

All Known Audio Transcripts

(That are Publicly Available)

Denver C. Snuffer Jr.

2007-2024

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2007.04.14 Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus with Q&A Session Following

April 14, 2007
Fairview, Utah

MAN: Denver Snuffer is his name. It's a real name; it's not a pen name.

DENVER: Actually, it's Denver Snuffer, Jr. My grandparents are responsible for the name. Both of them predeceased me, so I've never been able to hold anyone to account for naming me that.

I was asked to talk today by a rather insistent Doug Mendenhall. If you know him well enough, then you know that he's nothing if he isn't insistent. And I'm not really here as a volunteer; I'm here as a draftee (and a reluctant one).

But I've given some thought to what I would say if I were sequestered in a room with people who were interested in the subject of the Second Comforter. And I don't want to promote the book, and I'm not here to talk about the book (except indirectly, with some material that I think yields additional light on the subject).

What I looked at today is something that I don't think anyone who is LDS has commented on before. If they have, I'm not aware of it. So as far as I know, this is original material.

We just finished the Easter celebration last weekend. And as a result of celebrating Easter, I wanted to take some comments from the account of that very first day when the Lord came out of the grave. The fact that Easter is in the springtime I don't think is any accident. I think it's intended to align with the testimony of nature about the promise of eternal life, the promise of the renewal that comes every spring, and I think the Lord intended that His death and His resurrection should associate with spring. And I think it's appropriate that that be the subject that we look at today.

The incident that I want to look at is recorded only one place in Scripture. And even though it only appears one place in the Scripture, I think it's one of the most thought-provoking and potentially rewarding discussions about the Lord that appears anywhere else. I'm talking about the incident that Luke records of two disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day that the Lord rose from the dead. I'm gonna be using the Luke material throughout this as the exclusive source if Luke talks about it. If someone else talks about it and Luke didn't, then we'll look at that.

But the distance that they're going to walk is beyond what was then viewed as a Sabbath days' journey, so they couldn't take this walk on the Sabbath. They had to wait until the first day of the week when the Sabbath was over, which was also the day on which the Lord would be resurrected.

The incident appears in Luke chapter 24, and it begins in chapter 24: *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared* (Luke 24:1; see also Luke 14:1 RE).

He doesn't tell us this, but there's a detail you can find over in John chapter 20: *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark* (John 20:1; see also John 11:1 RE and Testimony of St. John 12:1 RE). All that Luke says is it was "very early in the morning." John lets us know that this was not only very early in the morning, it was still dark out. If you brought your Scriptures it might be useful to use them as we go along.

So, there is a walk that's going to take place in which two disciples (we have the names of only one of the two) are walking back to Emmaus, and this is what the account reads, beginning in verse 13:

Behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. (Luke 24:13; see also Luke 14:2 RE)

That's about seven miles, which (clearly, under their tradition) would have been too far.

And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. (vs. 14-16; see also 14:2 RE)

"Their eyes were holden." The Lord is with them. He's resurrected. He's walking along with them, and they don't recognize Him. Christ has the capacity to withhold His identity. As Paul reminded us in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 2: *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* From this incident, on this day with the Lord, we learn that the strangers can include the Lord Himself. And so when He says to be careful how you treat "the least of these my brethren," you ought not be surprised if, on the day of judgment, one of those "least" was the Lord Himself, and your eyes were holden that you should not know Him.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that [you] have one to another, as [you] walk, and are sad? (v. 17; see also 14:2 RE)

Clearly a rhetorical question. This is the risen Lord joining this fellowship in their walk, and He's asking them, "What are you talking about?" That ought to tell you something about Him. The Lord doesn't make any effort to displace their attention from the subject they're discussing. He joins them right where they are, on the subject that they're focused on, as a ready participant in the subject that's already on the table. That tells you something else about us. He really does want to help us where He finds us. **Our** concerns are really His concerns.

And...one of them, whose name was Cleopas... (v. 18; see also 14:2 RE)

Now, I think that's interesting, because I don't want to read too much into that, but I think it's very interesting that we have a name given to one of the two of them. And the name that's given to the one of the two is Cleopas, which is the male... It's like Stephanie and Stephen. The female is Cleopatra; the male is Cleopas. This is a male version of the name, Cleopatra, which we all think is an Egyptian name. But that's not true, because Egypt was dominated at that point by the Ptolemies. And Ptolemy was one of Alexander the Great's generals. He got that quadrant of the empire after Alexander's death. So it's really a Greek name derived from the Greeks. And I have a slight suspicion that the presence of that Greek name tells us something about him, maybe tells us something about his parents, maybe suggests that this guy was Hellenized, and if so (because he has kind of a Greek viewpoint), it explains why he's going to omit from the text (or from his testimony or from Luke's account of it, anyway) the thing that I want to talk about today. (You can't be sure of that, and I don't want to read too much in it because "Jesus" is a Greek name, as well, and He clearly was non-Greek. "Yeshua" or Joshua would have been His given name, but it was turned into the Greek name "Jesus," and we call Him by that.) A truly Hebrew mind, however, would have been very interested in something different than what the text is gonna tell us about. In any event:

...Cleopas, answering said unto them, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem...

That's kind of an amusing thought. See, Christ is not well informed about the local issues, he thinks.

[...Are you] a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which have come to pass there in these days? And he said unto [him], What things? (v. 19; see also 14:2 RE)

This is the Lord: "What things? Tell me about it."

At the time of the First Vision, the Lord says to Joseph: *This is My Beloved Son. Hear [ye] Him!* (JS-H 1:17; see also Joseph Smith History 2:4 RE). And then you have the Father and the Son—and a pause. "No sooner had I collected myself than..." Joseph writes. He goes on and asks his question. You have the controlling power of the Universe on standby, waiting for Joseph to formulate and ask the question. That ought to tell you something.

"What things?" Christ asks, although He clearly knows. The Lord clearly prefers a dialogue with us. He doesn't pontificate. He talks. He communicates. He wants it to be... I mean, He insists upon prayer for a reason; He'd like to hear from you—because in the process of hearing from you, you expose something to Him, and you expose something to yourself **about** yourself. He almost insists on treating us like we're equals—even though, clearly, we're not. And that ought to tell you something about yourself as well. All of these things are extraordinary revelations that the Lord is giving to us about who **we** are and who **He** is.

...And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief

*priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But **we** trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. (vs. 19-23, emphasis added; see also 14:2 RE)*

That's not what happened. That's not what happened. This is a stranger they're talking with, and this is what they're willing to say to the stranger that they're talking with about what happened. Now, I don't know if they're filtering the story because they don't want to come right out with it or if, in fact, the way they heard it omitted the appearance of the Lord Himself or if they heard the version that was told about the Lord Himself appearing but just couldn't bring themselves to believe that. But in this account, they admit that certain women went, that they made at least **these** two astonished. They were early at the sepulcher, no body was found, and they had a vision. That's all the further they'll go. But the vision, the "angel," said He was alive. I have to assume that what Luke is setting out in this story is the version that Luke got from these people.

You know, it's **also** possible... In fact, this is a good text to go to, to answer one of the criticisms about Joseph Smith. One of the criticisms is that he wrote multiple versions of the First Vision. Yeah, he did—and they're all instructive, and they're all useful, but we've canonized only one of them. But there's multiple versions of what went on on the very first day of the Lord having risen from the dead. In one account, we **know** that the Lord Himself appeared and that, among other things, He told Mary not to hold Him. The King James version says, "Don't touch me," but Joseph changes that in the Inspired Version to "Don't **hold** me," because I think implicit in the Joseph Smith change is that she did touch Him. She was not just a witness, but she was someone who felt free to embrace Him, and He said, "Don't hold me, I have to go appear to my Father and your Father," which is different than the version that we've got here where women are seeing the vision of angels, and they omit the Lord. Well, Joseph gave a version of the First Vision in which he discusses angels, but he omits the Lord. Now, is Luke lying? No more so than Joseph was. But we ought to be consistent in our treatment of Scripture anciently and modern and as fair with Joseph as we are with Luke.

The first witnesses of the resurrection were women. This is another confirmation that the Second Comforter is not inhibited by priestly office or limited in His ministry to the brethren. The first witnesses were women, and that should tell us something. I am constantly amazed, however, at **our** ability to ignore the obvious. We tend to read into texts things that aren't there, and we tend to read out of texts things that are glaringly apparent. We have encumbered ourselves with a trailer-hitch to the Catholic legacy of what it means to have a priestly class among you. And we tend to say, "Well there's been a restoration, and that means something new is going on," while at the same time putting on the same spectacles that cripple all of those in historic Christianity that needed the Restoration to occur. So, we ought to feel required to read the text and let it inform us without any predisposition.

Okay. In verse 24:

And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. (Luke 24:24; see also Luke 14:2 RE)

Sure enough, the tomb was empty; He wasn't there anymore. But they didn't see anything.

So far, you see, the men have only the witness of an empty tomb and the testimony of the women. I would suggest that if law governs all blessings—and it does. The statement isn't just "some"; the statement is "all." And we probably ought to read it: *There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of [the] world, upon which **all** blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated (D&C 130:20-21, emphasis added).* Well, if there is a law, and if it is inviolate and it governs, then perhaps there were those who needed to grow more in **their** faith before they could encounter this experience, and the Lord was working to furnish witnesses who were **already** predisposed or prepared in order to help others come along as well. Perhaps faith needed to grow in the brethren before they could get what the sisters had already themselves witnessed.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27; see also Luke 14:3 RE)

This discourse would probably rival the Sermon on the Mount **if we had it**. Other than mentioning the subject, we don't have anything left of this talk that He gave. What they will tell us is, "He lives!" The headline news is, "He lives; He's come out of the grave." Okay, what did He say when He came out of the grave? Because He's going to take a seven-mile walk, and He's going to begin at Moses and all the prophets and expound unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. That's sort of an odd way to spend the day with the Lord until you think about it. That's what He does. That's what angels do. That's what... "Which church should I join?" whereupon, in a mingling of Isaiah and the apostle Paul, the Lord essentially quotes Scripture to Joseph Smith. "I undertook to find out what my standing was before Him because I had every confidence of obtaining a vision as I had had one before" (see JS-H 1:29; see also Joseph Smith History 3:1 RE). A column of light comes down, the ceiling opens, a man with a robe comes and appears and quotes Scripture. And here we have the Lord taking a seven-mile hike, beginning at Moses and all the prophets and expounding the Scriptures.

Well, these disciples are more interested in the physicality of His rising from the dead, "Look! It's a body, and it's animated again!" because that solves the problem that the Greeks had, and it also proves that the Pharisees were right. So, the headline news is: "Pharisees got one up on the Sadducees" in this little cultural setting. But what the Lord

wanted was to impart some intelligence about the Scriptures so that understanding the Scriptures, they might be believing. And if they by being believing through understanding what the Scriptures had to say about Him, they might then be able to move to where He would like them to go. He wanted them to understand how these things foreshadowed everything about His life.

And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. (Luke 24:28; see also Luke 14:4 RE)

The Lord's gonna leave 'em now. He's talked to 'em for seven miles, He's told 'em about the Scriptures, and He's going to leave. He's going to leave unless **something** happens. They either constrain Him to stay with them and abide with them, or He's gone. That ought to tell you something else about the Lord. If they hadn't constrained Him, He may very well have just left. Verse 29:

But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. (v. 29; see also 14:4 RE)

That inspired a hymn, you know. So, they have been walking—we don't know how long, but approximately seven miles—and the discourse has taken the better part of the day as they have walked. And towards evening, they're getting ready to pull over... It may be that this was one of the reasons why Cleopas never attempted a reconstruction; it may have overwhelmed him even at the thought of trying to reduce to writing everything that was there—although that's the purpose of the Holy Ghost, to enable you to be able to do that. But **we are the poorer** for not having this talk preserved.

And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake [it], and gave [it] to them. (vs. 29-30; see also 14:4 RE)

Now, what does that sound like? Yeah, it sounds like an ordinance. It sounds like the Lord has slipped seamlessly into the role of Presiding High Priest, and it sounds like, at the moment that He begins priestly officiating, these people are finally able to see what it is that's going on. The breaking of the bread is the signal event for the opening of these disciples' eyes.

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? (vs. 31-32; see also 14:4 RE)

In *The Second Comforter*, I wrote about their heart burning within 'em. Today I'd like to talk about the second part (which is not in that book): "While he opened the scriptures to us." I want to look at what would necessarily have been included in the talk that the Lord gave on the road to Emmaus as an example of what it is the Lord would have **us** understand, preparatory to **our eyes** being opened. We cannot now recreate that talk without revelation, but we can, I think, isolate the things that are necessarily included

within it in order for these people (who had just witnessed the events of the last few days) to understand.

So what I want to do is turn to "Moses and all the prophets" and try and determine what was necessarily included in the Lord's remarks. I'd like you to imagine, as we do this, a newly-risen Lord—in the throes of celebrating the resurrection—walking on a dusty back-road and trying to persuade people that the Scriptures testify of Him.

The ordinances of the Old Testament, beginning with Exodus, were revealed through Moses, and so when you speak about "Moses and all the prophets," you should expect Christ would necessarily begin with the ordinances of the Law of Moses. When those ordinances are their most relevant, they're talking about the sacrifices that took place there, and they point to the great atoning sacrifice which He would perform. And when Christ asked: *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?* in His discourse, He's talking about the things that were necessary for Him to fulfill the Law of Moses.

In the tabernacle and, subsequently, in the temple that was built by Solomon, the temple divided up into three areas. There was an outer court into which was welcomed all of Israel. You had to enter Israel whether you were a priest or not a priest; all of Israel entered into the outer court. There was a Holy Place into which, on a rotating basis, the priests alone were allowed to come. (They would come for the morning service; they would come for the evening service.) And then there was the Holy of Holies, into which one priest (the presiding High Priest) would enter one time each year—for one specific ordinance—on Yom Kippur or the Holy of Holies. So you had, as a matter of separation, you had:

- Everyone, and
- Then you had a smaller group, and
- Then you had a single person.

Or—if you were to draw it out in terms of how the divisions looked—you create, in the structure of the temple itself, the mountain of the Lord's house.

In the Holy Place, there was a separation between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies by a veil. In front of the veil, there was an altar on which incense would be burned. On the one side, there was a menorah (or a candlestick). On the other, there was the table of the shewbread. And this is the structure into which the priests would pass for their ordinances. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, together with the Mercy Seat and the symbolic presence of God the Father and Christ.

These represented ascending levels of holiness which were symbolically separated by who got to enter. The three degrees—the three levels of holiness—are represented there. It is inside the Holy Place, this spot right here [referring to whiteboard visual]—that is the place in which the New Testament begins, and the New Testament ends. It begins chronologically in that room, and it ends in its narrative in the Book of Revelation, where Christ appears in that same room in John's vision of Patmos.

So, I want to turn back to the beginning of the dispensation in which Christ will come, and turn to Luke chapter 1, beginning at verse 5:

*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of **the course of Abia**... (Luke 1:5, emphasis added; see also Luke 1:2 RE)*

This is what James Talmage wrote about this course:

About fifteen months prior to the Savior's birth, Zacharias, a priest of the Aaronic order, was officiating in the functions of his office in the temple at Jerusalem. His wife, Elisabeth, was also of a priestly family, being numbered among the descendants of Aaron. The couple had never been blessed with children; and at the time of which we speak they were both well stricken in years and had sorrowfully given up hope of posterity. Zacharias belonged to the course of priests named after Abijah, [later] known in later time as the course of Abia. This was the eighth in the order of...twenty-four courses established by David the king, each course being appointed to serve in turn a week at the sanctuary...

During his week of service each priest was required to maintain scrupulously a state of ceremonial cleanliness of person; he had to abstain from wine, and from food except that specifically prescribed; he had to bathe frequently; he lived within the temple precincts and thus was cut off from [his] family association; he was[n't] allowed to come near the dead, [or] to mourn in [any] formal manner if death [occurred to] rob him of even his nearest [or] dearest of kin. [They select daily] the priest who should enter the Holy Place, and there burn incense on the golden altar, ...by lot; and...we gather, from non-scriptural history, that because of the great number of priests [and] the honor of so officiating seldom [this honor] fell twice [in] the same person. (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*: Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, p.71)

That's from *Jesus the Christ* at page 71.

Not only was it "seldom," later Jewish tradition has it that a person, a priest, who got to go in there and to do that in this room was considered rich, having been allowed to do this on one occasion.

Zacharias is well stricken in years. The lot hasn't fallen on him, he's spent his lifetime hoping for it, and now the lot falls onto him—and by the way, there are no coincidences. This was, at it turns out, exactly the right time.

...and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, ...her name was Elisabeth. (Luke 1:5; see also Luke 1:2 RE)

Both sides of this family are Aaronic/Levitical so that there's no doubt about the right—the inherited right—that John will have to officiate in the ordinances that he will later officiate in.

They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. (vs. 6-9; see also 1:2-3 RE)

So, his job was to come with coals from off of the outer altar and bring it into the inner altar and put the coals of the altar and then put on top of it incense—and then he had a job to do, and his job was to offer a prayer. The altar of incense, which had horns at its corner, would have burned with the smoke of the incense ascending upward in the Holy Place. When it hit the ceiling, it would then move outward, the rising of the incense column being a symbol of the prayers ascending to God from the Israelite nation. When it hit the ceiling and began to spread out, it represented (as well) the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, with the trunk and with the upper limbs extending—this was a symbol of the original Garden of Eden setting, all of this occurring within the Holy Place.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (vs. 10-11; see also 1:3 RE)

See, this—the veil—was fastened hard on the left but ended on the right in front, and behind it, it was fastened hard on the right and ended on the left, so that a person could pass through. But if you passed through and you came from inside the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies **into** the Holy Place, you would be standing, as it turns out, on the right side of the altar. Symbolically that meant that this person who has now come to stand on the right side of the altar has just emerged from the symbolic presence of God. We tend to think of things as being non-physical, but when these encounters occur, it gets very concrete and very specific—and there we have the right side of the altar of incense, and that description fixes the angel in the right location for him, inside the temple, to have emerged from this symbolic presence. But look what he says:

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard... (vs. 12-13; see also 1:3 RE)

Well, what was his prayer?

...Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, ...thou shalt call his name John. (v. 13; see also 1:3 RE)

You shouldn't leap to the conclusion that he's praying for a son. Because a man and a woman "well stricken in years," sent into the temple to officiate in an ordinance with people standing outside, everyone knowing what he was going to be praying, everyone knowing the timing that would be involved with that prayer, had a certain expectation of when he would come back out. He wasn't in there freelancing. He wasn't in there just praying. He wasn't in there saying, "And I'd like you to invent the Porsche... And I'd like a Porsche!" (My friends all drive Porsches. I must make amends.)

Alfred Edersheim tells us what the prayer would have been. And here is an excerpt from the prayer that Zacharias would have been offering:

...Be graciously pleased, Jehovah our God with thy people Israel, and with their prayer. Restore the service to the oracle of Thy house... So preserve us and keep us, and **gather the scattered ones into Thy holy courts**, to keep Thy statutes, and to do Thy good pleasure, and to serve Thee with our whole heart...**Bless us, O our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Thy countenance...**

And may it please Thee to bless Thy people Israel at all times, and [in] every hour with Thy peace. (Edersheim, Alfred. *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*. Hendrickson: Peabody, Mass., 1994, p. 129)

And the angel says, "Your prayer has been heard. Your prayer has been heard, and your wife, Elizabeth, is gonna bear a son," which means, "The Lord is about to bless Israel with the light of His countenance, and as a part of that process, your wife is going to have a son." His prayer has been heard. Israel was to be gathered. Israel was to be visited by the Lord. The angel's association of gathering and visitation, on the one hand, with the promise of the son, on the other hand, would have been—at a minimum—unexpected.

"Now, angel... You know I'm an old man, right? My wife's old, too. You're here to tell me you're about to visit Israel with the countenance—the light of Your countenance—that the Lord is gonna shine upon us. I get that. But this whole son thing, we've... You've got to back up on that."

The angel continues:

Thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. (Luke 1:14; see also Luke 1:3 RE)

You know, there's no record of that. In the context of the statement that's being given here, it's saying that "many" are going to rejoice at the birth of John the Baptist. We don't know that. I mean, we have the testimony of an angel that that is going to happen, but it's omitted from the scriptural account. Later on—it will be about two years after the birth of the Savior because they went to kill all the children that were two years old and younger, it's gonna be some later time—they will hunt specifically for John. In one account, they come to Zacharias and demand John be surrendered three times before

they finally kill (on Herod's order) Zacharias for not surrendering the son. They **knew** about John. He arrived as headline news because his father had been officiating in the temple—not at all like the One before whom he would go to prepare the way, who would be born in obscurity. John was someone whose birth would be heralded, and this says that "many will rejoice at his birth," which suggests that the publicity stunt worked.

Well, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, he wrote:

Let us come into [the] New Testament times—so many are ever praising the Lord and His apostles. We will commence with John the Baptist. When Herod's edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under this hellish edict, and Zacharias caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey. When his father refused to disclose his hiding place, and being the officiating High Priest at the Temple that year, was slain by Herod's order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said. John's head was taken to Herod, the son of this infant murderer, in a charger. Not with standing there was never a greater prophet born of a woman than him!

(That's from the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p.261.)

John was known. Herod targeted him. His reputation was known because of the circumstances of his birth, and apparently, there were those who rejoiced and, clearly, others who feared. The angel continues:

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, ...shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; ...shall be filled with the Holy Ghost...

*And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. ...**he** shall go before **him** [**he**, John, shall go before **Him**, the Lord their God] in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people... (Luke 1:15-17, emphasis added; see also Luke 1:3 RE)*

In this context, what the angel is telling Zacharias is the "light of God's countenance" is, in fact, about to break forth. So Zacharias asked the reasonable question,

Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. (v. 18; see also 1:4 RE)

It's the elephant in the room. "We haven't been talking about this problem. We don't have latter-day pharmaceuticals. This isn't going to work." Well, the angel answers him and says,

***I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.** (v. 19, emphasis added; see also 1:4 RE)*

"I'm not walking through a curtain. I'm not coming from the **symbolic** presence of the room next to us. I'm coming **from God Himself**. Do you understand that, Zacharias? Do you get the picture here? I don't think you should be disbelieving. Here's a sign!"

*...thou shalt be [struck] dumb, and not able to speak, until the day...these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which **shall** be fulfilled in their season. (vs. 20, emphasis added; see also 1:4 RE)*

Well, all the more publicity for John because you see:

...the people waited for Zacharias... (vs. 21; see also 1:4 RE)

There's a time involved in the visit and the dialogue between the angel and Zacharias. We tend to somehow think that spiritual phenomenon are outside of time and space (and while they **are** outside of time and space—because we don't control them in our environment; they control this environment, we don't control theirs), the fact is that when they come to our time and space, they are **in** our time and space, and time lapses. And this dialogue took a while. And the people knew how long the prayer ought last, and it was taking longer. And this is an awkward moment for everyone because if the guy died in there (and he's old and well stricken in years), no one else can enter until the evening sacrifice. And when you clean the altar off and you shovel the dust into the bucket, you can grab the guy by his wrist and bring the bucket and the old guy out. But between now and then, what are we gonna do? Because there is no ordinance for extraction of one each dead Zacharias. It's a problem.

So, they're all sitting about talking,

...marvell[ing] that he tarried so long in the temple. (v. 21; see also 1:4 RE)

"I don't know. What do you think we oughtta do?"

"Ask Annas."

"Annas is a jerk! You can't ask him anything."

So, they wait, and they wonder, and they speculate.

"Do you think he's in there eating shewbread?"

"I mean, he's been waiting his whole life to get in there. He's gonna have fingerprints all over the Menorah!"

"I'll bet right now he's in there... He's in the Holy of Holies, and he's rolling around on the floor. Right now. I'll bet it."

"Zacharias, what's he up to?"

When he came out, he could not speak unto them...

Ooh! What do you suppose that did to the attention of the people? What do you think the reaction to that would be? He couldn't speak to them. Well,

...they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. (v. 22; see also 1:4 RE)

And so, the publicity stunt is afoot. Everyone knows something happened. There's something going on here. And we know that:

Elizabeth conceived, and [she] hid herself... (v. 24; see also 1:4 RE)

...and so on. So, the dispensation of the meridian of time when the Lord is going to come begins right here in this spot. That ought to tell us something too about the terrible significance of—tying into everything that the Lord does—the temple.

So, here we are, standing on this side of the veil with the dispensation launched with an angel who has emerged, not from just the figurative or symbolic, but from the literal presence of the Lord, and we're going to have to, as part of this dispensation, at some point pass through that veil and enter into the Holy of Holies.

(I'm told we have to take a break at one point, so I'm checking my watch on that.)

When Moses passed through the veil, the presence of the Lord was shielded by a covering of a thick cloud. The cloud operated as a veil to the onlookers of Israel, but Moses was allowed to pass through or enter through the cloud into the very presence of God. We have an account of that in Exodus chapter 24, in verses 15-18.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and [on] the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:15-18; see also Exodus 13:26 RE)

See, just like in the mountain of the Lord's house you have the pinnacle (the spot at the top of the mountain at which, when one stands there, they are no longer of the earth but they have become a part of the sky—that is one of the reasons why the "mountain of the Lord's house" is the symbol that gets used in Scripture to describe the phenomenon because it is no longer connecting you to the earth; the only thing that touches is the soles of your feet; you have become part of the heavens), Moses ascends up, and the ascension that's being talked about here in the cloud at the top of the mountain of the Lord's house—inside there is where we find the presence of the Lord.

Similarly, as Christ asked, "Ought not these things to have happened?" one of the things that had happened was, in the dispensation of the meridian of time, Christ also passed through the cloud and entered into the presence of the Father. There were three

disciples who were able to see Moses [and] Elias, but they were not permitted to see the Father, though they heard His voice. They heard the voice speaking from inside the cloud; only Christ passed into the Father's presence. That is recorded in Matthew chapter 17, verses 1-8. The relevant part:

After six days Jesus [take] Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them...to an high mountain apart, ...was transfigured before them: ...his face did shine as the sun, ...his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, [it's] good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make [thee] three tabernacles; one for thee, ...one for Moses, ...one for Elias.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. [It's intimidating.] ...Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, ...be not afraid. And when they...lifted...their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. (Matthew 17:1-8; see also Matthew 9:4 RE)

See, Christ tells these disciples to tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man shall be risen again from the dead. Well, on the road to Emmaus, He **was** risen again from the dead—there is no reason now to withhold the information about the Lord having passed through the veil on the Mount of Transfiguration into the presence of God the Father. So this would have been available subject fodder for the discussion on the road as well.

In the rites of Moses, there was one occasion when it was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies. It took place only one time each year on a specific day. The day is set out in Leviticus chapter 23 where it says:

On the tenth day of [the] seventh month there shall be a day of atonement... [Thou] shall do no work in that...day: ...it is a day of atonement. (Leviticus 23:27-28; see also Leviticus 11:8 RE)

This orientation as to time and number orients us on the tenth day to remind us of the "Ten Commandments" at Sinai. Ten is whole; it's complete. We use ten because of our fingers as the basis for a numbering system. And seven (on the seventh month) is a symbol of creation or completion or perfection. These two numbers combined in a symbolic testimony of the significance of the Day of Atonement, which is also testament of the perfection, the completion, the exactness of the timing of the actual atonement. It was no accident the Lord came and did what He did at the very moment that He did it, and it's no accident that the angel appeared at the very moment he did.

The Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur) was originally associated with the deaths of Aaron's two sons. (That's sort of an odd thing to think about. That's where it comes from; that's where it gets started.) They had taken incense into the Holy of Holies and burned it there in an unauthorized manner, and that offense (in entering into the presence of God in an unauthorized way) resulted in Nadab and Abihu being killed. Fire

came out and devoured them. They were killed. The Day of Atonement was the day in which there was a method provided for Aaron to enter into the Holy of Holies without being destroyed. The entirety of the ordinance reaches out, first, to cleanse Aaron (or Aaron's successor as the High Priest), and then to cleanse the temple, and then to cleanse all of Israel. It was a progression in three degrees—as if the atonement were intended to include redemption for the Celestial, the Terrestrial, and the Telestial, as if the mercy of God was intended to extend to every living creature regardless of their obedience to Him. It was intended to be all-inclusive and all-encompassing.

In the context of the Day of Atonement, there was a prescribed use for incense. It symbolizes the cloud covering the presence of God, just as the cloud covering Sinai when Moses entered the presence of God—and the full account of the rite is set out in chapter 16 of Leviticus. Well, I want to take a look at what that says only for purposes of saying what necessarily the Lord **had to suffer** in order to enter into His glory. We don't look at these old books anymore. We tend to think that they were all done away with—and they were. We don't celebrate them anymore, but they were intended to give an orientation to who it was the Messiah was and what it was the Messiah was intended to do. It is a **testimony**. See, if God knows all things beforehand—and He does—then He knows how to set out in a ritual all of the details of what it is He's about to do.

So, between now and the time that we get started again, I want you all to have read Leviticus chapter 16, verses 1-34 [audience laughter], and maybe you can mock up a Holy of Holies and practice burning incense and entering into the veil and... We're gonna need an animal 'cuz we're gonna need some blood—but ketchup will work if you've got... You can bring some of that over from the...

Because it is fascinating to take a look at what the Lord **suffered** in the actual atonement in order to see what the rites were intended to reveal about it. You don't understand the Lord until you understand what He set out in symbol to testify about Himself.

[Break]

I'm reasonably confident that we will arrive at Emmaus just about the time the tables are set.

So, if we go to Leviticus chapter 16, verse 1:

The LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron [that incident occurred in Leviticus chapter 10, verses 1-3], when they [had] offered before the Lord, and died; ...the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. (vs 1-2; see also Leviticus 6:1 RE)

So, you don't get to control the timing of events. The Lord reserves to Himself the timing of events. If you think that there are moments when you're ready for something, you

may not be. It's the Lord who decides and the Lord who fixes the time, and those things are determined according to the mercy and the wisdom of the Lord, just as it was when Zacharias was surprised in the Holy Place. Verse 12 says:

He [that is, Aaron, when he goes in—and his descendants] shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not. (vs. 12-13; see also 6:3 RE)

So, he's supposed to bring from off of the altar a burnt sacrifice (coals) with him, and he's supposed to bring a collection of incense with him, and he's to enter into—through the veil—into the Holy of Holies, and there he is supposed to set the coals and set the incense in order for a cloud to be produced inside the Holy of Holies. So, he's inside the veil of the temple, but he's also being drawn into a further cloud (or veil) inside the Holy Place, "that he die not."

Well, unlike the room in which the altar of incense appears, the room in which this takes place is literally a cube. Every dimension is exactly the same inside this room. It is a perfect cube, and it's significantly smaller than the room from which he's traversed to get there. The incense behaves in a different way, and the cloud that's produced there does not become columnar; it fills the room because it's a much smaller space. And so while he's in there ministering, he is inside the cloud and in the symbolic presence of God (just as Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration had accomplished that—and the elements from Sinai are brought as well). You have Moses on the Mount Sinai, you have Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and you have an ordinance. And the ordinance is symbolically recreating these actual events: one that had occurred at the beginning of the Dispensation; one that will occur in the Lord's own life, and it is to be modeled every year on the Day of Atonement.

The Messiah's life necessarily included an ascension through a cloud or veil into the presence of God. He was touching on one of the required elements of His ministry when this ordinance was established and when He said: "Ought not these things to have occurred?" One of the things that ought to have occurred was the incident on the Mount of Transfiguration. It satisfied one of the elements of the Law of Moses which would **identify Him** as the Anointed One, as the Lord, as the promised Messiah. In all things, Christ was required to fulfill what had been foretold of Him.

When He asked: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" on the road to Emmaus, it's the same sort of question that He and John the Baptist exchanged at His baptism. "Suffer it to be so because we need these things. There's a pattern here. I must conform to the pattern. I am the one who will fulfill the pattern, therefore, I must do this, John. It's necessary. It's essential." And if so for Him, then for us also. When He said, "Come, follow me," I don't think He had in mind merely walking around Palestine, much to the rather organic view of Islam about what we ought to be doing. The Savior was talking about things that were transcendent.

The great Day of Atonement had elements included throughout the ritual which associate with the events of Christ's life and of Christ's sacrifice. This conversation on the road to Emmaus surely turned, therefore, to the Day of Atonement to show the necessity of what He suffered. Let's look at how Luke described some of what happened, in Luke chapter 22, verses 39-46:

And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives. (v. 39; see also Luke 13:9 RE)

This is after He has introduced the sacrament ordinance, after Judas has disassociated himself. The Savior now goes out to the Mount of Olives (Luke 22, verse 39).

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And [he] said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. (vs. 40-46; see also 13:9 RE)

Here Luke identifies three elements of the Day of Atonement:

- First, he orients us to the place involved. It's the Mount of Olives. This mount (the Mount of Olives) was east of the temple.
- Second, he identifies the sprinkling of blood upon the ground. Luke tells us Christ (at the eastern location) suffers until "drops" of His blood are sprinkled upon the ground.
- Third, Luke tells us that Christ was left alone at the moment of these events. No **man** accompanies Him. Those who were a stone's throw away have lapsed into sleep so, as the blood is sprinkled on the ground, Christ is alone. Interestingly, the place that the priest would enter alone on the Day of Atonement is about a stone's throw away from those that would be in the outer court waiting as he performed the ordinance inside the Holy of Holies.

In our dispensation, the Lord confirms His suffering in section 133 of the Doctrine and Covenants: *I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me* (D&C 133:50; see also T&C 58:6). This had to be a

solitary event. So, if we go to Luke [Leviticus] chapter 16 and look at the Day of Atonement, look at verse 14. The High Priest, when he comes in:

He shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward...

He comes into the east side of the mercy seat, and he sprinkles there the blood of the sacrifice that's been offered, just as Christ went eastward from the temple into the Garden of Gethsemane, where he sprinkles the blood upon the ground.

*...before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle...the blood with his finger seven times. Then [he shall] kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring **his** blood within the vail, and do with **that** blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, [he shall] sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place...*

[Verse 17:] *...there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place. (Leviticus 16:14-17, emphasis added; see also Leviticus 6:3-4 RE)*

Christ's suffering and the "sprinkling" of His blood on the Mount of Olives was **necessary** to fulfill the Law of Moses. He needed to suffer these things in order to fulfill the symbols that identify Him as the Messiah, in the rites that He had established as the way to identify who He would be. It would be more correct to say that the rites needed to include these elements because the **events** would include the elements—because He foresaw the elements of what He would suffer before He ordained the ordinance itself, and the two of them fit together.

Continuing with the events in Luke, we read that Christ was taken before Israel, and an option was given to Israel to either let Him or let another man go free. As Luke describes it (this is in 23, Luke 23, verse 16—Pilate is speaking):

I will therefore chastise him, and release him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) And they [all] cried out...at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again [un]to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

And he said unto them the third time [Interesting that it has to be repeated three times], Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

*And they were [insistent] with loud voices, requiring that **he...be crucified**. And the voices of them and...the chief priests prevailed. ...Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And [they] **released** unto them **him that for***

***sedition and murder** was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered **Jesus** to their will. (Luke 23:16-25, emphasis added; see also Luke 13:17-18 RE)*

Well! Knock me over with a feather—if the Day of Atonement doesn't do this exact same thing (in one of the parts of the Day of Atonement that has generated, I would guess, more doctoral theses in the divinity schools of Christendom than probably any other speculative point). This account conforms to the Day of Atonement:

- First, you offer one to be sacrificed and one to be released.
- Second, the choice is made before all the congregation of Israel.
- Third, after the choice is made, **one** is sacrificed for sin, and
- Fourth, the one to be released is **laden** with sin when it is turned free.

So, Leviticus chapter 16, verses 7-10 and 20-22:

*He shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one...for the LORD, and the other...for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer **him** for a [sacrifice]. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let **him** go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.*

...And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:7-10,21-22, emphasis added; see also Leviticus 6:2,5 RE)

He shall let the goat go in the wilderness, confess over him all their sins, release him who "that for sedition and murder was cast into prison." So the one laden with sin is let go.

The elements of the ritual in the book of Leviticus and the events in the life of Christ are not inadvertent. The Lord saw the events of the day when His own life was going to be laid down. The rituals of Moses were fashioned by the Lord in the revelation given to Moses to reflect the events that were actually going to occur.

The "two goats" are alike in the ritual. Just so, too, are the positions of Christ (the Son of God) and Barabbas, on the other hand:

- *Bar* meaning: "the son of" and
- *Abba* meaning: "the father."

Whether that was his given name or the name he assumed as a zealot, I don't know. But this name-title co-identified "the Son of God" and "the son of God (*Bar Abba*),"

Barabbas. So we have the actual Son of God, on the one hand, and a man whose name refers to him also as "the son of God" standing co-equally before the congregations of Israel. "And whom shall I free?" And the lot falls upon the Savior.

The "two goats" are treated differently in the ritual. One is killed; the other (laden with sins) is set free. Barabbas is set free. Well, the similarities are striking. No doubt the risen Lord would have pointed **these** things out as they walked on the road to Emmaus, about how all these things ought to have occurred and were necessarily so.

The next element was the location. Luke describes the place of Christ's killing in Luke 23:33,

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, ...the other on the left. (Luke 23:33; see also Luke 13:20 RE)

You know, there's some controversy over the location of things. When Constantine converted... (Actually, that really overstates the case.) When Constantine determined that Christianity was going to become the state religion of Rome to help him govern an unruly group of people... He wouldn't get baptized until about a month before his death, many years later, and (presumably) the reason—notwithstanding the Catholic apologists' reason for it—he just wanted an insurance policy on the off-chance that Sol Invictus wasn't going to help him and on the possibility that this "Jesus Jew-boy" might; he got baptized before his death and his final illness. But at the moment of his conversion, he was more interested in the political advantages of having Christianity become the state religion of Rome than he was in a sincere belief that it had something to offer him.

His mother, on the other hand, appears to have been rather converted and zealous in the cause. She was the one who went to Palestine and located all of those sacred sites that we now have: the Church of the Sepulchre and the church in Bethlehem (the birth site). All of those areas were discovered by Queen Helen, the mother of Constantine.

And she, too, fixed the place of the crucifixion, which the apostles and prophets of the Restoration have never accepted. There have been no efforts by the Church to **officially** identify the spot where the crucifixion took place, but there have been a number of statements, including one by President Spencer Kimball, about "feeling by the Spirit" that certain places were likely to be. No one's ever tried to fix it, but in our Scriptures, map #12 (in the back of your Scriptures) gives you a probable location of Golgotha, and there's a picture of it. The picture is back here, photo 13: Golgotha. "A prominent tradition holds the Lord Jesus was crucified near here, 'place of the skull.'" And the skull there appears to be the features of the mountainside.

Assuming for a moment that that orientation is correct and that Queen Helen was wrong, then the place where the crucifixion occurred would be to the north of the location of the temple mount. Inside the temple environment—inside the larger temple area—the place where the animals were killed on the grounds was the place of

slaughter, and it was located to the north of the altar for burnt sacrifice and outside of the temple itself but in the court of the temple, just as the Scriptures make clear it was outside the city wall and at a location to the north of Jerusalem.

Leviticus 16:14 [11],

Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, ...shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself. (Leviticus 16:11; see also Leviticus 6:3 RE)

This site would have been in the northern part of the outer court of the temple, the location of the **actual crucifixion** corresponding to the location of the rites performed within the temple. Crucifixion outside the temple walls (or outside the walls of Jerusalem), corresponding once again with killing the sacrifice outside the walls of the temple building. So, then once this has occurred, once this slaughter has occurred, it's necessary to bring the blood in verse 15:

Then shall he [Aaron (or the successor High Priest)]...bring his blood within the vail...and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat. (v. 15; see also 6:4 RE)

So, it has to come into the presence of and the attention of (symbolically) God the Father. The mercy seat is inside the Holy of Holies. It's inside the veil of the temple. It's the most holy spot of the temple. When, therefore, the actual events of the Day of Atonement occur, it should be necessary for the offering to be brought into the holiest place and offered to the attention of the Father.

So, in Luke 23:45, at the moment of Christ's death, after He shouts with a loud voice and gives up the ghost: *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst* (see also Luke 13:26 RE). Matthew 27:51 says: *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks [were] rent* (see also Matthew 12:30 RE).

Christianity says, "Oh, that's 'cuz they did away with all that stuff! It had now been superseded, fulfilled, and it was no more." The rites of Moses suggest it was necessary for the offering to be accepted within the Holy Place. And as no one who was officiating would draw aside the veil to allow the presence of God the Father to acknowledge the sacrifice, God the Father Himself drew it apart with an earthquake, rending the veil of the temple to accept the sacrifice. As Christ completed His sacrifice, the Holy of Holies opened to acknowledge and accept the offering.

It should not be a mystery to us why this happened. It completes the acts required under the rites to confirm that this was the Anointed One, to whom all the rites and ordinances pointed as our common hope for the One who would enter in and make atonement for us.

Well, Christ's discourse on the road to Emmaus was not limited to the rites of Moses. He says, **Beginning** [with] *Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all*

the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27, emphasis added; see also Luke 14:3 RE). It had to include more than just Moses. So, there are a few other Scriptures that I think we have to consider in order to conclude what was necessarily included within Christ's dialogue.

Matthew's Gospel brings up details of Christ's humiliation in Matthew 27, beginning at verse 33:

When they were come [to the] place called Golgotha, that is, [the] place of [the] skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: ...when he...tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Then [there were] two thieves crucified with him, [the] one on the right hand, [the] another on the left [forming rather a presidency of the damned and outcast and executed]. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, ...saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

[And] now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour [Christ] cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard [this], said, This man calleth for Elias. ...straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, ...filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, [to give] him...drink. The rest said, Let be, [let's] see whether Elias will come to save him.

[And] when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; ... the earth did quake, ...the rocks [were] rent; ...when the centurion, [there] that [was] with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and [the] things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matthew 27:33-54; see also Matthew 12:24-31 RE)

One of the prophets, no doubt, that Christ would have referred to is one that Matthew just referred to. If you get out Psalms 22, you'll read this account:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but

thou hearest not; and in the night season, ...am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and [not a] man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing [that] he delighted in him.

...Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

...They [gape] upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and...roaring lion. I am poured out like water, ...all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; ...my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of [the earth]. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, [they] cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

...My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. All [of] the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations. (Psalms 22:1–8,11,13–19,25–28; see also Psalms 22:1-2,4-5 RE)

Ought not these things to be and for Christ to enter into His glory? It had to be! The disappointment and the confusion and the uncertainty of these disciples, walking after the apparent defeat of the Lord in Jerusalem, didn't understand. Everything about these events were essential for the Messiah—if he BE the Messiah—to accomplish.

Isaiah chapter 53, verses 2-12:

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground [as a root out of a dry ground—there was no drier ground than that; it's remarkable that the Lord was able to take root there]: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. (v. 2; see also Isaiah 19:2 RE)

You know, that "There is no beauty that we should desire him," is the King James' way of putting the verse. The Jewish Study Bible published by the Oxford University says, "There is no **charm** that we should find him pleasing." Avraham Gileadi in his *Apocalyptic Isaiah* renders it, "There's no **pleasing aspect**, that we should find him attractive." If I were going to say what the gist of the idea is that's being communicated

here, I would say: He was uncredentialed; there was nothing about him that made him bona fide. If you wanted to recognize the Lord, it had to be in the content of His message. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" and not in the majesty of the office He held; for although He held the only true High Priest office of that day, at that moment, all of society was otherwise oriented. He didn't don priestly robes; He didn't own possession of the temple courts; He didn't come through the lineage of Aaron—indeed, not even of the lineage of Levi. He was uncredentialed. There is nothing about His lowly position inside a society that was organized as it was that would recognize Him as being bona fide. Only those willing to "let their hearts burn within them" would recognize Him. As to everyone else? Just another common man.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: ...we hid as it were our faces from him...

Look away, look away. We still do that, you know. Walking alongside on the road to Emmaus we still hide, as it were, our faces from Him.

...he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (v. 3; see also 19:2 RE)

Yeah, it's popular to disrespect, to question, to doubt, to trouble over. I love the question someone called Doug [Mendenhall] with yesterday. I have no credentials. I am no one. I am a member of the Church with a testimony. I preside over nothing. I hold no keys, and yet, I know Him.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried [away] our sorrows...

You know, that's not just a statement about what it is He's accomplished. That's a statement of trust. That's a statement of your confidence in Him. Because if He's borne your griefs, it means you have to allow Him to do so. And if He's carried away your sorrows, you have to permit Him to be the one who makes the carrying away.

...yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (v. 4; see also 19:2 RE)

"Can...any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (see John 1:46; see also John 1:7 RE). Or—as some think—can any good thing come of this Nazarene?

*But he was wounded for **our** transgressions, he was bruised for **our** iniquities: the chastisement of **our** peace was upon him; and with **his** stripes **we** are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...* (vs. 5-6, emphasis added; see also 19:2 RE)

We don't like His way, you know? We like to meddle with it, adjust it, adapt it, toy with it, alter it. We like to turn to our own way.

...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the

slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he open[ed] not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: ...who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ...he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death... (vs. 6-9; see also 19:2 RE)

In a borrowed tomb from a rich man, He was buried; but with two thieves, He was hung on the cross, you see.

...because [he'd] done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. (v. 9; see also 19:2 RE)

When he said, "Tell me, are you the son of God?" and in response, "Thou sayest" (meaning, "What you've said"; meaning, "That's right"), there was no deceit in His mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. (v. 10; see also 19:2-3 RE)

It "pleased" the Lord to bruise Him. Well, fortunately, we have an Anglican bishop who came to our rescue advocating, as he is, ordination of homosexuals (among other things) and the "utter nonsense" of the sacrifice of Christ. He wants Christianity and the Anglican Church to become a homosexual social movement. How you turn Christ into that is sort of an oddity, but... I mean, if the dispensation began with an old man reproducing, I would rather think it's a heterosexual dispensation we're talking about. But this bishop argues (in an article he published within the last month) the phrase, "...it pleased the Lord to bruise him" is absolute nonsense. But no less a prophet and seer than Enoch took joy in the Savior's sacrifice. He describes it in Moses chapter 7, verses 45-47:

*And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life? And the Lord said: It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance. And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and **his soul rejoiced**, saying: The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me. (Moses 7:45-47, emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:19 RE)*

It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. It pleased Enoch that Christ was bruised. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and enter into His glory? It's a delightful moment. It is the moment at which the atonement gets worked out. It confers such blessings upon

mankind that it was a happy event, causing actual joy for those who behold it with understanding, even now.

Returning to Isaiah:

He shall see...the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore [I will] divide him a portion with the great, ...he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:11-12; see also Isaiah 19:3 RE)

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? Enter into His glory... See, there's a statement that we've got, Jacob in the Book of Mormon (Jacob chapter 4, verse 4): *For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us* (see also Jacob 3:1 RE).

"Enter into His glory." "A hope of His glory." What is His glory? *Behold, this is my work and my glory...* (Moses 1:39; see also Genesis 1:7 RE). What is that? What is His glory? **It's you.** It's you. See, as He's talking to them about the things that He ought to suffer in order for Him to be able to enter into His glory, He's talking to them about **them.** He's talking to you about **you.**

I had a Baptist mother who suffered from all of the handicaps of not only being Baptist but devoutly so. She was always worried when I was growing up that I was going to hell because I never became a Baptist—and then I became a Mormon and removed all doubt. After I finally took the missionaries seriously, one of the reasons my attention was drawn to the Church was because of section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants (see also T&C 69). It furnished a description of the afterlife unlike anything I'd ever heard before.

Well, in one of those passing religious colloquies that my mom and I engaged in after I was "a Mormon and consigned to hell" and she was "a Baptist and interested in reclaiming me," I asked her, "What do you think you'll do in Heaven?" That's a great mystery to the Baptists. Mark Twain tried to help them out in an extract from *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven* (which if you haven't read, you ought to read; it's really good doctrine). Joseph and Mark Twain had the same vision. Well, this was her answer, and it was a studied answer, derived from the teaching of devout Baptist ministers who had been her friends over the years: She "would spend all eternity blissfully gazing into the face of Jesus." I mean, not that the Lord isn't a good-looking man and all, but I can't imagine blissfully looking into the face of any person/object/animal/thing for all eternity. It's an oxymoron. I don't get the "bliss" from that. "Oh, he winked! Ah, did you see that? It will be another ten thousand years before something else happens. We'll be blissful in the interim."

Well, the notion that Christ has a mission/has a destiny for mankind, the idea that His glory necessarily encompasses us, the idea that the temple anciently divided things into three levels of holiness, and the idea that His plan is robust enough—that His glory is robust enough—to provide for both the immortality (on the one hand) and eternal life (on the other hand) of mankind suggests a Lord who is collegial, who is friendly, who is social, who is as interested in you as you may be curious about Him—a person who, in describing His own glory, necessarily includes within it others, is the kind of being worthy of worship and worthy of admiration.

Well, some interesting things unfold. I want to do a quick summary before I turn to those, though. From the little bit that we've looked at on this discussion that we've gotten to so far, we can safely conclude the following: The Lord is willing to answer our questions. He's never said, "Don't ask that." On the contrary, He said, "Ask." He said, "Seek." He said, "Knock." And He hasn't said, "Es prohibito that stuff." You can ask about anything—and probably ought to. He accepts us where we are, walking down a dusty road, confused and befuddled and thinking that **He** was a failure; He'll come join you. There's no elitist cabal. There's no limitation. He went to the women at the grave, and now He's associating with a couple of chaps tramping seven miles to Emmaus who needed Him. He accepts us where we are. We need to impose upon Him to have Him stay with us. Otherwise, He'll move on. Places to go, fish to fry—literally—in Galilee. "I have other fish to fry." (He has a sense of humor; someone asked me about that.)

The Lord is a teacher, first and foremost. He is a teacher; that's His great role—is to teach. When He says, "If you want to be serving in the Church, you need to learn how to preach, teach, exhort, expound, visit, associate..." this is a very social being that we're talking about—and first and foremost, He's a teacher.

"Should we render taxes to Caesar? Good question. Do you have a coin? Whose picture?" What a brilliant and insightful little episode, an off-the-hand remark. I imagine it given with just absolute wit: "Great question! You got a coin? Hey, whose image is that? Look, give the things to Caesar that belong to him."

He is not necessarily able to get His message through to us, however, because **we** are not **His equal** as students. He does His best to compensate for that, but the teaching agenda of any teacher is always limited to the capacity of the students. He would like us to understand and appreciate the wonderful mosaic of symbolic information that **He took the trouble** to build into the script of Scripture, the prose of the prophets, and the rites of His religion. (That's some Maxwellian alliteration for those of you who miss him. Oh, you know, I wrote this too: "Elder Neil Maxwell's sermons as an apostle were punctuated by his proclivity to produce prose with panache." [Audience laughter] Some of us delighted in his command of the language.)

He has appeared to women and to men in the flesh after His resurrection. He appeared to the women first, then to two disciples (who required some considerable teaching and, perhaps, even an ordinance in breaking bread before them before they were able to open their eyes and see Him). He was **unable** to visit with His apostolic witnesses until they had been prepared to see Him by the testimony of the women first and the

testimony of the two disciples second. Then they, the apostolic witnesses, saw Him third. If all things come in obedience to law, then perhaps the apostolic witnesses needed the Law of Moses itself satisfied with two witnesses (or three) to come bear testimony to them before they felt obliged under the Law of Moses to accept that testimony and to allow their faith to grow.

From this, we can also conclude that there is no controlling or managing the Lord through hierarchical limitations. You don't have to get someone's permission, nor does someone have to gain access simply by virtue of status, as was anticipated with the words, *no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (D&C 121:41; see also T&C 139:6). The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of Heaven.

One of the first witnesses of the resurrection was named Cleopas. Other than this single mention of him, we don't have any other reliable information about him. On the day of the resurrection, when the Lord took the trouble to walk seven miles as a companion with this fellow, we know nothing else but a name. Another of the witnesses of the Lord's resurrection does not even have a name given to him. "Great in the eyes of the Lord" does not necessarily mean you or the world will ever even notice them. Notice or recognition, let alone fame, is not required of someone who has seen the resurrected Lord; indeed, it's irrelevant. It's possible that these witnesses withheld information about the Lord's communication to them because they were asked to do so. Although there are scriptural limitations on what we may teach or disclose from personal revelation, there is no limit on what the Lord may choose to reveal to any given disciple.

All Scriptures are focused on the Lord's ministry and message. They are one, and we err when we fail to see a consistent overall testimony of the Lord's great plan of happiness for all of us within it. Christ's apparent defeat and death were but a prelude to His great triumph over death itself. For those who follow Him, defeat while alive is irrelevant and ultimate defeat in death itself is irrelevant—because if you follow Him here below, you'll be invited to follow Him to greater things above.

Well, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to have entered into His glory? The answer is, of course, everything that He did was according to a plan. Every step He took and everything that He taught was intended to bear witness of the ministry and the mission that He had. He satisfied all of the requirements—not only of the Law of Moses but of the law of the gospel as well, which He was in the process of introducing to them. I find it always amusing to consider what was going on on Mars Hill when Paul arrived there. And they were always interested in hearing some new thing—when, in fact, what Christ (on the road to Emmaus) wanted was not "some new thing" but a clearer understanding of the things that had already been given, a clearer understanding of the testimonies that mankind had entrusted to them already, a clearer understanding that His work and His glory was intended to encompass not only Himself as the Father of all those who will receive Him but also intended to encompass our own immortality and eternal life.

In the spring of each year, all nature reawakens from the sleep of winter to bear testimony of the resurrection. And similarly, I want to add my testimony to those others that the Lord has risen. He conformed perfectly to the Father's plan. His rhetorical question still remains, in my view, the best way to think of Him: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus

Q&A Session

Denver: Now, Doug warned me about questions and answers, but I'm a foolhardy fellow, and so for the last few minutes (before we have our dinner thing set up here), if anyone's got any questions, I'd be glad to respond to them.

I had decided, by the way, to put this stuff down in writing, and I've done that. And I'm working on a third book that I'm hoping to get out sometime later this year. Even though it's completely unrelated... Well, nothing's completely unrelated because it's all one, but the book that I'm working on now is Book of Mormon material, and this is New Testament and Leviticus stuff. I intend to put the talk as it was written into an appendix in the back of that. So, if you're interested in a hard copy of this, it'll be in the back of a book whose working title at the moment is *Eighteen Verses*. It takes eighteen separate verses of the Book of Mormon from widely separated spots and simply discusses what doctrine are contained within those verses. It's all written up here, and 80% of it is typed. I've got to get the rest of it down and hope to do that and get it to the editors and have it out later this year—and this will be in an appendix in the back of that if anyone's interested in it. Not that I'm interested in trying to sell anything to anyone anywhere. I don't do that; Doug does that.

Yeah? Yeah?

Question 1: There's a rumor about how long it took you to write *The Second Comforter*. Have you heard that?

Denver: No, I'll tell you the truth, ok. But...you shouldn't know this before you read the book, k? 'Cuz you need to read it in order to get why it's even significant. It took approximately 70 hours from April to July. It took a whole lot longer than that to suffer through the butchery of the publishing process, in which I don't know how many errors were introduced into the typing and the punctuation, and there's **still**... There's a statement in the book that says (as I wrote it), "I will doubt doubt itself." Somewhere along the line, the spell checker got rid of the second "doubt" because it's redundant.

But if you happen across that sentence, it will be corrected at some point, but it just hasn't been done yet—again, because of the violence of the publishing process.

I started in April; it was finished in July as a manuscript. It took approximately 70 hours. It took a whole lot more than that to get it into print because getting books into print... I'm absolutely convinced that there is no perfect book. In my copy of *Rough Stone Rolling* (Bushman, Richard Lyman. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. 2005), I found four printing errors—and I wasn't looking for them, so they've got to be glaring in order for me to notice them. But, man! Publishers are just horrific.

Was there a hand over here? Yeah?

Question 2: You read a Scripture in Isaiah 53:10: *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed.* Would you mind explaining that particular statement: "...he shall see his seed"?

Denver: Well, who are the seed of the Lord? The seed of the Lord are those who accept Christ as their Father, those who receive Him to be their parent and His offspring, those who become the "begotten sons and daughters of God." They are spirit children of God the Father to be sure, but they have to come **here** and become born again and become the seed of Christ, who is both the Father and the Son—the seed of Christ. And so those who benefit from all this and who are the seed of the Savior are those who are connected with Him by adoption, by affiliation, and otherwise.

There is a secondary meaning to that (and one that is a bit more controversial) which relates to the normal process of being a parent. You'll have to appeal to Dan Brown and *The DaVinci Code*; *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*; Orson Pratt and *The Seer*; well, and a few other sources in order to sort out the **literal** meaning of the seed. But boy, that sells a lot of books, that "seed of Christ" thing.

Yeah?

Question 3: Are you aware of the ... translation that was made by ministers of ...?

Denver: Yeah, the "Drama of the Lost Disciples." Yeah, there is a lot on that. There is a whole body of literature, some of it real interesting. Who knows, some may even be true. Yeah.

The fellow next to you had his hand up.

Question 3 (continued): ... so John has a ... bearing Christ's name ... talks a lot about patterns and all ... what do you think about it repeating ... ?

Denver: Interesting question. There was a hand here. [Audience laughter] Look, we're enacting **ancient** events. We're part of a process that began a long time ago and is going on still. You read (What is it? Genesis chapter 49?) the patriarchal blessings of

the various patriarchs, you look at the lives of those men in the flesh. We're just reenacting them on a grander scale (and with more of us, to be sure)—but the patterns are there. The records of the prophets are not just history—as the Book of Mormon demonstrates very ably—it's not history. It's highly edited, very limited, highly selected (at one point, they estimate less than one percent of their history even gets alluded to) material that has been selected on account of prophetic foreknowledge of our circumstance. And so it constitutes not merely a history but a prophetic pattern, in which they try to get us to see the process that we ought to be reenacting **in our lives** to do the things that they did that brought them to **know** the Lord. Nephi couldn't have been more plain if he had said, "Here's my guidebook. Here's my rule book. Here's my pattern recognition sequence. You know, go and do likewise." He's trying to get us to get our hands around (as Joseph Smith put it) "the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ." And the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ involves the path to and through the veil into the presence of God, becoming joint-heir, becoming a son of God. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 375, he refers to (I don't have a copy of it with me, but I think I can quote it) "sons of God who exalt themselves to be God even before they were born, and all can cry Abba, Father." Joseph wanted us to take the religion that he restored to the earth rather seriously and to search into and contemplate both the heavens and the darkest abyss.

In a (I don't want to use the word "evangelical"; I'll use "evangelistic"), in a proselytizing church, in a church in which at any given moment the largest segment of the adult population are *novices*—introductory novices to a faith—you should never expect the church to forfeit the interests of the *novices* (who rightly need to be fed and nurtured) for the interests of those who are maybe a little more mature and have a little more robust comprehension of what the Savior was trying to teach us all. And it's probably rightly so that the Church makes no effort to really address that—and rightly so that you're left to your own. We **have** the Scriptures. I mean, when the rich man said to Abraham (in Christ's parable), "Well, send Lazarus back so he can warn my brothers," Abraham's response in Christ's parable was: "They have Moses, and they have the prophets. And if they won't believe them, they won't believe Lazarus, even though one rise from the dead," which is a very interesting foreshadowing of how people would treat the Lord.

Here's the problem: People do not believe **Him**, even though **He** rose from the dead—period. Today—US—you and I do not believe Him, even though He rose from the dead. It was not intended to be a one-off event that occurred in the meridian of time. It was intended to be a gathering. I mean, the little seed grows up into the great mustard plant into which the birds (or as Joseph put it, the angels) were intended to come and lodge. It was intended to be a superstructure for housing contact between the divine and the mortal. It was intended to be the moment of intersection between all that is in eternity and the life of the mortal. It was intended to be the journey into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God.

In the ordinances as they have been restored in the temple today, everyone who enters in is expected to come to the veil possessing certain knowledge, capable of identifying themselves as having been true and faithful, and be received in an embrace, and then

welcomed into the presence of God. It's a normal and expected part of the ordinances as they have been restored. Those ordinances are supposed to be teaching us something. They are the Lord's way of shouting in a multimedia presentation, "Here is how I did what I did and what I would like you to do in the process of you becoming like me, a son of God, a daughter of God, a member of the household of faith, and part of the church and kingdom of the Firstborn." You have to become the Firstborn. You have to become one with Him. You have to become part of that, not in an organized group-think kind of way, in an individual way in which you connect up with Holiness in which you become a vessel of Holiness. You are someone to whom sacred things have been entrusted and you become, in turn, sacred as the bearer of them.

The Law of Moses prescribed the death penalty for a variety of offenses. One of the ways to avoid the execution of the penalty was to go to one of the safe harbor cities. Another way was to go and to come in contact with the altar—because if you came in contact with the altar, it was considered "most holy." Things that are "most holy" communicate holiness. You can't profane them. If you come in contact with them and you are unholy, you don't make **it** unholy—it makes **you** holy because it is "most sacred." Part of the rites in the temple are intended to communicate to you things that are most holy. They are intended to make you holy. They are intended to make you a suitable recipient for an audience. They are intended to make you a suitable companion for a walk down a dusty road with the risen Lord who's trying to get you to notice exactly who it is that speaks to you. It's intended to have you understand that He lives and that He's willing to associate with **you**. And that it's not (as Joseph Smith put it) relying on the words of an old book, the people who lived once long ago, that's going to save anyone. It's the dialogue that you engage in with Him **now**. It's the living, breathing, vital... He uses the figure of the living vine, and you have to connect to the living vine; and He's the vine, and you connect to it, and you get life through that. Words could not be more plain! He's trying to get...

I mean, what does it mean to be connected up with the vine and to derive sustenance from it? I mean, you have to be alive, which is not inert or an object that you move from there to there. If it's alive, it's going to grow. It's going to increase. It's going to improve. It's gonna have "connection with." I gonna have... And Christ was extraordinary in His selection of the things that He wanted to use to communicate to us what He intended the gospel to be. And we read them and say, "That's cool. I'll pay my tithing; I'm connected. I got a card; I'm connected."

Well, it's intended to be more than that, and the way that it becomes more than that is an individual journey in which you receive from Him and become a part of Him—and He does His best to try and use analogies and parables and stories to make it clear to us. And the history of the events that are recorded in Scripture are intended to try and make it clear to us. But at the end of the day, it's up to you to have the a-ha moment and realize He really is talking to and inviting **YOU**: You, individually, whoever you are, wherever you're at, whatever your confusion, whatever your doubts, whatever your uncertainties, He wants to talk to **you** about them.

Yeah, her and then you. Yeah?

Question 4: In the beginning, you said that there was a woman first who saw Christ had risen. Was there any special reason you did not give her name?

Denver: No, it was Mary. Any reason why I didn't use the name of the woman? The reason I use the **category** is because we are categorical. Our defect and our impairment is we have the brilliant, the ingenious capacity for looking out over people and filtering out all the females. It's a gift. I don't know how we manage that, but we do; we do manage that.

And the Scriptures plainly tell a different story. And it's that "different story" that's our problem, not the personal identity of the woman involved or her relation to the Lord or her obvious reaction to Him. And Joseph altering the text to say, "Don't hold me," as opposed to, "Don't touch me," which means that he removed "Don't touch me" from the text (she WAS touching Him) and tells you something else potentially about their relationship—because if she was embracing and attempting to hold Him and He was saying, "I've got another appointment to keep; I'll be back, but don't **hold** me," it suggests something else about what was going on there. I mean, why was **she** there at that point in the morning? Why was it still dark? And why did He elect **that** moment to come and rejoin **her**? I mean, there's more to that story, but heavens—we'll leave that to Dave [Dan] Brown and the rest of them to get into.

Question 5: You made an interesting comment earlier about the Church and how... And I can't quote you exactly, but it was something along the lines that it made no effort to get into more advanced understanding of some of these doctrines that may or may not be important. I am generally interested to know if you believe that the essential requirements exist within the Church today, all the members...?

Denver: Yeah, I think all of the tools are in the Church. I think that the Church has been organized for a wise purpose, and it does its purpose rather well. I have no quibbling or qualms at all about the question asked in the temple recommend interview about whether we sustain the brethren (and in particular, the President of the Church) as holding the keys—because the keys were restored, and they exist, and the Church is a repository, and it has a job to do, and its job is sort of business-like, and it does that job well. And if it were not for the Church doing its job well, it would never have come to **my** attention. And I wasn't looking for it. And when it did come to my attention, I wasn't particularly interested in it. It was insistent and persistent, and you read a little about that in *The Second Comforter*. I wasn't an eager volunteer to become a Mormon. I mean, the people I knew who were Mormon were weird. My Baptist mom told me they were, and I trusted her. It was only when I got a little older that I started seeing that maybe my Baptist mom didn't comprehend the entirety of it all.

I have a testimony of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I take no issue with the organization, the structure, the ordinances that they perform, their right to do them, the responsibility to do them, or the necessity of the Church being the instrument

through which the great latter-day work that's going on is gonna unfold. But I do think that it's gonna take a few twists and turns before the end of this story is written.

And you know, we are a very Americanized church, at the moment, that is growing primarily in Africa, Latin America, and some parts of the Orient. We tend to try and export cultural baggage that—if you read the Book of Mormon alone and read the commandments alone—do not necessarily require that baggage to go along with it. I suspect we're gonna have some trauma to go through before we finally segregate what's true and right and pure and necessary/essential and what are just old habits or traditions. That's the way the Book of Mormon puts it: "the traditions of your fathers."

But all of that is as a result of good and sufficient reasons. We had the Army of the United States, the majesty of Congress, and the Supreme Court arraigned against the Latter-day Saints. It's the product of history. The Church was outcast. It was the object of the targeted, intentional, systematic dismantling by the Government of the United States. And in order to win over the right to exist, the right to hold property, the right to keep our temples, the right to have a state in which we could enact laws to protect and preserve our own property, the right to sit on juries (because we had that right taken away from us), we had to become American, and we had to give up some things, and we had to acknowledge some things. And in the process of doing that, the Republicans (who were the primary persecutors of the saints) we have gone so far to appease, at this point, that we ARE Republicans. It's just the most bizarre transformation of all.

We are now part and parcel not just Americans, but we're **conservative** Americans. We are (oh, what's his name? Billy Graham)... We are Billy Graham Americans. We are Norman Rockwell Americans. We are Americans from the 1950s trying to take into Generation X and rap music a Norman Rockwell persona. We are trying to be "uber" Americans. And in some respects, we just ought to relax. You know?

The fact is that... I should probably not admit this, but I will. For Father's Day... (I don't know that I should admit this.) For Father's Day, my wife gave me (now she's laughing because she knows what I'm going to say)... She gave me a Kid Rock CD, who happens to be, by the way, an extraordinarily talented musician—obscene, to be sure. The label had a price tag that had been strategically placed to block the parental warning, so when I opened it and the price tag came off with the outside plastic, I said, "Parental warning? Did you know that?" "Oh, no." Well, it has the one song that he did as a duet with Sheryl Crow on it. It has some other stuff that's really good on it, but it also has some obscenity. Well, I like to bust out Kid Rock from time to time to shock the folks who come to my house that need shocking.

Look, there's no reason for us to be as uptight as we are. We are so anxious. Being anxiously engaged does not require anxiety. We tend to view ourselves as being... If we're straight and narrow, we must be rigid. And you know, sometimes the best way to conform to the surface is to be limber, is to be adaptable, is to be willing to accept some new ideas.

Brigham Young had this attitude about whatever truth there is out there, we want it. I don't know how many of you have read the Van Der Donckt/B.H. Roberts' debates. They were gathered up... I don't know the name of the book. I think it's called the "B.H. Roberts Van Der Donckt Debates" (Roberts, B.H. *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity: The Roberts-Van Der Donckt Discussion*. 1903). But Van Der Donckt was the chaplain of the United States Senate and evangelical minister who was given the tabernacle to come and preach **against** us, come revile against us, and he did! And then B.H. Roberts delivered a sermon to tell the other side of the story, and then Van Der Donckt was invited to rebut B.H. Roberts. And then B.H. Roberts gave a surrebuttal to that, and the whole exchange was welcomed. Everyone was welcome to give their ideas.

You know, on occasion, the guys who are standing outside of the Conference Center with all their vitriolic nonsense, on occasion they stumble on a defect of ours, and we ought to be able to accept the criticism and say, "You know what? On that score, we suck." And we ought to be willing to say, "We ought to do better, and we can do better, and we're embarrassed that..." As possessors of the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we're unwilling to shed some of that or to welcome in some other truths. I think that what we have restored to us anticipates that there will be other streams of thought which converge with our own, and as they converge with our own, those other streams of thought are gonna inform us about ideas we haven't quite got our hands around yet. I think as we grow into the Buddhist world, Buddhist converts to the Church are gonna bring to our attention understanding about the Book of Mormon that we don't penetrate just yet. I believe that Islam is going to bring to us some understandings and insights from the Book of Mormon that we won't get without them. I believe that the gospel program was intended to welcome these divergent streams of thoughts and to help us flesh it out and to help us see, "Ah, there's more to this than we (in our little, narrow, Western vantage point) have yet been able to discern."

OK, thank all of you. And we have a song that I'm informed we are going to have played now.

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See that, in the, that's the purpose behind the voice, it's easier to feel the spirit during singing than it is during someone speaking, because our voices were only intended for singing. They don't talk in the Spirit World, they don't need and the voices get used there for singing. You can hear each other without the voice. If it were up to me, I'd have nothing but singing go on today, 'cause I'm using the wrong instrument. See you have to feel the Spirit while I'm using my voice to talk instead of sing.

As Nephi paraphrased Isaiah in the concluding chapter of Nephi's use of Isaiah and his material, he left out a phrase that appears in Isaiah 29 and I believe he did it very wittingly. I believe he did it so that as you look at the material, you'll ask yourself "why did he leave that out?" And you'll think about the omission. *"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed."* He left out "the vision of all." Well, you're talking about Zion here, yesterday and today, and as is usual any time you get to a substantive topic that's worth paying a lot attention to, the Book of Mormon has something to say. In fact, while it doesn't comment at extraordinary length, the substance of what it has to say on this subject is really quite startling, and that is described for us in Fourth chapter of Nephi. But before the Fourth chapter of Nephi picks up, the last verse of chapter 30 of Third Nephi is a precaution to us, that are going to inherit this book, which Mormon made sure was inserted at this point in the narrative. What's remarkable as you look at that verse is how it then ties into the description that we're going to receive of the practice of Zion among those in the Book of Mormon, *"Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and [of] your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel"* (3 Nephi 30:2).

Keep in mind that list of defects as we look into the things that are right and proper in the Zion that we find in Fourth Nephi. In Fourth Nephi, [chapter 1] verse 2, it tells us that, all the people were *"converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites* [and that's all good and well, but it goes on to say] *and there were no contentions and disputations among them* [which you have to add, because if you've been to any gospel doctrine class or any High Priest group meeting, or any Elders Quorum or Relief Society, there's always that, you know, fellow or gal or group, who have an incapacity to depart from contention. So it's not just being converted, see they're narrowing it down, you get converted, but then you reach at some point a unanimity or an agreement upon what the Gospel really means. And, well take a look around. Oh ye Gentiles, turn from your wicked ways, and ask yourself, ok, confine it to your own ward, to your own quorum to your own Relief Society group, to your own

Stake, confine to whatever you want it to be confined to, are there no contentions or disputations among them?

It's a serious defect, it's a serious challenge and it's one that we aren't meeting very well, and it's one of the reasons why we tend to neglect the Book of Mormon, because the Book of Mormon is always stepping on our toes. The relentless message of the Book of Mormon is, hey repent, you suck, you're just, you're a mess, **you**, not them, I mean it's not a matter of I got religion, I'm safe, I've got a recommend, I'm on the "in club", I can get into those buildings that other people [can't] that doesn't matter, you still, you've got to repent. You're a defective item incapable of resonating at the right frequency and receiving the Spirit of the Lord and finding, not contention, but love in bringing people together and coming to become one. You can be absolutely in disagreement over a doctrine, and lovingly, and gently, and patiently persuade them to come unto Christ. Or, you can hold a Council, and kick 'em out.

So, after they manage not only to have the same faith and to eliminate from him contentions and disputations, then they go on and, *"every man did deal justly one with another."* See, there's a difference between mercy and justice. Justice is a tougher standard. We don't want justice. We want a merciful Redeemer, who will come in and who will make up for our defects. But this is saying, *"Every man [Me, inside me, this is the turf we're talking about], did deal justly [the higher standard] with one another."* You don't have to give me mercy, because I'm going to give YOU justice. I'm going to be tougher on myself. It is **fair** that I do this for you. Oh no, no, you don't have to do that. No, no, no, the standard by which they are evaluating their conduct internal to themselves is the more difficult standard. They're going to deal justly with one another. I will break my heart, I will break my wallet, I will break my life before I will not deal justly with you and give you everything that you're entitled to. See, it's putting the shoe on the other foot and it's not the more relaxed and kindly and gentle standard, because when they're dealing with one another they want to deal justly, a real problem for all those car dealers among us.

So after we fixed the religious diversity and we fixed the contentions and the disputation and we've grown enough now that we're willing to treat ourselves as the one upon whom justice has reign, then they get to the point that they had all things common among them. Anytime in the Book of Mormon, they're ticking off a list and they do it everywhere in the Book of Mormon, this and this and this, and this, generally what the writer is doing, because they've had a lot of time to reflect upon it and they're etching on metal plates, which is a difficult thing to do, they are being extraordinarily careful with the material that they're committing to you. So when you encounter a list, you ought to look at it and say to yourself, is this a progression? Is what they're doing is telling you here is how you get from one point to another and we've encountered that already in fourth Nephi, you encounter it throughout. The Book of Mormon is a manual on how to return to God and we read it like, well, like we do in gospel doctrine, when we're cover eight chapters in 50 minutes.

So now that we've gotten to the point that we're able to do these things, then and only then did they have all things common among them. Therefore, and this is as a logical result of what happened before, as an inevitability, there were no rich and there were no poor, and there were no bond, and there were no free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift. This is not a description of a social-economic order alone. The foundation of Zion shows up here yet again, is the heavenly gift. It's the presence and the abundance of the things of the Spirit. It's not that we have now solved the social-welfare state, because the social-welfare state is, really it's the arm of flesh effort to try and imitate something that we all, in our gut, think is probably a fair thing to do, to have everyone be on an equal plane and have everyone deal with one another so that there are no rich and poor, or bond or free, but it doesn't work and it doesn't work, because to get where you need to get in order for the things to work, it has to be the heavenly gift. It has to be people in harmony with each other, because they are in harmony with the Lord. By getting in harmony with the Lord you find that, well, **you** are a lot more tolerable to others and others are suddenly more tolerable to you. Even defective others are more tolerable to you, if you're in harmony with the Lord. Because if you can see them as the Lord sees them, they are beautiful, they are wonderful! Everyone you have ever met is a child of your Heavenly Father and if you can get the heavenly gift then you stop seeing things through the lens of this world and you start seeing things as they really are.

So, now we're in the 37th year. If you skip over you're going to find that this stuff is going to break down in verse 24 at the 201st year, so really we've got this 169; 168 year interval in which we have the appearance of Zion and we're going to cover all of the events of that entire period beginning in verse 4 and ending in verse 24. And while you might think that's an abbreviation, it's actually everything we need to know and it's startling in what it tells us. There's an abundance of information that is downloaded in a rapid-fire fashion. So, look at verse five at what happens once you have the presence of the heavenly gift. In verse five you find that they healed the sick, they raise the dead, they cause the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, the deaf to hear; *and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus*, as the song just mentioned, it is about Him and it is about His work and is about bringing about His will. And why was it then, His will that the sick among them be healed and the dead rise again? Why is it that during this period of time it was in conformity with His will that the lame walk and the blind receive their sight and the deaf hear and all manner of miracles occur? Why during this time period, when they've got the heavenly gift, and when you would say, you know, that's sort of unfair, I mean, they got all things in common, they've solved the problems of the social-welfare state, they've got this great societal thing going on, you know, don't they need cripples? Don't they need the blind? Don't they need people to whom they ought to be ministering to? Shouldn't there be a group of them, who, unlike the verse mentioned earlier, are in bondage to the ailments of the body? And the answer is, well, apparently not. Apparently, we need it. Apparently it serves an extraordinarily useful purpose for us, but in their setting they've got bigger things to do, they've got more important things to do and it will tell us what that is, tell us about it repeatedly.

We'll come back to some of this, 'cause I don't know if we have time for all of it. but verse ten, it says, "*The people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast.*" In verse 11 it says, "*they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord [had] made unto them.*" And in... somewhere over here on that page 467, I don't see it at the moment, but I'm telling you it's there. There it says they multiplied exceedingly and they filled the whole land. So, at first blush you say, "whoa there's a lot of sex going on during that Zion thing," and I'm reasonably confident that no matter what I say someone is going to walk away from here and say, "hey, what did brother Snuffer talk about?...Zion and the Book of Mormon" And someone is going to say "he talked about all the of sex that goes on during the time of Zion." But that's not the point; the point is, what is the bigger fish to fry? What is more important? What is it about Zion that results in this baby boom? Anyone got any idea? [audience member] "Plural marriage?" Well, there's plural marriage, that's part of it. but, but... yeah? [audience member] "There's no fear anymore, people are devoted entirely to the Lord, they can have another child" Yeah, [audience member] "There's no sickness and death" There's no sickness and death, you're going to get rid of the infant mortality problem, yeah. [audience member] "It provides a purpose of the Lord to bring spirits to the earth?" Yeah, family life. **Family life.** K' Would you like to see Zion being practiced right this minute? I don't care where you go in the world; you can find it inside the family. That's the little microcosm of Heaven, that's the little...do you expect, well I don't know, there might be some Dickensian folk here...do you expect child labor, you know how stuff...there we are... my Dickensian wife...do you expect child labor for your kid to earn the right to be clothed and housed, and fed? [audience member] "They should have jobs." They should have jobs, but if your child needs food and your child needs clothing and your child needs shelter....when Christ used in His analogies the idea of the Father, which of you if his child asks of him for bread, gives him a rock? Speaking to some fairly hard-headed people, many of whom would conspire together to cause His death and He is saying to them, I know how you can relate to the principles of the Gospel, think about your own children. And these people in this setting have as their priority, the family, the nurture and the raising of children. And the family is the place where, if we don't find it anywhere else, we will find the presence of Zion, even in the hovels of third-world countries.

See, as a consequence, and we're going back to verse 7, as a consequence of the way in which they were living, "*...the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land [yea] insomuch that they did build cities again, where there had been cities burned.*" These people are busy, they're engaged in activities...they're not just sitting about, they're accomplishing something, but they're not accomplishing something in the way in which we accomplish something. If you wanted to rebuild a city among us, the way in which we set about to rebuild cities is extraordinarily inefficient. We divide up the capital that's used to finance the construction and we create a whole industry and people out there that never produce anything, except let people use their money, and that's all they do and they become really quite wealthy as a consequence of that. There are some people that do some small component and all they do is that small component and they sell it at a high price and whether it's easy or whether it's difficult, the purpose behind that is their own self-interest and we have managed to figure out how to get along in a society with

every single person working for their own self-interest, and we've never come together to say, how might we benefit one another by the contribution of whatever our unique gifts are, by the way when the Lord talks about gifts in [D&C] section 46, He talks about gifts as the property belonging to, not the person who has the gift, but the church itself. It's not a commodity that someone owns; it is the presence of God in the life of a person that is intended to elevate and to benefit and to bless everyone and they are proceeding on the basis that, the presumption is, everything is to be done for the benefit and the glory of Zion. Well, they talk about the destruction there.

In verse 10, *"...Behold it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, [and] did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people."* Exceedingly fair and delightsome people, one of the themes that the early saints in the valley talked about was the children that were given to those who were practicing plural marriage, were exceedingly fair and delightsome, their children were blessed and they were benefited. And from what we now know about genetics, the more diverse you get into a gene pool the more healthy is the product that is the progeny of those that are there. What is happening here, is that the children are being blessed and the children are turning out to be these wonderful, delightful children, but this process is happening not in some violation of the laws of biology, they're happening in conformity with the way it would always happen if we were living in a certain fashion.

Verse 11 says, *"And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them."* The multitude of the promises, "the married and given in marriages," - think about that for a moment. We have just had the fulsome restoration of the benefits of the Gospel by the coming of the Christ in which He has restored some things that are too sacred to be committed into the written account of the events and now it says in passing, "they're given in marriage and He blessed them according to these promises." Well what's He telling us? It's the covenant of Abraham... it's the temple marriage. He's saying that these people enter into the covenant of marriage and as a consequence of the covenant of marriage they realize the benefits of the promises made and what are the promises made that you associate with the covenant of Abraham? Well, it's not just benefits that pertain to this life; it's benefits that pertain to all eternity. It's the promise of exaltation. It's the promise that you become part of the Church of the Firstborn, you become part of the General Assembly, you become part of the citizens, not just of a society here on this earth, but a society that includes a heavenly body and you have the right to commune with all of those that are participants in this larger organization. You need to go through and read the descriptors of those in D&C 76, beginning at verse 66 and I apologize, I do have a set of the D&C from the RLDS church, but it's at home and I didn't bring it with me, so I can't give you the cross reference, but D&C 76 beginning at verse 66, *"these are those who are come unto Mount Zion [see Zion in this context is a mount, because it's up, a symbolic elevation of the way folks live], and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all" [Oh my]. "These are they who have come to an innumerable company of the angels, to the general assembly and the church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are judge of all. These are just men made perfect."* Now while this is a

description in section 76 of the afterlife and ultimate arrival, the description as is often the case, is not merely a description of the afterlife alone, because, well as we are signing off, verse 117 of this same revelation, after talking about those who love Him and purify themselves before Him, it's added: *"to whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory."*

So, keep that in mind as you read verse 11, *"blessed according to the multitude of the promises, which the Lord made unto them."* These now are citizens with dual citizenship. They may be born in Mexico, but they have a work permit in the United States. They are still confronted with the obligation of enduring to the end, but they have a residency prepared for them elsewhere and these folks, tying the marriage covenant and the blessings, according to the multitude of the promises, which the Lord had made unto them, should not be constricted. Oh, and they didn't walk anymore after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses--very useful—animals were pleased to hear that. I imagine during the Millennium when the lamb and the lion lie down together, we're not going to be eating both of them. *"...but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and praying, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord."* You know, fasting and prayer and in meeting together oft, meeting together oft, meeting together on the Sabbath? It doesn't say that. Meeting together in order to correlate the activities of the Stake, as we do at 0630 in morning every Sunday. Meeting together to hold some presidency meeting or other--none of that. Meeting together oft and what were they doing when they got together? They're fasting, they're praying, they're meeting together, they're bearing testimony, and they're listening to the word of God. Listening to the word of God. Oh, oh I know what that is, that's the scriptures, they're reading the scriptures. It doesn't say and reading together the scriptures. They got together to hear the word of God.

Used to be [or if you're from Alabama, used to "was"] when we baptize folks, we expect the abundance of the gifts of the Spirit to be manifest and quite often in the journals of those in the earliest part of the Restoration, folks would prophecy as they came up from the waters of baptism. You read the account, well we can, turn to it in Joseph Smith History, verse 74, this after the baptized, well back up to verse 73: *"Immediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things, which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things."* And then look at verse 74, *"Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of."* I don't imagine they were getting together to rehash and reiterate a limited and redundant correlated curriculum, that tends to make high priests of us all, that is to put us to sleep. I imagine there was something exciting about it!

When I first joined the church, I was astonished at all of the flood of new information that came and I was astonished in reading those old, New Testament passages that had been pounded into my head by a devoted Baptist mother, who never succeeded in making a Baptist of me, despite her best efforts. I've said this a number of times and apologize if you've heard it before, my Mom was always afraid I was going to hell, because I didn't join the Baptist Church and then I became a Mormon and removed all doubt. I was astonished at how much new information there was and the Gospel was exciting, it was delightful. They word that gets used by Lehi is delicious and it was, and it took about 5 years and then, it was Hamlet's soliloquy about flat, stale and unprofitable and redundant, and what happened? We've reached the end of the road - Can you tell me more? Can you tell me more? I was in search of a mentor. I was in search of new information and I knew more than anyone in any group that I sat in. I read everything I could get my hands on--there was nothing new. What just happened? We crossed a threshold. Now we're going to idle, endure to the end? That does not mean to be bored until the end! And I searched, I searched for 7 years before I ran into a guy, I don't know his first name, I know that he worked in the church office building and I know that he was one of the good guys and he taught as part of "Know Your Religion" series in Sandy. At the time I was living in Utah County and had to drive up there, but I drove up there and I found someone that could teach me and I was astonished, because there was the guy. And he taught, and he seemed to really dislike the audience, but he taught. And he told a story about when he first became a member of the high council and they were holding a church court and he showed up at the church court and when he arrived, he was the only person in the room that was ready for what was about to take place, that was in the Spirit and in tune and ready to confront the difficult issues that were going to be laid in front of them. And how the rest of the room took forever to get up-to-speed, and get the Spirit to the point that they could judge the matter. And he wasn't talking about the high council; he was talking about the infernal room. Well, he endured and I had him as a mentor for a few years and was so grateful for that, but he announced he was quitting, and there was a big groan from the audience, because he made life easier for a lot of them, they could bring their notepad and they never had to do any work and he just handed it over, but he was through with that. He had been through with that for a long time. You know, as I think back about that moment, some things about that are really quite poignant, that probably ought not be shared, but I went up and I talked to him--this was the first time I had spoken with him, in the entire time I had been there learning for a number of years learning from the fellow— and I shook his hand and said, "you know I've never spoken to you, I've always sat on the back row, but I really appreciate what you've done." He looked me in the eye and held my hand longer than, you know it was almost French, it was uncomfortable, and he said to me, "the only reason I have been here for the last year is the back row." You know, sometimes you can look out at an audience and you can see who's getting it.

Well, these guys did not find what was going on unhappy, unpleasant, unexciting--this was an eager thing, so eager in fact that they met together oft and they pursued things. Joseph Smith said, "I would encourage you to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God." He does not say, I would encourage you to keep your feet on

concrete at all times, so as not to sink deeper into anything. We tend to have a real aggressive view about doing exactly the opposite of what the Book of Mormon invites us to do, which is to search into the mysteries of God. In any event, so they're meeting together, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord, and I would not read, "hear the word of the Lord," as a limiting expression of a monotonous repetition of a limited curriculum, but something that is just delicious.

"...There was no contention among all the people, in the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus." So we lose some of them, except the three [Disciples] and verse 15, *"And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people."* See this is now the third time that they've mentioned, "no contention." They mention it back in verse 2, no disputations, and no contentions among them. They mention again in verse 13 and they mention it again in verse 15 and they talk about *"the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people."* Etching is hard work. There's absolutely no reason for redundancy, therefore, you have to conclude that while they thought they had gotten rid of contention, they found another level of harmony among them. And then when they thought they had achieved a perfection of that harmony, they found yet another level of harmony among themselves – Oh, three degrees. Well, that's interesting. *"Because of the love of God, which did dwell in the hearts of people."* The love of God: Faith, Hope, Charity - these three, well such irony. Here we have Charity now, where we have finally arrived at the point where there is such a fulsome elimination of the problem that you have to use the word, but you don't have to mean the same thing with it.

So, look at what we got rid of in verse 16, *"there were no envyings."* Well, go back to that (last chapter of 3 Nephi), turn all ye gentiles and repent of your crap you're doing and it says, in that long list of stuff, it associates, *"and your priestcrafts and envyings."* Ew, now I'm uncomfortable, because if envyings get associated with priest-crafts, well I don't like that at all, and yet what a wonderful system we have. We have upward mobility in the church. We have your elders and you have your elder's quorum presidents and you have your wards and you have your bishops, and you have your stake presidents who rule and reign over your bishops and you have your area presidents, who rule and reign over your stake presidents and you have your general authorities and you have your first presiding authorities in the quorum of the twelve and the first presidency and then you have your first presidency and then you have your president. And all along scattered in there, there's lot's and lot's of opportunity for envyings, because we're suffering from the defect that the Savior noted among His own disciples about wanting those chief seats. A Savior, who knelt and washed the feet, the most menial act that you can engage in, in that society, is dealing with the problem of disciples, an inner circle, who want recognition, they want those seats, and He says, look, look, don't do that, don't even think about that. Go sit in the back of the room, get called up. And I think about Nephi in the crowd at the temple Bountiful and how the Lord had to call him up. Nephi wasn't up there saying, "the great and wonderful, His holiness has appeared, I'm here to introduce him." Because really all that is, is a diversion of attention to the one—(like Chaucer in Knight's tale). Nephi did not make of himself Chaucer; he sat in the back, blended in with the crowd, and required the Lord to call him

up. Christ addressed this problem directly. I know people, well, I mean I know people, you know people, we all know them, whose life's ambition is to have some office in the church. And my life's ambition, I had an opportunity to substitute in my little daughter, Carson's, 7- year-old primary class. My ambition is to be a 7-year-old primary teacher if I can ever get that calling, that, that is wonderful. I can't imagine dealing with the affliction. Neil Maxwell talked about it, he said yeah, it's out there, but you just don't inhale. But the way my wife has characterized, and I think it's the perfect characterization, is the curse of celebrity- dome. We turn them into celebrities; we want to turn them into Britney Spears, because that's the ultimate end of celebrity-dome. It is hollow, it is stale, it is flat and it is unprofitable--there is nothing to it. Why do you think Britney Spears is the mess she is? Because fame and fortune is nothing. And I suspect those who enjoy the envy of position, who ultimately wind up in a position in which "they are now there," they managed to weasel or brown-nose their way to where they thought it would be great, arrive at that point and look around and say, "well this is just like where I was, nothing has changed;" because the change has to be a change internal to the person and not a mere geography or topography—going from the third floor to the tenth floor, it doesn't change you. You're still that same hollow, miserable, envious chap.

So there's no envyings and there's no strifes, and as a result of that there are no political conventions. I mean that's all a tumult is; it's just a lot of noise in a concentrated collection of folk, in which, we have a revival, we have a Republican Party breakout just all of a sudden, no tumults. And, despite all of the rapid increase in the population and the familial life that's going on there, there is no whoredoms. Well, tumults, politics, and whoredoms, they go hand-in-hand. The only guy in the entire assortment of folk that were running as candidates that had not had more than one wife was the Mormon, and he's not running anymore. Nor whoredoms. What was that headline about John McCain in the New York Times? Well, if we're going to have whoredoms, of course we have its corollary, lyings, because those go together, and there are no murders or any manner of lasciviousness. Now take that list and ask yourself, upon which any of these things is our culture, is our society, is our economy based? You can't, Viva – yeah, it's no longer Las Vegas, it's Viagra [laughter]. Ok, take that list of stuff and say, we're going to eliminate this from the storylines of prime time television. What's left? The only thing that's left is, "Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader," because everything else, this is the stuff we eat, this is our daily fare, this is who we are, this is the definition of us. You know what, we're going to make you envy with each year's new car model. Why do we buy new cars? Why would anyone ever buy a new Dodge truck after they've gotten a Dodge truck that has a lifetime warranty? And do you know why Dodge can give you a truck with a lifetime warranty? Because it's only for the life of the original owner and guess what, you're not going to own that vehicle past 50,000 miles, because you're going to envy the new model that they've got on the drawing board. Envy is the stuff that Wall Street uses. Lusts, and whoredoms—I mean we don't sell chewing gum, without sex. Everything about our society; take that verse and photocopy it, so you're not messing your scriptures up, take that verse and sit down and watch an evening of primetime television and start crossing it off, you probably won't be 15 minutes in before you've recognized in the story that they're telling you and the commercials that interject themselves, you're going to check off everything on that list. THIS IS US, Oh Ye

Gentiles! So we're here and we're talking about Zion and we're wondering why it's not here in full bloom at this point. This garbage is in our DNA. We have a hard time even thinking in terms that would allow us to relate to these people. The plot lines of all of our great western stories involve this stuff - *"nor murders, or any manner of lasciviousness."* The story of the latter end of the Jaredites is full of murders, lyings, and all manner of lasciviousness. The ultimate end of the Nephites is going to be a repetition of that. And we don't learn from the patterns that were shown that says, here's the road to hell and here's the road to Zion, and we march down the road to hell and we talk about Zion.

So then it says, *"and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God."* To us, in our cultural setting that seems really incongruent, because everything that drives us, everything that our economy is based upon, everything that our entertainment portrays in front of our minds is based upon these kinds of conflicts and tumults, and envyings, and whoredoms, and desperate housewives. It's all tied into this stuff. CSI, how many murder-based shows are there on TV? The only thing that's interesting anymore are the murder shows, because the forensics of Crime Scene Investigation ultimately get you to the real guy and you notice in the background, there's always pole dancer or two, because they just presume we're all in to that stuff. You know and among lyings and this stuff, the Marriott hotel in which we're currently talking, owned by the Marriott Corporation, the CEO of which is a Latter Day Saint and whose father built the Marriott Center at Brigham Young University, has enough pressure on them from those who use their hotels, that they offer X-rated movies in the privacy of your room as part of the services provided. I haven't checked, but I assume it's true in Provo, because if it's true in one place, it most certainly would be true everywhere. Because they will actually lose patrons, they will lose customers if they don't offer that garbage in the hotel room. And so, market-driven forces require them to offer this kind of stuff, and we sit back, scratch our head, and say, "oh those decadent Romans with that Coliseum," – What? Whoa, what's the difference between Jaws [the movie] and the boat battles in the Coliseum that the Romans were notorious for flooding, and killing, and mayhem, and carnage? Now, ours is a mechanical shark, and Roy Scheider is just so ineffective anyway, but the blood in the water is the real color and your mind cannot tell the difference between what you take into it in a fictional way, and what you take into it in a reality way. That's one of the reasons why I don't read fiction, because I hate messing up and remembering something that was out of a novel instead of out of some bit of history that I'd read and boy, history is much stranger than fiction. Should read history, it's perverse, man. It will twist you.

But these people who have been separated from our common fare, there could not be a happier people than among all the children of God, because you know what? There comes a point when you have separated yourself from the crap, that your capacity to incorporate more and more truth and light, allows you to say, "well, this is more interesting than that was anyway." There's something more engaging about truth and light and there's something more fascinating about the things of eternity than there is about any of this stuff. We are all weak, we are all vulnerable, we are all carbon-based mud-piles at the moment and this carbon-based pile of mud around which my spirit has

been wrapped into, it gets tired, it has appetites, it has weaknesses, but the reason why they threw fasting in there was to subordinate that body and to teach it that the spirit is something that ought to be in control. There comes a point at which if you've allowed the spirit to have its way, you find that the things that are fascinating to this pile of mud that you walk around in, are far less interesting than the things of the Spirit. And whatever principle of intelligence you attain to in this life is going to rise with you and if it does, then you're going to have so much the advantage in the world to come. And why is that? Because in the world to come, the crap that's here has no utility, it has no value. It's here to test you, it's here to try you, and it's here to give you an opportunity to overcome it, but it's not here for you to revel in, it's for you to dig yourself out from.

So, there's no robbers. Ok, there goes the banking industry, the law industry, yeah; there goes the government. Nor murders neither were there Lamanites, or any manner of -ites. But they were all in one, the Children of Christ and heirs of the Kingdom of God.

We're running short on time, so I'm going to skip forward and talk about what happens to Zion. In verse 24, *"...two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, [see it starts with this pride] and wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain."* So, institutionally, as soon as you get the mischief going, as soon as you begin the process of corrosion, the very first thing we want to build, the very first thing we've got to fetch for ourselves is churches. That ought to sit sort of as a curiosity to you. Now why is that? Why is it that as soon as this process of degeneration begins to unfold, the first thing they want to get is churches? [Audience answers: "I think it's because you feel insecurity right away and you want security back again"]. Yeah, because you know you're wrong. Well, let's take one step back from that statement. Everyone who has a body, everyone who is here in mortality, knows Christ, chose Christ, accepted the plan of the Father, and came down and inherited this estate as a consequence of having kept the first estate. Whether they are in tune enough with their spirit, whether they are in tune enough with the voice of God in this life, or not, they know at some very fundamental level that what they're doing is wrong, when they are doing wrong--everyone does! That's why a convert to the church feels like they're coming home, they feel like there's something familiar. They feel like in the teachings of the Gospel of Christ that have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith there is a resonance there with something inside them that was empty that this now fills. And when you take a step back from that, when you reject that, when you say I'm departing, even though at this point they may be departing so little, that to us these people at this point in this decay of Zion, would be our superiors--they know that they've lost something. And because they know they've lost something they have to repair that damage. So what do you need? To repair the damage you need someone to tell you, "don't worry at the last day God will beat you with a few stripes but it will be ok, all is well in Zion, Zion is prospering. Check out the wardrobes in our congregation, things are ok, we're building a lot of new chapels, there's a lot of brickwork going on, things look economically viable. If we were ranked among the Fortune 500 companies, we'd be

right up there, all is certainly, certainly well in Zion. And with a 1.53 percentage rate growth increase in the United States last year, the LDS church qualifies as being one of the top growing churches in America, because so many of the others are in state of decline--whoosh, all is well in Zion."

So they build up churches when they've divided into classes, because the first institution you want when you know that you're racked with guilt is religion. It's always about false religion. The entire story of the Book of Mormon, all of the anti-heroes, have religion. Even the Rameumptom folks are steeped in religion, devoted to religion. The problem is not the absence of religion; it's the presence of false religion and the presence of things within the religion that is false. *"...unto themselves to get gain and began to deny the true church of Christ."* See, churches [plural], true church of Christ [singular]. Why plural, why singular? Well, because churches [plural], there's different personality types, there's different kinds of ego trips, there's different kinds of folks wanting to salve a peculiar form of sin that they're participating in, and so they need different kinds of churches to tell them, "that's ok, that's ok." But if you look at what began the process of degeneration in verse 24, it all begins with one particular problem—pride. "I'm proud of my church, I'm proud of my neighborhood, I'm proud of what we've accomplished, through hard work, through a capitalist, and protestant, and Elizabethan and puritanical tradition that has managed to come into an even flow to the consciousness of us as Latter Day Saints and by damn I'm proud of it." And so, look here now were I a resident in Zion at this point, verse 24 shows you where I'd show up, I'd be right there saying, "let's break this mold, let's...this harmony, it's incessant, I mean, look at us, we're wearing uniforms, we all look alike, you all sound alike, let's do something new, let's do something different. I found this plant and if you smoke it, that's really...and the music here sucks, have you noticed that, it's all hymns, I mean why can't we have some rock and roll, and we have rock and roll and we have rock and roll stars and we have rock and roll stars and get limos and more pearls and costly apparel, and it'll be fine, it'll work out, this is going to be nice" – pride! I mean pride manifests itself in so many divergent ways, that just the word alone tells you something about the insidious nature of the decay. See, if the Book of Mormon is only part history and is also prophecy, that is, they selected from their history those portions, which most relevantly bear upon us and our condition, and if you would like to know what is going to happen in the Millennium at the end of that season when Satan has been bound, and the beginning of that little season when Satan is loosed and how we managed to wind up then with the loss of Zion at the end of the Millennium, before that great tumult that is described in the book of Revelation, after the Millennium, the word pride, ought to resonate with you. Pride suggests that you know better than God. Pride suggests that at that moment when everyone has been resurrected and everything has been wrapped up and everything is now at "post-second resurrection" state, that you can look about and say, "I know better than God," that is, "His judgments are unjust," that is "Satan was right all along, because look, I'm Telestial, look I've been quickened by a portion of the Terrestrial world, well look, I've been quickened by a portion of the Celestial world, but my friend was quickened only by a portion of the Telestial world...and it's not fair, it's not right." And what is that, at the end, that's pride, which is what we're really here preparing to confront is that argument at the end of the Millennium. And so, when you arrive at that

blessed day and you're confronted in that moment and you want to know how we're going to get from where we are at that moment to the end of the war that is about to unfold, yet again, before they are cast out into their place and the saints inherit the earth--check or calibrate your pride, and realize that the God and Father of us all has been right all along, His plan has been perfect all along, He is merciful, and He is just and it is not our place to judge Him, but it is our place to be judged by Him.

Well, if you go through [we're out of time], if you go through and look at the rest of the description of the decay into where they wind up with, you are reading once again a re-introduction into that society of our cultural mores--they are becoming progressively more like us. So, we still weep for Zion, it has fled. There are two models that you can consider from the scriptures as possibilities for Zion in the last days. The one model is the Book of Mormon model in which Zion gets introduced after destruction and after the return of the Lord and after folks have a season to incorporate the information and the teachings, the ordinances that Christ restores at His coming. Under that model, we will not see Zion until sometime post-Second Coming. There's a second model that we find in the scriptures, however, and that model is the one that Christ suggests, He says "as it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be at the time of the coming of the Son of Man." And what was it that was going on contemporaneous with Noah? – it was the city of Enoch, in which a people, separated themselves, and they found Zion. Melchizedek was able to do the same thing. The people of the Nephites were able to do the same thing. Whether the model that will actually apply is the model that Christ suggested about the City of Enoch and a righteous people ready to meet the Lord, or the model that the Book of Mormon suggests --a post- holocaust, a post-second coming establishment of Zion, is YOUR choice, and that ought to be the most sobering comment of all. Let me end by bearing testimony to you that what I've been trying to do today is the same thing I've been trying to do in every book I've written and that is – to remove the condemnation under which we labor, because we don't take the Book of Mormon seriously enough. Joseph Smith did not write that book. It is a gift of God. It is the Vision of All. It is the message for the last days. You can get closer to God and closer to understanding Him and His ways, by abiding by what is in the Book of Mormon than you can in any other book. It is NOT a watered down version, it's not the Gospel-lite and "ooh, we can't wait for the rest of this stuff when they break the seal and bust it out." If you're attentive to what you have now, you're going to find out that all that's going to happen when the seal is broken and you read the rest of it is, "yeah, you were right, you did pick it up, because it's all in there."

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2008.08.16 Personal Revelation

August 16, 2008
Sandy, Utah

...And since no one's paying me...

You know, the other problem is this: in the Doctrine and Covenants there's a mandatory statement. It's much ignored, but it's a mandatory statement. It says...

[inaudible comment]

So, I have to talk loud? Do Bob Dylan? Bob's always swallowing the mic. Can you turn it up?

[comments about the mic]

Talk normal. Can you hear me? Is it...? Can you hear me back there? Alright.

The other problem with treating you as if you were a jury is the mandatory statement in the Doctrine and Covenants—much ignored by us but nevertheless the case—which says *if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach* (D&C 42:14). I view that as mandatory. *If ye receive not the Spirit **ye shall not***... is one of the prohibitions on what we ought to be doing. I'm always amazed at those who are **eager** to do this kind of thing. I am a **reluctant** draftee. I don't want to do this. I don't think I will ever do this again. Doug **nags** me to these things. And so, I'm telling you that if he tells you I'm coming again, don't believe him, because I view this as a terrible responsibility. Anytime you're going to take up the subject of truth and you're going to speak, I think you have an obligation to do so by the spirit, and if you don't, then the requirement is: shut up; just don't do it.

We have this erroneous reading of the description given in section 138 about those that were called to be rulers. There's a parallel drawn between the statement in section 138 and ~~the section~~ the description given by Abraham in the pre-existence about how Abraham, you were chosen, you were one of them, you were one of the rulers that were chosen before the world began to be a ruler. And we equate *ruler*...

Well, in the Book of Mormon, the equation between *ruler* is **teacher**. It has nothing to do with position or rank or authority. It has everything to do with whether or not you teach. And so, in the Book of Mormon what Nephi says is that my brothers are always angry at me because I'm going to be a teacher and a ruler over them. Teacher and ruler are an equivalent.

Abraham presided over a family, but Abraham learned great truths, and he taught great truths, and he is distinguished as a consequence of the things which he learned and he taught. You can occupy a position of authority and never say one thing worth anyone

remembering, and therefore, you are not (by definition, using the Book of Mormon) a *ruler*.

On the other hand, you can be one of the least of the Lord's. I have heard... In fact, the most memorable statements I have heard in church meetings came from a stake president bearing testimony while talking about the David and Goliath incident in the Old Testament, came from an elderly woman, widowed and in ill health, bearing testimony in a Fast and Testimony Meeting. When I think about those talks that have affected me, that have enlightened me, that have enlivened me, it is the rule that they come from **odd** places. And it is the exception when I hear something like Hugh B. Brown's "Profile of a Prophet" that still resonates with me. There are talks, the greatness of which will endure forever. Paul (on Mars Hill) talking is still resonating in the world.

(Ya know, I don't know how you're gonna get that up here. But if you got it here, I'd use it.)

[inaudible comment]

(It has a wide base? Just turn it into a mosh pit and bring it/hand over to the front.)

In any event, so we've got this a...

(Well, I'll be quiet while we move the chalkboard. I surrender to the chaos of... There it is. Just out of curiosity, do we have a marker and an eraser? 'Cuz it's a lot of trouble to go to. Oh, we do. We do. OK, I'm gonna be wary of the microphone and try and stay close to it, but I can still reach part of this.)

So, the obligation becomes—if you read section 42, and you read what the Scriptures generally have to say about the subject—the obligation becomes: if you're going to say something, to say it by the spirit. And so, I'm hoping that the trip to and from the airport, the soccer game that I've had to go to, and the fact that when I leave here I am in a hurry to get my daughter and get her to the pet store to buy the frozen pinky mice for her pet snake, and then get her to her babysitting appointment at 6 o'clock will all come together somehow happily, and that I can forget about that while I'm here. (It's a corn snake. Have you seen her corn snake? It's this pink, light-colored... It's a pretty snake, as snakes go.) But...

In one of the latest offerings in the... By the way, all of this bears on a subject that we'll get to, but you have to triangulate in if you're really gonna... If you're gonna say something meaningful.

One of the latest offerings about our greatest controversy, we now have *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* in publication. We have listed... I mean, everyone refers to this as "Turley's book" when it was coming out, but listed (in order of priority) the authors are:

- Ronald Walker, who's an independent historian and writer of Latter-day Saint history;
- Richard Turley is listed second, he's an Assistant Church Historian for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints;
- and then Glen Leonard is listed as the third author, as the former director of the LDS Museum of Church History and Art.

It was published (or it **is** published) by Oxford University, carried by Deseret Book. And it was the intention that it be published by Deseret Book in order for the book to bear—or excuse me, published by Oxford Press—to bear the imprimatur of independent scholarly approval on the book and not be something that is simply an apology.

But when you go back to the acknowledgements portion of the book, and you look at who all was involved in getting this into print, he references:

Colleagues in the Family and Church History Department and other departments of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Brigham Young University traveled to many librar[y], archives, and other historical institutions...

...and they list all of them that they went to, and it is formidable. And they give special thanks to all of those from those various church institutional sources who participated in this information gathering and give credit to them.

Then they thank "the professionalism of several editors," and they list the editors, many of them inside the Church or Deseret Book, but then they also thank an editor from Oxford Press. They thank:

Others at church headquarters or Brigham Young University who gave countless hours of assistance with their various skills and knowledge includ[ing]...

...and they give a page-and-a-half list of names. These are **names** that are involved in doing the review, and included among them is Dean C. Jessee, who is working on *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

And then they also thank "the skills and knowledge of archivists, librarians, historians" and others, some of whom reviewed and provided information or critiqued the manuscript. And included among them are some very interesting names like:

- Lavina Fielding Anderson
- Richard L. Anderson
- Sharon Avery
- Lowell Bennion
- Ed Firmage
- John Groberg
- Steve Robison
- John Welch

(He's ubiquitous, ok? You can't get anything into print without John Welch's name appearing somewhere.) And then there is thanks given to doctors who helped them and to others who are scholars that looked into it and pages of names.

- Richard Bushman's name appears.
- John Carmack's name
- Sheri Dew
- Ronald Esplin
- Arnaud Mauss
- Cory Maxwell (well, Cory and Karen Maxwell; my suspicion is Karen did more than Cory did, but that's just my suspicion)
- Jan Shipps.

And then they end all this—and this is pages; this is pages, and it's "Who's Who," k? They end all this with:

We also express appreciation for the support and feedback of Russell M. Nelson and Dallin Oaks, advisors to the Family and Church History Department, and of Marlin K. Jensen, Church Historian.

So, I assume, therefore, that this is a very deliberate book. This is a very calculated and intentional book. And that the words that appear in this have been weighed carefully in the balance and chosen in order to have an effect. K, let's accept that as a given for a moment. Go read the Acknowledgments if you would like to check that and reach your own conclusion.

There are precious few things which appear in this book, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, which touch upon the subject of revelation or visitations. I think I can read all of them to you. (I may have missed some because I just finished the book a few hours ago and may not have been as deliberate as I went through it as they were in preparing it, but I think these are the quotes.)

This is talking about the primary villain responsible—ultimately, the only one that will be executed for the crime of murder of over a hundred and twenty people at Mountain Meadows. This is Brother Lee:

During missionary tours to Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee, Lee said he beheld heavenly visions, contested with evil spirits, and defeated other Christian ministers with strong, inspired words. Although at first timid and inexperienced before a congregation, he soon believed he was transformed by a higher power. "My tongue was like the pen of a ready writer. I scarcely knew what I was saying," he reflected, after speaking to a congregation for an hour and a half.

"I grew in grace from day to day," he said...

So, "beheld heavenly visions, contested with evil spirits, ...defeated other Christian ministers with strong, inspired words." That's from page 60.

Beginning on page 65, there's another source they quote at some length, speaking also about John D. Lee on the subject of inspiration and the spirit:

Thomas D. Brown...wrote an extended passage in his diary that accused Lee of having an "abundance of dreams, visions and revelations" that he used for his own purposes. Brown believed the actual source of Lee's information was more ordinary. "He listened behind a fence to Bros. P[eter] Shirts and W[illia]m Young who are talking of his immeasurable selfishness, and he repeated it next meeting as having read it from a sheet let down from...[heaven] before his eyes," Brown claimed.

Then there was the incident in which Lee, thinking he was temporarily out of favor with Brigham Young (his adopted father), was troubled over whether he would get the appointment to be the U.S. Indian farmer, which was a governmental position, and Brigham Young was at the time the governor. And so, as the governor and as his adopted father, he could make an official appointment. And Lee was sweating over that 'cuz it meant an income for him. And Brigham Young, sure enough, **did** make the appointment, which gratified him because he now he knew he was not out of sync with his adopted father. And again, this is from page 66:

When Lee learned of his appointment, he wept—not because it satisfied his ambition, he said, but because it allowed him to continue to serve. He **later** said that several days before Young's letter arrived, "an angel of the Lord....stood by [his] bedside and talked....about these and many other things."

Now, are you picking up a pattern yet about how spiritual phenomena are being dealt with? Since we're confining it exclusively to Lee in this account (and since Lee will ultimately turn out to be filled with all manner of wickedness and chicanery)...

Well, after he had led the early abortive attack and personally become involved in the surrounding of the emigrant wagon (when they were dug in), in the fracas that ensued and the bullet fire that was going on, he got hit several times in his clothing, but he did not get injured. Then, a couple of Mormon communication bearers, Willden and Clewes, arrived; the incident occurs (and this is set out on page 172) in this way. (And this account, by the way, will... You'll want, in your own mind, to juxtapose this account with Willard Richards' statement about why he escaped Liberty [Carthage] Jail without any injury and what some people believe that possession of the temple rites do for you—but that's not mentioned, but keep that in mind.) So, reading now on page 172:

At one point—perhaps after getting bullet holes in his clothing—

Well, undoubtedly, because that's the point. I mean, he has the bullet holes, but this is between dashes. So, it's just to remind you that we've got that background.

At one point—perhaps after getting bullet holes in his clothing—Lee had told the Paiutes "that the bullets of the emigrants would not hurt the 'Mormons' the same as the Indians." Seeing Willden and Clewes, the Paiutes decided to test Lee's claim[s]. They "demanded that Willden and Clewes should put on Indian attire and run unarmed past the emigrant train within easy range of the rifles, to a neighboring point about a hundred yards distant." It may have been the same route Jackson's brother took when he was shot. The two white men concluded that they would have to "take their chances" in doing what the Indians demanded "or risk being killed by them. So they ran, amid a shower of bullets from the emigrant camp and reached the opposite point in safety." The men then returned to the Paiute camp, where they "were heartily cheered for their bravery after their perilous run. Soon," said Clewes, "we were hailed from a ridge on our left; we looked around and there stood John D. Lee." Lee told the Indians to return to their camp—"pacify[ing] their feelings by making explanations to them"—then sat down and talked to [them].

Well, we get that. And in the context of this book and this treatment, and given the fact that the focus of the tale is upon what's the worst crime committed in the history of the Church, this is the first words. This is the Preface:

On September 11, 1857, Mormon settlers in southern Utah used a false flag of truce to lull a group of California-bound emigrants from their circled wagons and then slaughter[ed] them. When the killing was over, more than one hundred butchered bodies lay strewn across half a mile stretch of an upland meadow. Most of the victims were women and children. The perpetrators were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints aided by Indians.

It makes no apology for the Church's involvement. It exposes it. It limits the damage to those who were locally involved in perpetrating it and doesn't gloss it over. It's a very raw, candid description (including of the killings themselves). And I've read to you from this book (deliberately prepared), those statements that exist in it with respect to the subject of visions, revelations, and visitations.

And so, if you are going to form an opinion about how we regard the subject of visitations, and this is the latest statement from all of the gathered, well, "powers that be," blue-bloods, insiders, credentialed folk—all the good people that we rely upon—if that's what they had to say about it, you would have a hard time reconciling that with what our nineteen-year-old missionaries do.

The nineteen-year-old missionaries go out, they hand people the Book of Mormon, and they say, "Look, look! Here in Moroni 10:4, it says, *Ask God*, and He's gonna tell you. And oh, by the way, this whole thing started/this whole thing began when Joseph Smith read in Scripture, *Ask God*. And Joseph read that *God...giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not*. And Moroni says if you *ask with a sincere heart*, God's going to answer you." And so, our missionaries go about saying to everyone, "You go get revelation."

And then we encounter the Church Historian and the director of the...well, the Assistant Church Historian, reviewed by the Church Historian, Marlin Jensen (who I knew when he was still practicing law), and no one seems to have said, "Wait a minute, for a church whose bedrock remains—indispensably remains—the presence of the spirit, and for a church who, in order to expand, requires those that would like to join to go ask of God and get an answer to prayer, ought we not to do something more with the passing mention of revelation than to simply confine it to the guy who gets executed for the crime/the guy who led the charge that created the problem/the guy who shot someone (and we had to now cover it up because white men were involved in this incident, and if the emigrants got out, the emigrants were going to spread the word of that), ought we not put revelation in the hands of someone else and in some other context?"

Well, there is a little bit more, and to be fair I probably ought to read that, 'cuz the sisters were involved. "At 2:00 that afternoon..." This is after the group had set off from Cedar City—the militia had set off—to finish the deed and to kill 'em, under the direction of the stake president.

At 2:00 that afternoon, leaders of the Cedar City Female Benevolent Society held their regular meeting. "Sister Haight" reported that she had been visiting some of the Cedar women and "taught them the necessity of being obedient to their husbands" and not to be fearful in these "troublesome" and "squally times." ... They had advised the women they visited "to attend strictly to secret prayer in behalf of the brethren that are out acting in our defence."

So, **prayer** creeps in here, too. And then, there's this comment in the...umm...as they got ready for the final killings (in the chapter, "Decoyed Out and Destroyed")—I'm reading on page 187:

The men sat in a circle off by themselves and began by praying for "Divine guidance," a sacrilege that only the passions of the time could explain.

So, we do have prayer. We do have prayer in the book, too.

Now, I find this troublesome. I find it more than troublesome. I find it troubling enough that it's worth commenting on as we get into the subject of revelation. Because there is a competition afoot. It is a competition that if history should inform us of anything, it should inform us of this tension. This is **always** the case. There is **always** an effort to turn the gospel of Christ into religion and to turn religion into something that is very different. And you have to be on your guard, and the church has to be on its guard. And every one of us have to wage war against this process, because this process is foreseeable/predictable/ knowable. If you want to know how it happened in the past, all you have to do is study the past. I was surprised in reading...

(I watched the soccer game, okay? I did. But there were timeouts. There were... I don't know **what** they did to bring that little girl into that crumpled ball off the... I mean, it

didn't look like that, but the girl that kicked her **was** rather big. And then we had halftime, and so there long periods when I was reading this just a few hours ago.)

Yeah. In any event...

This is the book I'm waging into at the moment. It's the latest in the Hugh Nibley Collected Works, *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*. And some of **this** stuff struck me. **This**—a publication of "The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Hugh Nibley and Associates, LLC" (see, there didn't used to be a Hugh Nibley and Associates—yeah, Tom, the next generation, LLC'd up)—and printed by Deseret Book Company. So, there's hope! I mean, there's happy news. **This** squeaked through. Let me read you... I mean, these two books came out at virtually the same time. They were hot on the shelves when I walked in and took them off a few days ago.

This is Nibley in an interview that they've published, and so, here we go:

And the two marks of the Church I see are and have been for a long time these: a reverence for wealth and a contempt for the scriptures. Naturally, the two go hand in hand. We should call attention to the fact that these things we are doing are against the work of the Lord. There is one saying of Joseph Smith I think of quite often. If the heavens seem silent at a time when we desperately need revelation, [it's] because of covetousness in the Church. "God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church." And now the Church isn't just shot through with covetousness, it is **saturated** with covetousness. And so the heavens are going to be closed. We're told we don't get revelation if we put our trust in money in the bank.

Well, okay, what do you do? Well, that's answered a little later in the same book: if you seal the heavens up because you're covetous, then...

This is a description of what happened in the Christian church, k?—the history of Christianity and the church fathers. We're now a couple of hundred years post-Christ and into the era when the apostles are gone, and we've got a limit on ongoing revelation. So, here, I'm reading from page 127, here:

When the Church lost revelation it had to turn to another source for guidance and so it threw itself into the arms of the established schools of learning. The schoolmen, as one of them expresses it, took over the office and function once belonging to the prophets and once in power guarded their authority with jealous care, quickly and violently suppressing any suggestion of a recurrent inspiration.

Oh, I shouldn't read this, but this is a great comment:

... I was forced to admit that the Berkeley institution is if anything less anti-religious than BYU, where religion is under more conscious and deliberate

attack. But I do not for that reason hold my BYU colleagues culpable—they cannot help themselves. By its very nature the university is the rival of the Church; its historic mission has been to supply the guiding light which passed away with a loss of revelation, and it can make no concessions to its absolute authority without forfeiting that authority.

Yeah. Huh. Here's another quote a couple of pages later:

The celebrations of the learned men and **not** the utterances of the prophets comprise the gospel [according to the university]. This has been the credo of the Christian schoolmen since the days of Clement of Alexandria: the universities—Christian, Moslem, Jewish, or pagan—has its own religion, and the basic tenet of that religion is the denial of revelation.

(And then he quotes from C.S. Lewis; I'm not gonna read that, but in any event...) So, there's hope because this is the some of the same folks... I'm sure (I didn't look), but I'm sure Jack [John] Welch's name's in here somewhere, too. You can't... Yeah, you can't get it out into print without him appearing here as he does in the other. So, there **is** hope—there's perhaps some schizophrenia—but hope nonetheless, in the way that it all unfolds.

So, what of it all? You know, there was a time when... Our language is still permeated by words of usage and descriptors which presumed a whole different world than the one we live in now, words like "envision" or "light." I mean, we accept the idea of anything that is not in front of your face being described and using the word "envision" as the manner/the proper word to use when you're talking about it. Can you envision what Utah will look like in 2050? Can you envision what the new temple in Draper will look like when it is completed? Can you envision this or that? It's a holdover from another period of time in which the visionary experience was so commonplace that it leaked into the vocabulary, permeated the vocabulary, and we all thought it perfectly appropriate. "Can you give me further light on that subject?" "Can you shed some light on that?" "Are we enlightened on the subject yet?"

And you can be talking about anything from General Motors to solving the problem of sabermetrics (a subject that is worthy of devotion). If anyone here wants to devote themselves to a Ph.D. effort, that's the study of mathematics and baseball and figuring out what really wins games. I think Billy... We owe a lot to Billy Beane, I'm telling ya—the Oakland A's. If you have a resistance to reading obscenities in print, then you ought not get it. But if you'd really like to know what baseball is all about, that book, *Moneyball*, is just... It's full of light and truth (and a number of obscenities at the same time).

So, then we get, we encounter... Joseph defies categorization. Joseph brought a flood of light, literally a flood of light. And...

I appreciate the efforts of the scholars. I applaud the work that they do, but they don't give us the answers. You have to find a revelator if you would like to get the answers.

And the preeminent one for our time was and is Joseph Smith. He covered the turf. What we're trying to do is catch up with him and to figure out what it was that he was talking about. Joseph repeatedly said, "Hey, I can't go any further than this. The Lord forbid me from saying anymore. And many more things did he reveal unto me, which I cannot at this time put into write. But great and marvelous were the things which the Lord showed unto me, and the mysteries of his kingdom which surpass all understanding, which we were commanded we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit" (see D&C 76:114-115).

I mean, the account of the First Vision, the account that we find in section 76, repeatedly in the Book of Mormon, we get right up to the precipice, and then we draw the curtain. And the Scriptures say, "Naw, we're not gonna go there." And why aren't we gonna go there? We're not gonna go there because, well, we would profane it. We would take and we desecrate it if we put it on public view.

Well, doesn't the Lord want us to know this stuff? Well, of course He does! Of course He does! In the proper setting, with the proper person, in the proper light, so that you know that it will not be profaned or desecrated, the Lord will show anything to anyone that anyone would like to see. He's told us that. Joseph said that repeatedly: "He didn't show me," this is Joseph speaking, "...anything that he won't show unto the least of you."

(Hey, Benjamin, can you come here? Make sure you lock it when you come back. But in the middle, I left the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. It's a small, leather-bound copy, and it's right in-between the seats. Yeah. We need Joseph...in more ways than one.)

See, Joseph was way, way out ahead; we still haven't caught up, and we display the **least** amount of curiosity about the things which are **most** enticing. He throws out a statement, and he just dangles it, and then...no more. And what was the reaction of Nephi to the dangling statements versus the reaction of Laman and Lemuel to the dangling statements? We know what Laman and Lemuel said. They said, "The Lord maketh no such thing known unto us."

And what did Nephi say? He said, "Hey, have ye inquired of Him? Have you asked? Have you asked? Have you asked?"

"No, we haven't asked; the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us."

Well, I've got this, and then I've got this. Now, you be careful; you be very careful. In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* on the subject of "Revelation," one of the great precautionary statements there is the devil—the devil's gonna crop up and mislead you.

I noticed that on the... It was the 20th anniversary, I think (it may have been the 25th anniversary because that... I mean, that was in the intro; I didn't keep that in mind), to a news article on KSL this last week. We had a... (Hey, thanks.) We had a repetition of the woman who threw her children off of the 11th floor and killed them, and then she

jumped off and killed ~~them~~ [herself], and then the brother-in-law to the woman (the uncle to the children) giving his explanation of how the husband—his brother/her husband—was Jesus Christ and was God the Father and that because he had died, that the family had committed mass suicide to be with him again, and "Can you imagine...the faith that [that] took?"

And that incident, again, is another cautionary tale: Be careful. Be afraid; be very, very afraid. Revelation: You could be John D. Lee! Revelation: You could throw people off a balcony! Be very afraid.

These are not just random happenstances. This is the era in which we find ourselves. This is the times in which we live.

Well, this is from the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, a comment that Joseph made. (And again, there's so much of this that I would canonize in the teachings if I were given discretion to ask you to sustain things in adding to Scripture. We'd have a bigger quad; we'd all look like high priests.) So, this is from page 51:

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments....

So, he's... I mean, this is Joseph Smith using, really, prose to describe the process, because for Joseph it was prosaic; it was poetry; it was a thing of beauty. "Light communicated from heaven to the intellect." "A mind capable of instruction....a faculty [that] may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence [it's] given." These aren't just idle words. These are Joseph trying to put into the English language a description of a process. And the process works.

Well, a couple of other Scriptures before we start on to something. This is from Doctrine and Covenants section 93, one of Joseph's most **profound** revelations. In section 93, he says, beginning in verse 27:

No man receive[s] a fulness until he keepeth his commandments. He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

Well, that's interesting: keeping commandments, receiving truth and light, glorified in truth, knows all things. Then he adds,

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and

truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one....that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

Huh, yeah, well, we're fetching up on that, aren't we?

So, we've got these interesting statements. And there's this notion that there is some relationship between keeping commandments, on the one hand, and receiving truth and light, on the other hand. And then, there is this statement about "intelligence, or the light of truth, [wasn't] created or made"—intelligence wasn't created or made. Intelligence or "the light of truth" and "the glory of God," then... It's redefined "glory of God," "intelligence," "light of truth." K? In two separate statements, in verse 36 and 29, it's reiterated for us twice that intelligence (that which can't be created or destroyed—and **can't** be created or destroyed—intelligence) **is** light and truth. Light and truth, co-equal with God.

Now, that's an interesting statement because here we have the word "intelligence," and it appears here in the **singular**. When you go back to Abraham chapter 3, beginning in verse 22, it says,

*Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the **intelligences** that were organized.*

Now we've encountered something that has a **plural** to it. And in Abraham chapter 3, when it talks about the plural form of this,

...the intelligences that were organized before the world was; ...among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; ...he stood among those that were....

From what then were your spirits organized? Light and truth. Okay... At your core, at your nub, at the very essence of what it is that constitutes you to be you, what is it that constitutes you to be you? Light and truth.

There's another place where a description is given of the Lord—Christ—in the pre-existence: *In the beginning was the Word*. Now, that's an interesting thought, that word. So, what you have at your core is light and truth or intelligence, which is...what? The glory of God—God the Father; you're derivative from Him. He is the Creator or the Organizer. But what He created or organized you from is light and truth.

Okay. Now, this ought to become increasingly obvious to you as you look at what we were reading in section 93. Why, why is it necessary, therefore, for you to keep his commandments in order for you to receive truth and light? Why? Why is that the way it works? Why must you keep the commandments if you want to get more of this?

[audience comment]

Exactly! We're trying to harmonize ourselves with Him. We're trying to get back to Him. We're trying to get ourselves aligned correctly so that when we resonate in the same way that He resonates, we can pick up on things that are not pick-up-able in the absence of that resonance. We're trying to get in harmony with God.

So, what are the commandments? What use are they? Well, He's giving us a blueprint. And some portions of the blueprint may appear altogether ridiculous. We're supposed to do them anyway. And why are we supposed to do the things that may seem even ridiculous anyway? Because at your very core, you **know**... You know if it comes from Him. And you know when you're getting light and truth from Him. There is never a futile act. You know when you pay tithing that you're doing something **He** asked **you** to do. And you know what? If it involves a sacrifice, you know all the more **by** that sacrifice.

This is what Joseph was trying to get across in the Lectures on Faith. Would you like to know God? Then go inconvenience yourself by following what He asks of you, and you will unlock inside yourself resonance with the light and truth of God. And it's an unfolding process.

It grows... (Oh, you gotta go back to 50 for that). It grows... Let me find that, which is really also borrowed from the *Psalms* or the *Proverbs*, rather:

That which is of God is light, and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

Proverbs 4:18 is a similar thought. But it's a dynamic process. It involves your (again, you know, we're victims of our time), your interface with God. (Another 500 years and the gospel will be perverted by computer terminology, but...) The way you link up to God (see? There it goes again) is by this mechanism of obeying the commandments that He's given you. And it's never futile, and it's never superfluous. It's how you, as a being at your core made of light and truth, **know** that you're pleasing God.

In the Lectures on Faith, Joseph said you had to know that the sacrifice that you are making was pleasing to God. How can you **know** that? You can know that because in your core you have light and truth, that's why I read the quote a few minutes ago. The nearer you come to God and the more obedient you are—the more "heed and diligence" were the words he used in that statement—the more heed and diligence that you give, the more correct your understanding will be. Well, why is **that** the case? Because you are enlightened, because you are enlivened, because you are drawing closer to Him.

One of the great descriptions of how Christ did what He did—in addition to 93—is in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning at verse 21:

Wherefore, the Almighty God...

And by the way, since we're not in church, you can actually get your Scriptures out and read along. I talk in a ward tomorrow as the High Council representative, and it es *prohibito* tomorrow, but today you can get your Scriptures out. This is D&C section 20, beginning at verse 21.

(Can you hear that annoying rustling of the pages? Because these things aren't made of paper. They're made of fabric; that's cotton you're hearing. And it's just annoying. It grieves the spirit and withdraws itself.)

[audience comment]

Yeah, some of mine won't. Okay, so, we're reading, beginning in verse 21:

Wherefore, the Almighty God...

And by the way, if we can't laugh at ourselves, there's something really, really wrong with us. I mean, if we take ourselves so seriously that we can't look at and say the most comedic thing on Earth is a Mormon trying to live his religion, then you missed the point.

I mean, we do **not** attain to perfection in this life. The visions that we read in Scripture all have a constant theme. And the constant theme is a **wretch** managed to make it into the presence of God, and then **God** fixes the wretch. What was the very first thing—not in our current version of the First Vision, but it is in the earlier versions that Joseph wrote—what is the very first thing God does when Joseph's in His presence? He forgives his sins; He cleans the mess up. "Joseph, you know you're a wretch; let's fix that. Okay, now, now you can endure My presence." Isaiah, in the temple:

Woe is me! ...I am undone; ...I am a man of unclean lips, ...I dwell [among] a people of unclean lips.

Fetch the coal; fix the guy. Coals from the altar, touched to the lips—there; purged; you're okay.

You do... Look, we really are comedic. Our religion promises the fantastic, it promises the perfection of us frail, messed up, insecure human souls. We get hungry; we get thirsty; we get tired. We're vulnerable; we're subject to pain; we're gonna ultimately die, every one of us. We have infirmities, and they progress over time. What about us can possibly be perfected? And you look at it and say, I can't detect a thing. Oh, wait there **is** one thing. You **can** be perfect in your desire. You **can** hope for it. And for God that's enough. As long as you make the kind of sacrifice that He would like to have you make preliminarily. And we're talking about that at this point. And we're reading from verse 21 of D&C section 20, where it says:

*Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him. He suffered temptations but **gave no***

heed unto them. He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; And ascended into heaven....

See, "**He** suffered temptations but gave no **heed** unto them." Turn back to D&C section 130. Verse 19 in section 130 says,

If a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

That's what Christ did. Christ gave **no heed** to the things that were pulling him in the one direction, and He gave **strict** heed to the things that were enticing Him to the other direction. And He obtained (as section 93 explains) a fullness of that. So, if there is an increasing flow of light/an increasing flow of truth that comes to someone by their heed and diligence in following the commandments, then that seems like a fairly simple formula for someone to follow if they're interested in obtaining further light and knowledge.

There was a time when all of these words crept into our language, and their usage in our common vernacular became popular when everyone simply **assumed** that we all were in contact with the mystic, with the mythic, with the forces that were around you. Everyone simply **assumed** that was the case. There was a way of describing the phenomenon. And the way that the idea was reduced to words was by using the concept of a third eye. Well, why that? It was because physically your eyes are the source that light gets into you. You perceive light through your eyes. So, if you're gonna collect light from somewhere else, two things are essential. The first thing is you have to realize that it's there, and then you have to be willing to see it. Well, it was a fairly common thing because people weren't as well educated as they are now. They weren't...yeah. They weren't schooled in naturalism and the philosophies of men, which we have so successfully commingled with Scripture that we have essentially supplanted, in all of Christendom, the gospel of Christ and replaced it with the doctrines of men and the precepts of men and the creeds of men. And we're beginning to develop our own set of creeds.

You see, it's hard. It's hard to keep the commandments. It involves inconvenience and sacrifice. It's hard. And for some folks, in a trial and error kind of way, it's like riding a bicycle. And when you start riding a bicycle you get bloodied elbows and bloodied knees, and you make mistakes, and it's unhappy. But you know what? You can write a Ph.D. thesis on riding a bicycle without ever getting **on** a bike or ever suffering an injury. Well, isn't that interesting? Because that's essentially the trade-off that we've made. That's the trade-off that Christendom made, and that's the trade-off that is rapidly, rapidly advancing right now...

I... Why would Satan ever change his agenda? Why would he ever invent a new tool if the old one works perfectly well? If I can use the sexual appetite of men to destroy a David, well, why not just bust that thing out all the time and aim it at whoever happens

to promiscuously get in front of me? (In that context, the word means "randomly," and it was a pun.) In any event, why invent a new way of corrupting the truth when the old way has been so entirely serviceable?

When the Jews returned from the discipline of Babylon, they learned the wrong lesson. And they became sophisticates in the Babylonian system of thought—which, as Lehi would tell us, was necessary because they were the only people that would kill their God, and they had to be in the right frame of mind (which is to say, "screwed up") in order to be willing to kill their God, because no one else would do it.

It takes a lot of learning to really be in hell, because the gospel of Christ beckons people to become childlike and to become simple. That's not to say the gospel is simplistic, because it comprehends all truth, and it involves light, and it involves everything that is—everything that was, everything that is, and everything that will be. And there are enormous surprises along the way. The gospel of Christ ought to be a delightful process of discovering new things all the time.

Well, at a time when people understood this idea that you could take in light, that it was possible to tune in and to receive information... And by the way, this information was so readily available that you just had to be sensitized to the awareness of its existence and the willingness to look into the matter for you to begin receiving it, whether you were Lutheran or Calvinist or involved in folk magic. In fact, folk magic largely grew out of the idea that you **can** tune into these things.

This has been a war that has been waged (and waged successfully), and...it's my own people that did it. I'm just... The Scottish Enlightenment, my ancestors, they're... They just—you know, David Hume and the gang—they won. And whether **you** know it or not, **your minds are full of that crap**. And Joseph Smith brought... He was carefully selected at the time that he came at the end of one epoch. And the American Revolution was a war against some of that stuff; we wanted to preserve an island/a place where you could still be in touch with the deity and be free to accept and receive things from the deity. There were more things in play at the time of the American Revolution than simply a new form of representative government. It was trying to preserve an ideal—an ideal that was rapidly fading—and allow an environment in which people could continue to be in touch with God, however you envisioned your God to be, because there were things available that, if you would let them in, would speak to you (if you were willing to see them).

Why does a mother suddenly know that her child is in danger at the edge of the camp, with her back turned, and drops everything and runs and catches her child before he or she falls in the creek? Well, we've all read stories about that. Oooh, ummmm, ~~tuition~~ intuition or PMS? Somehow it's ovarian. I... See, we tend to reduce that to the biological function now. But there was a time when everyone accepted the fact that that was **sight**, that was vision, that was light. She **saw** it. She envisioned it.

You know, you do fall down, and you do scuff your elbows and your knees when you learn to ride a bike. But when you finally master it, it's the closest thing you will do to flight other than flying. And I don't even think an airplane feels like flight as much as riding a bicycle does. (I'm so converted to the principle that I own four Harleys, and I fly about on them. Yeah, it's cost me a few tickets, that flight.)

But you can't... You can talk about bicycles; you can build them; you can repair them; you can have discourses on them without ever having experienced the bike. And what the school men are trying to do is change the subject. The subject **ceases** to be that sensation/that wonderment/that childlike experience of getting in the seat and running down the road and leaning as you propel yourself under your own strength into something that nearly replicates flight itself—and changes that into something that can be controlled and bona fide, and we can credential it, and we can give you a Bachelors of Bicycle-dom, and we can give you a Masters of Derailleurs. Now we're getting even more specialized, because it's not simply the bicycle as one component. At the Masters level, we're talking derailleur. And if you would like to go on to and graduate to axles, well, that's a Ph.D.

And so, we never encounter the **vision**. We can fill libraries up with crap **talking** about it and never **do** it. And the gospel that Christ delivered and the thing that Joseph was trying to describe for us was the **doing** of it.

There was another analogy, and I like it a lot, too. It's an analogy I borrow from Jon Larsen, and it's not original with me. He likens it to the launch pad that's built down at Cape Canaveral, where we have this enormous infrastructure, and it's all kept and preserved and polished and... But if you never fly anything out of it, then all you've got is a launch pad. The gospel of Christ was designed to be a launch pad. One of the unfortunate things about launching is you melt a bunch of stuff, and you make a mess. I mean, anytime you fire one off, it gets kind of ugly for a while.

And of all things we Mormons would like to be, it's orderly and punctual and uniform. We would hate to have the mess, the chaos, the disaster of... I mean, we all remember Jøħñ [Hiram] Page, right? And we got a section in the Doctrine and Covenants about Page. And he's the guy with the peep stone/the seer stone that got rebuked for having visions because it came from the wrong place.

Well, you know, **we learned the wrong lesson from that!** The lesson from that is not that Jøħñ [Hiram] Page got misled and had a false revelation using a peep stone that gave him bad information. The message from that is spirits were afoot. Now, let's get... Let's weed them out, let's figure out which ones are bad and which ones are good, but let's stay in touch with them. Let's keep the dialogue going. Take that stone, and take a hammer to it. Go find some others, because as far as I know, Jøħñ [Hiram] Page is the only one (other than Joseph) in this dispensation who claimed to have contemporaneous revelation using a seer stone. Although I'm sure there were others, they aren't published. Well, yeah. I mean, the whole idea... The idea of the crystal ball

gazing, the Urim and Thummim—these things... They're traditions, they're echoes; they're found everywhere, and they're based upon the truth.

Well, look. Ether chapter 4, verse 11 (I'm going to the last sentence of it—Ether 4, verse 11):

For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good. And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am.

See, "he that will not believe my words will not believe me." It's a real simple test. Did the words you heard originate from God? You should be able to tell that. You should be able to say, sitting and listening, "I hear God in that." And then whoever it is that is speaking, it doesn't matter if she's an elderly widow. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if he's the stake president—it doesn't matter. You have to hear **Him** in the words that come. And then, it ceases to be the woman or the man who is standing in front of you, and it becomes the Lord. And the person is simply... I mean, good for them; they resonated with Him, and they caught on to something.

Turn back to Moroni chapter 7; it's the same thing. Moroni chapter 7, verse 16: *For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man.* Wow, now there's another thought. The Spirit of Christ given to everyone. You have a link to Christ. By virtue of the fact that you're here, you have a link to Christ. K?

The Spirit of Christ is given to every man [and in this sense, "man" means mankind; it's not sexist], that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

Satan is so committed to doing evil that he's treacherous even to those that'll follow him. He won't support those who say, "I'll follow you, Satan, if you'll do something for me." And Satan'll say, "I'll do it. Come, follow me." And you come follow him, and he doesn't support you, and you say, "Wait a minute. You said you'd make that bargain!" And he says, "I'm a liar from the beginning. I'll always tell you what you what to hear, because I'm a liar."

[audience comment]

Yeah, he is unreliable. He doesn't even support those who follow him, as the Book of Mormon makes the point (repeatedly) with those who, after having followed him and succeeded in bringing others to apostatize, are not sustained by him.

Well, the thing to fear is not the existence of Satan or the fact that you may be deceived. That's a given. Turn on your TV. Uh, I don't know...do Toyota trucks really get that mileage? I mean, you're being deceived every time Wall Street has your attention. The glitter, the glitz, the garbage they're trying to sell you. If you love your family, you'll buy some wretched piece of trinkery from someone somewhere because they know you like families. If you love your wife, you'll do some hopelessly pathetic physical acquisition and make an offering to the goddess, and then she'll be pleased. And it doesn't work that way! Because if you come bearing rings and trinkets and you're a jerk, she's gonna see right through the rings and the trinket to the jerk. It's just... They're not fooled! Hollywood says, "Hey! Trick them this way, and you know, we've got Viagra for the elderly. It could work out."

It's not difficult (as Moroni points out, both in his interlude in Ether and again in chapter 7 of Moroni), it's not difficult to tell the difference. It's really not. "Satan deceived me!" Well, why did he deceive me? "Well, he deceived me primarily because I wanted to be deceived. I knew it was a crappy deal. I knew what I was up to was no good. I had this nagging feeling at my core, because I am, after all, made of light and truth, that something was wrong with this. But I did it anyway." I mean, how many times do those who are caught—the primary antagonists of the Book of Mormon, when they're caught, and they're not supported by Satan, and they collapse at the last day—how many times do they confess, "Yeah, I knew all along I was deceived. I knew all along it was wrong, but I did it, I taught it, I preached it, I participated in it, I urged it. I knew it was a lie, but I nearly believed it myself because I had success at it. It looked good; it felt good. It was fun."

There is nothing more fun, however, than gathering light and truth. We're sent down here on a journey in which we are supposed to be getting "added upon." Those are the words. That was the goal. We're gonna send people down to the second estate, and what's the goal? The goal is to be added upon. But what are we adding? What are you **adding** to yourself that you didn't have before? You're adding light and truth. You came with a certain amount of it. You're supposed to leave with a greater **quantity** of it.

The description given in section 93 of Christ:

I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory [this is verse 11 of section 93, his glory], as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father.

You know, you're just gonna have to do your best with this. We've got this idea that God the Father and his unnamed Consort (Mrs. God the Father) had a Son (and we know Him as Jesus or Jehovah) and then had another son or sons and some others, and then we got a Lucifer. And then some others and what have you. And then this group, these are called "sons of morning." And then there's this birth order, and eventually, we get

down to the rabble that we were among. And that that picture is this linear development of the family of God.

If you read very carefully what we find in section 93, there's another picture. And that picture is that you have this group of... Imagine all of these being little stick figures because I don't have the time to draw them. You have them all, and...

Oh, I think I can read you something on this. Yeah:

*This is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercis[ed exceeding] great faith, are called with a holy calling...Or in fine, **in the first place** they were on the same standing with their brethren.*

K? This is chapter 13 of Alma. So, let's change that picture, and let's say that instead of this [referencing the original picture Denver drew], everyone was on the same... "In the first place..." In the first place everyone was just alike. Everyone had the same potential. Everyone had the same light and truth. Everyone was made of that. Everyone was just like one another.

Where did the birth order come from? Where did Christ come from? 93, beginning at verse 11, this is John (and I'm starting at verse 11, but we'll back up in a minute):

*And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, **full** of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us...*

K? This is Him; He came, and He dwelt here. "[But] I..." I'm talking about the pre-existence...

...I saw that he received not...the fulness at first [He received not the fulness at first], but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; ...thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not...the fulness at the first.

What did He do? One of this group/one of this family/one of this assortment of people/ one of them went from grace to grace until He received a fullness. **He proved** it could be done. **He showed** the way. **He was called** the Only Begotten of the Father. He was called that because **He** embodied the word of God. Would you like to know what God the Father's word was? Look at Him. Look at the Only Begotten. Did you make it without Him? No, you didn't. You didn't make it **here** without Him. **Christ proved the word of the Father by the things which He did.** As a consequence of Christ doing it, some few others, in turn, were also able to rise up. And they became "sons of the morning."

You see, the picture that we get in D&C section 93 (coupled with Alma chapter 13) is different than the picture that you sometimes pick out or get described for you. Look at verse 30 of section 93:

All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

Did Christ exist? If Christ existed, He had to be free to choose for Himself. This had to be a **voluntary** act on His part. He had to be willing to receive the light and truth.

Believe it or not, we're all just talking about the same thing. This is just about personal revelation. All of it is. And it's about how **you** receive light and truth. Because we're acting out again here what we acted out once before, and the process is the same here as the process was there—although here it's coupled with a lot of illusions that are guaranteed to make you progress whether you want to or not—it's coming.

So, when you look at the **word of God**, what you're seeing in Christ is the embodiment or the fulfillment of what the Father **said**. When Christ defines Himself in 3rd Nephi chapter 11, and He tells you who He is, He can't tell you who He is without referring to the Father three times in a very brief introduction: *I...suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning*, He tells us. He is the word of the Father. He is the embodiment of the things that the Father would like to have for us. So, why do we obey the commandments? Why do we follow the process? Why do **we** want to go from grace to grace, and **how** do we open the third eye to be able to resonate with and receive light and truth into ourselves from the Being who is defined as light and truth?

Well, I read another book just a few days ago. (I've heard that he's written a good book. I was challenged to read this one, and I was challenged **by** reading it.) You just... You can't pick up that title without... Well, maybe **you** can: *Odds Are, You're Going to Be Exalted*. Well, he's got a "Master's degree in theology and a Ph.D. in biblical studies." So, he has credentials: Alonzo Gaskill—actually, I was gonna leave him alone, but I heard him on the radio a couple of days ago, and it was that... It was the tone in his voice—it was the absolute, resolute, bitter, hostile conviction that "God wouldn't do that!" on the radio that just struck me, convinced me I don't want to talk to the man. But in any event, here's a quote from his book:

The thought that God would promote something that would ensure that the vast majority of His children would never again be able to dwell in His presence is **incomprehensible**. And the assumption that our mother in heaven would idly sit back and allow such a guaranteed flop to eternally strip her of any interaction with her spirit offspring is equally unfathomable. Such could not—and did not—happen!

I couldn't contain myself, and I wrote, **Why?** You see, nature tells us that of all the male turtles that are born, precious few of them are ever going to survive long enough to

reproduce. And of all the bull elk that are born, precious few of them are gonna survive long enough to ever reproduce.

And he's made the cataclysmic leap of presuming that all children who die under the age of eight are promised something other than the Celestial kingdom (which is what the Scriptures say that they're promised—they inherit the Celestial kingdom); he's leapt to "exaltation," which is a different kind of life within the Celestial kingdom. And he does some math calculations based upon the Millennium, based upon the number of children infant mortality tells us will die before the age of eight, and the city of Enoch, and people who are unaccountable because they're mentally impaired—which I presume would include most of the faculty of many of our learned universities—equals, in his computation, that the odds are you're gonna be exalted.

The problem is none of us fit in the category about which he's exalting. You've lived beyond the age of eight (except the kids that aren't listening). And you're... Well, I was gonna say you're not retarded—I need to at least hesitate on that point—I don't think you're mentally impaired, although some of us are. And you don't live during the Millennium, and you weren't in the city of Enoch, and you're not part of the Nephite centuries and the post- visitation by Christ. I mean, the audience... You know, odds are you're gonna be exalted... Peddle that to children under eight, peddle it during the Millennium, maybe you got an audience. But the audience to which this is directed is **you**. And he's trying to tell you that this isn't hard, when everything that the Savior said implies very strongly that this **is** hard, and that "few there be that make it," and that it's designed (just like nature is designed) to start with a lot and to end up with a few. And the lessons of nature tell us that you will start with a lot, and you will end up with a few. Just like this overly generous outpouring of priesthood ordination to anyone who is twelve years old or older who happens to be baptized in the Church results in just the most promiscuous series of priesthood certificates of any dispensation ever. But then we read,

*Behold, there **are** many called, but **few** are [then] chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are [so set] upon the things of this world, [they] aspire to the honors of men, ...they [don't] learn this one lesson—That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and...the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or...gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when [it's] withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.*

See, odds are you are going to be...a priest? Well, "that they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true." But I just read a bunch of limitations.

Odds are you're gonna be exalted? Well, you can go to the temple and fetch an ordinance, but unless it's sealed upon you by the Holy Spirit of Promise, you know, all those things are conditional. And so, it's not... The call is to **do** this. The call is to come down here and be a gatherer of light. And it doesn't matter if the process seems so ephemeral; it seems gossamer. It seems like the web of a spider and so delicate that the blowing of the wind can tear it apart. That's exactly how it's supposed to be. Because you're trying to get in harmony with God. And you're trying to gather a substance that proves your existence by your free will choice to accept light and truth. When you do, Joseph said you could **taste** the truth. When you do, you can **feel** the truth. You can sense its presence; you can let it in to you; you can resonate with it. The...umm...

(Boy, we're not going to have the time to get through this stuff. And I have to go buy frozen pinky mice. Yeah.)

When you go back to the account that's given in section 93 and you go back to the description that's given in Abraham chapter 3, you learn in Abraham chapter 3 that the Father shows (Christ shows, acting in the role as the Father) all of the organized intelligences that existed before the world was; and among this all there were a subset called "many" that were noble and great (if you can read that scratch).

*...saw many that were noble and great. And God saw **these souls** that they were good...*

These souls, that they were good,

...and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers.

These are the people that are gonna teach truth and light. These are the ones that are gonna come down and bring to you revelation. These are the ones that are gonna shed forth light and truth. They're not administrators.

These [will I] make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, ...he saw...they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham...

So, we know that one of them is like the Son of God, but another one is Abraham.

Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. ...there stood one among them that was like unto God...

And that's Christ. Christ stood among them, k? He (Christ),

...he said [to] those [that] were with him:

K? Christ talking to "noble and great," He says to them, "We, we will go down." **This** group...

*We will go down, for there is space there, ...we will take of these materials, ...we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And **we** will prove **them**...to see if **they** will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate...*

...and so on. Well...

This is from the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, from page 375:

"Now," says God, when He visited Moses in the bush, (Moses was a stammering sort of a boy like me) God said, "Thou shalt be a God unto the children of Israel." God said, "Thou shalt be a God unto Aaron, and he shall be thy spokesman."

I [this is Joseph, I] believe those Gods that God reveals as Gods to **be** sons of God, and all can cry, "Abba, Father!" Sons of God who exalt themselves to **be** Gods, even from before the foundation of the world, and are the only Gods I have a reverence for.

This is Joseph, just in the middle of a talk, saying that there is a group who exalted themselves to **be** gods even before they were born, and all of them can cry, "Abba, Father!"

Well, Abraham served as the prophet-leader of a little, tiny family. We read about him now and think him "big cheese," but at the time, he led a badly-fractured family and presided over a small group. His apparent one public ministry in Jerusalem resulted in him getting run out of town. From then on, he ministered only inside his own family. Abraham (while he had a fairly interesting career in a varied climate and managed to get to sit on Pharaoh's throne because he taught some things about the heavens and ingratiated himself to Pharaoh—not the least of reason was his wife and her beauty) went on to lead a relatively private life in a **family**—in a family. And we all call him the father of the righteous.

Christ's largest audience was, in all likelihood, the group He spoke to at the temple in Bountiful **after** His resurrection. During His mortal ministry, in all probability, even in the temple He didn't have as big an audience as He did at the temple in Bountiful. Perhaps as He hung on the cross, as the crowds were gathering to attend the festivities at the Passover in Jerusalem, more people passed by Him and wagged their tongue at Him in His final state of making the sacrifice, but we don't know that.

The folks who the Scriptures identify as being most clearly "noble and great" are people that really didn't have much more responsibility in life than every one of you have inside your own family. You know, we get filled with covetousness because celebrity-dom has come to Zion. And I mean this in all sincerity: I do not intend to be a celebrity, and it's one of the reasons why I don't like talking at these things. Because I think to the extent that you attract attention for yourself, you're missing the mark. The best of us are

horribly flawed, the **best** of us are. Anyone that would attract light or distract people for themselves and take it off of the perfect example that you find in Christ is a fool. They practice the wrong sort of religion.

We're down here to gather light. Whether you recognize it or not, **you** are a son or a daughter of light. That's what you are. You're down here to gather more of it. And the place where you're primarily responsible for presiding and conducting is inside the confines of your own family. That's why Abraham is remembered. That's why Lehi is remembered. For the most part, the public ministry of ancient prophets was met with almost universal failure. Noah saved his own family. You rarely find a prophet or prophetess (and they are in Scripture, as well) who succeeds in their own lifetime.

Christ got it right when He was saying the only words of the prophets that you really respect are the dead ones. And why do you respect the dead ones? Well, because then the professors of religion can take over, and they can package them and parse them and explain them—or explain them away. Without the living oracle there to be able to say, "Not so fast!" you can take the words of any of them and parlay them into whatever you want them to become. Hence, Joseph's insistence that every one of us become a prophet and prophetess, every one of us get in touch with the things of the spirit, every one of us receive what is out there in the way of light and welcome it into yourself. Vessels of light—that's what you're supposed to be.

You know, it's very basic, and I think it's (in all likelihood) the case that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel are not the **first** principles (meaning the beginning), but they are the first principles meaning the primary/the essentials/the ones that **must** be kept/the ones that are always in front of you:

- *Faith*—you have to have faith in the existence of that light and that truth.
- *Repentance*—why? Because you're made of light and truth, and if you won't reconcile and resonate with it, you won't welcome it in. You create a barrier to it; it can't be shed into you.
- *Faith. Repentance. Baptism*—you're supposed to be doing that every week when you partake of the sacrament (that ordinance that Christ celebrated repeatedly with the Nephites over and over). He's taking the time to do the sacrament, and we're supposed to be taking the time to doing that.
- And then after you have had faith, and after you've repented, and after you've partaken of the sacrament or received baptism, then what happens? Yeah, you *receive the Holy Ghost*.

You receive the Holy Ghost. D&C section 130, "The Father..." This is verse 22:

*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not **dwell in us**.*

Receive the Holy Ghost, and let it **dwell** in you.

Well, you know, it's... I don't know if the odds are you're gonna be exalted or not, but I can tell you that the way in which that will happen, if it does happen, is going to be through—unlike the way revelation is portrayed in this, the latest offering by the powers that be, as something perverse and something that only the nutcases engage in—it will be by your connection with the spirit.

Moroni chapter 7 is a dissertation on all of those things of the spirit, and it says, "Hey, if these things have ceased, then there is no faith, and no one's being saved." And it's just that simple. If it doesn't happen, no one's being saved. You're a child of light; you're a son or a daughter of light. You proceed from the glory of God or the intelligence of God, which is light and truth. At your core, what is there is light and truth. But it has been made independent. It gets to choose for itself. Otherwise, there is no existence.

And you—each of you—need to receive the Holy Ghost—each of you—and to permit it to dwell in you. You know, there are a lot of symbols that get employed in the Scriptures. One of the words that gets employed to describe the Holy Ghost (which should dwell in **you**), is "the third member of the godhead." Would you like to be like your Father in Heaven? Well, then, receive ye the Holy Ghost. He is as close, He is as intimate, He is as in connection with you as the very substance out of which you were originally organized. If you would like to be in touch with Him, keep His commandments.

Follow Him. You're not... Even if you do your best, you're not gonna do a very good job. But the Scriptures talk in terms of your sincerity: those who keep all His commandments or **seek earnestly to do so**. Even the best of us are doing things wrong that we don't even know are wrong yet, because we haven't **got** that much light and truth **yet**. And so, we proceed to blunder around in the china shop, breaking the furniture and damaging all of the things that we ought to be holding sacred, and we do it with reckless abandon. And God doesn't care about that, because He hasn't brought us that far up the ladder yet to respect the furniture. He's just trying to get us to stop messing our pants and stop putting graffiti on the walls—if we'll just settle down enough to do that.

The atonement of Christ is a work in progress. He's trying to fix us, and He does that by giving us a little light, and a little more light, and a little more yet. Until finally you look back upon yourself from two decades earlier, and you say, "What a wretch was I!" Well, it's a progression in light and truth. You're still a wretch, you're just 20 years away from recognizing it still. **Start obeying further** and getting more light and truth, and you'll be astonished at what it is you're going to become.

Well, let me end by bearing testimony to you that, in my view, the Church is exactly what it ought to be, staffed exactly as it should be, filled with all you good people, with all of the things that you bring with you to the party. And that this is a perfect environment in which each one of you get the opportunity to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before the Lord. And you ought to be afraid. You ought to be fearful, because the things that you hold onto in your secret sins are the very things that you ought to be abandoning. And the fact that you're holding on to them

means you have not yet chosen the light and the truth. You ought to be abandoning that junk, whatever it is.

We all have our shortcomings. We all have our temptations. We all have our failings.:

- **Despite** the bundle of insecurities (and there were **many** in the prophet Joseph Smith), the prophet Joseph Smith met the Lord.
- Despite the fact that **Abraham** [Isaiah] was a self-confessed man of unclean lips in the presence of the Lord didn't stop him from entering into the presence of the Lord.
- The fact that Peter is... Peter is not even a personality; he's a syndrome. OK? He's got pathologies. This... Peter: the chief apostle, the rock, the one that the Lord relied upon, the one that He put first and preeminent.
- And Paul? Well, look... You have to trust Paul to someone with far more... They have to have prescription authority to deal with him. You can't... A psychologist is insufficient.

These people met with the Lord. It is not a distant mountain. It is not an insurmountable problem. Have faith, repent, go and partake of the sacrament—do so (and I use the word advisedly), do so **worthily**.

By the way, do you know how to determine if you're worthy or not? You ask the Lord. You don't do as brother Gaskill suggests and simply presume it. You do as Joseph said: And after thinking about his native cheery temperament and his inclination towards irreverence, he decided to inquire of the Lord to find out what his standing was. It had been four years since the First Vision, and Joseph wanted to know. Joseph didn't presume. In fact, if he were presuming, he would have presumed to the contrary that he was worthy. "How am I doing, Lord?" And the Lord answered, in the form of the angel Moroni.

You know, don't settle for a book about riding the bike. Don't settle for polishing up the launch pad. It was designed to be set in motion. It was designed to engage you. You're supposed to be part of this. The prophetic history of all that we read needs to come down to and be embodied in you and your life.

You have whole generations of people that went before you and you have people that are coming after whose faith, just like our faith in the pre-existence, was stimulated by the word of God embodied in the life of Christ. You have people looking upon you and having faith as a consequence of what you're doing. You're called "saviors on Mount Zion" not simply because you trek to the temple, and you fall asleep during the endowment. You're called that because all of those that went before and all who come after have an investment in your life. **You! You** are the source of faith. **You** are the source of light for many.

Live your life as if you're on stage because, believe me, you are. There are people who are being redeemed as a consequence of the investment that they have in you. A failing, flagging, despondent ancestor is being buoyed up by the example you set. You

have no private moments, and you have no private sins, so stop holding on to them. For goodness sake, they're not only being shouted on the rooftops in the day of judgment, they're being shouted on the rooftops right now. This is only the illusion of privacy. Everything you do is on display, which is why it is so important that you be one who gathers light and truth.

You be one who is open to receiving these things, which **God offers liberally**—liberally, however perverse that may be in political terms in Utah, that's a descriptor of God. He spends money like a Democrat with the federal budget when it comes to giving you light and truth. God giveth liberally. Deficit spending doesn't matter. He gives liberally, so where's the impediment?

The impediment is that we lack the faith to bring ourselves into harmony with perfect perpendicularity to the Earth—because as long as you're in sympathy with the Earth, you're out of sync with heaven. You have to get perpendicular to it. You have to draw a line between you and it. And when you draw a line... That's one of the reasons why we have gravity. That's one of the symbols that God gave us in this life. If you can walk, you're walking around teaching a lesson about "getting in harmony with God" to yourself. All things testify of Christ. They all do.

And I bear testimony of Him in His name, Amen.

2010.09.18 Chiasmus

September 18, 2010

American Fork, UT

We all know that the name of "chiasmus" comes from the Greek letter Chi, which is an X. We know the date on which Chiasmus was discovered in the Book of Mormon to the exact day: it was Wednesday, August the 16th of 1967. And it was a missionary to the Church in Germany who made the discovery after going and attending some lectures about the subject where they were using the Bible as an example, and the account of that you can read in an article that is available online. The title of the article is *The Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon: Forty Years Later*. If you just do a word search—"Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon" or "Chiasmus Forty Years Later"—you can... It's in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*; the article written by John Welch, and it's about his discovery.

And in there you'll learn that the first occasion in which the presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon occurred as the consequence of a revelation. He quotes a voice that spoke to him, and these are the words: "If it's evidence of Hebrew style in the Bible, it must be evidence of Hebrew style in the Book of Mormon."

And so, as a consequence of a revelation, John (our young missionary at the time) went out and pursued the subject, and found, among other things, the largest single chiasmic passage in literature in Alma chapter 36, that we're now all familiar with.

He also wrote an article about determining criteria for identifying and evaluating the presence of chiasmus, and that also appears in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. And he gives a list of some fifteen criteria that can be used to determine the presence or absence of chiasmus. And throughout the day today, there will be those who are speaking about how this pattern has been located in a variety of places.

And I'm more interested in the issue of **why**. It's really interesting to note its presence, to study it—and the theory that underlies the presence of chiasmus in the Hebrew text is the idea that this made it easier for people to memorize it. If you have this **progression** and you have this **regression** and there's a single point at which it flips, then it makes it easier for people to study and memorize and preserve things in oral tradition. But juxtapose that with the statement you find in Abraham chapter 1, verse 28 about how "*the records have come into mine hands*"—and the records that he's talking about are those that run back to the beginning of the creation— and that's in Abraham chapter 1, verse 28. And then the comment that is made, also, in the book of Moses about Adam keeping a record. And if the record keeping—see, Moses chapter 6, verse 5: "*And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto...many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration.*" By then the children were taught to read and write, having a language that was pure and undefiled—this is chapter 6, verses 5 and 6. So if writing was with us from the beginning (that is, at the time of Adam—the language of revelation was not transmitted orally), then perhaps the pattern has nothing to do with the ease of which one can memorize

and preserve passages of traditional understanding from one to another. It may have another deeper and more profound underlying purpose behind it.

See I— I want to skip right to some things that are important, in my view. I've written a paper that will be published as part of this thing, and you can read all those words in there. I want, given the fact that it's an opportunity to talk live— I really detest reading talks to people.

I have a theory that underlies the reason why we find this pattern that appears over and over. And this pattern appears: it's a **progression**, and then it's a **regression**. And if you take those and you close them in, what you wind up with are two triangles—one pointing upward; the other pointing downward—with the suggestion that if this relates to the heavens and God, then it suggests the notion that God is actively in the process of reaching down to man. And if this suggests mortality, then implicit in that is that it's the obligation of man to reach upward to God. And that implicit in this may be embedded a message about the point at which—the contact at which—the Chi crosses one another is at that moment, that instant, a revelation—that point at which we get perfectly aligned with heaven and heaven is able (because of that alignment) to reach down and make contact with us. And perhaps implicit in the message of why this would appear is the suggestion that it's the obligation of man to reach upward because God is permanently in a state of reaching downward in order to make the contact with man.

The **progression** and the **regression**—if you look at the pattern that you find in the menorah, "ABCDCBA," what you're seeing in the pattern of menorah (which was a deliberate symbol located within the holy place of both the tabernacle and later the temple of Solomon and down from there) this symbol is suggesting in another way the exact same pattern of **progression** and **regression** and convergence in the center. See, those that take the chiasmic literary form and explore why it was done—in addition to the ease of memorization—they say the point that you locate in the center of the chiasm is the point at which the central theme of the idea is presented.

And if you go into Alma chapter 36 and you look at Alma chapter 36's suggestion of what the center point is, it's that moment at which the conversion occurs; it's the moment at which the contact between the man and God occurs; it's the conversion point. And so it would also be consistent with there being an underlying **why** to chiasmus that's perhaps more important than detecting its presence elsewhere. Because if Alma (or Mormon, and I think the greater light is that it was Alma and not Mormon that wrote that chapter because of its literary form—that's beyond this, but I think it was Alma that wrote it) experienced it and understood the underlying **why**, then of course the central theme would be the point of contact between God and man, because that is the point at which redemption occurs—the point at which the process goes on.

Well, the other thing that this does is, particularly here, this **progression** and this **regression** is the process of walking you backwards; it's the process of returning you to somewhere, as opposed to going somewhere. You're already somewhere—you need to get away from where it is you are and back to something which was better and

preferable and earlier. And so the **regression** is a question about, well what is it that regression would deliver to you, would fetch for you, if you were to take it seriously?

Matthew chapter 18 has this little incident in it:

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-3).

And so the idea of **progression** and **regression** and becoming something converted from what you are today—where you find yourself at this extremity—back to where you once were at the other end of the scale may also be a reminder that, although your mind is currently filled with all of the issues and all of the experiences of adulthood, there was a time when, previously in childhood, you were capable of much more and much different kinds of things. Christ's comment that you—

The question that drove the answer was the question about who's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. So the issue on the plate was: "Where do we find something that is great; show us one of these; tell us." (And I suppose they were hoping for some mention of themselves.) But instead, what Christ did was He asked for a little child. And the narrative suggests that this is quite a young child—a toddler, the younger that could toddle over the better. So He has the little child, and He puts the child in front of Him, and He says, "This—here is an example—this is what the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is like." Well, why is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven something that has regressed from the complexity and the sophistication—particularly of **our** kind of thinking—back into a point at which there is this child-like faith, there is this child-like approach to whatever is out there?

We put away childish things. In fact, Paul in one of his passages makes a comment about childish things and putting them away.

Well, King Benjamin had something to say about the character of a child, and he gives this in his big talk, beginning in Mosiah where they're all together for his farewell address. This is Mosiah chapter 3, verse 19:

The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child.

Then he elaborates what it is about the child that is so useful in yielding "to the enticings of the holy spirit, [putting] off the natural man, [becoming] a saint through the atonement of Christ" -- all of those are driven by these kinds of characteristics, which are childlike: "submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the

Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19). Those are the characteristics of a child that manages to change their mind or to facilitate their development.

I heard again (people keep trying to calculate this and come up with a new number all of the time)—but I'm sure all of you have heard it said that most of what you're going to learn in your entire life you learn by the time you're five years old. The personality of a person is fully developed at five. There's another study that came out and said almost all of the education that a person is going to receive in their lifetime has been completed by the time they're in fourth grade, then they simply reapply and reapply the same techniques as they had acquired by the fourth grade, repetitively thereafter, to increasing levels of complexity; but nevertheless, it's the same tools. Well, why is it then, that at the early front-end there is this capacity for absorbing everything there is from the universe around them, and then that begins to quiet down and slow down or to become resistant thereafter? It's because, by its very nature, the mind of the child is open. **Submissive** is a characteristic that says:

- I am open to, will submit to, and looking forward to something you can give to me.
- I don't come here with a hard attitude.
- I don't come here with my predisposition.
- I don't come here with a bundle of things that, if you're going to present a truth to me, it must fit within the boxes that I have constructed.

"If you want...wait a minute, wait a minute—how do you reconcile that with... well wait a minute, I...Now Elder McConkie wrote in this book—we have to have bibliographies okay?"

Here's an idea: It's a truth, but it's truth that you must relax, open your heart, open your mind, and accept and see if it contains light and truth.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no I want a bibliography; if you don't fetch a bibliography for me, and I want footnotes. Then..."

See, I have been so tempted... I have been so tempted to write a book without a single footnote in it. My wife just thinks that's a terrible idea. The most important chapter I ever wrote had no footnotes in it when I wrote it, and it's my wife's fault that it's now riddled with footnotes, because she says, "You can't do that; they won't— You'll get in trouble! You won't...it's not..." And she's right. She's right because the reader—the typical reader—is not at a point where the typical reader will simply relax and say, "Is it true? Does it resonate with light? Is there something about this that is fulfilling?"

I've been able to put more information about God and man in ten short parables than I'm able to put into 170,000 words in *The Second Comforter*, simply because parables don't require you to vindicate or justify; but what it does impose upon the reader is the obligation, then, to open themselves up and say, "Well, how do we do that?"

Well, there was a time... There was a time and it was back here in your life, there was a time when you did not need to go down to the firing range and have a skeet machine firing off a clay pigeon and a 12-gauge loaded with birdshot in it to be able to enjoy yourself. If you had a stick... If you had a stick, it was enough, because your mind was alive with the kinds of things that allowed you to have just as much—if not more—joy pretending, as does the adult with the gun and the ammunition and the skeet range and the machine and the clay pigeon and the thing blowing up in the air, and "Oooo, isn't that fun; don't you wish there was more of that from Hollywood." Too bad we can't load blood in clay pigeons; then we'd all be at the firing range.

The idea of submissiveness is another way of reckoning into the idea of openness—the same with meekness; the same with humility and being humble; the same with patience—and we ought to clarify the point about the child and patience, because at first blush, you look at a child, and you say there is nothing less patient than a child:

"Can we...? Can we...? Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Can I, can I, can I...? Please! Please! Please! Are you sure? Aaaahhhh! Crap, how does this work? Can I? Can I? Can I...? Okay, what if I give this; can I get that?"

See, they go through all of the tantrum stuff until they begin to negotiate, and sometimes that negotiation thing works, particularly if the kids are bright. (And we've been playing with really bright kids, so they tend to go and negotiate everything.) They are not patient in that sense. They are... Children are patient in the sense that relentlessly, endlessly they are studying to learn more. They **want** to know more.

I write... I write a blog, and on it I ask more questions than I give answers, because what people need are not a bunch of answers. And answers end the discussion. Once you've got the answer, that's the end of that. What you need is a question, and you need a question so that you'll open your mind. And you need to open your mind so you can become like a child. And you need to become like a child so that you're a suitable environment in which revelation can take place. And you need to have revelation take place in order for you to reconnect with heaven. And you need to reconnect with heaven so that you get to know who God is. And you need to get to know who God is so that He can, in turn, make you a member of His own household and redeem you from this current plight in which you find yourself: in darkness and distrust. And what people want from me are answers, and I can hand you an answer and cripple you. Or I can teach you to ask and even turn you into, potentially, someone that can make this trek backward, that can make this climb.

When you take the symbols and overlay them upon one another, you wind up with the symbol that was adopted by David as one of the symbols of Ancient Israel, United Kingdom, Priesthood, the Star of David. When you place them side-by-side, if you read the account given by Lucy Mack Smith of the Urim and Thummim, the Urim and Thummim were similarly these two triangular-shaped (and this is in the stuff that is going to be published, you can find the sights and description in there) set in a bow that he would look through. And you ought to ask yourself again the question of: If the Urim

and Thummim has that symbol contained within it, again the question becomes, Why? Why would we wind up with it embedded in the Urim itself, an instrument in which the contact between God and man is to take place? Why would it bear the symbol that appears there?

The Urim and Thummim becomes another interesting issue to think about as a device, as a mechanism. Joseph Smith would begin the process of translating the Book of Mormon, in using the Urim and Thummim, found that it was so filled with light—his comment was that "I can see everything in looking through it." It was so filled with light that he wound up having headaches because it was physically painful using the device. Later, Joseph would use a seer stone, and he would block out light because it was less painful to make the process. And later still, towards the end of the translation process, the book wasn't even open, the seer stone wasn't even used, because this "prop" had resulted in Joseph acquiring this capacity. And at the time that we get Joseph in the section 76 revelation, Joseph's just sitting in an upper room dictating the transcript from heaven while in open vision, without possession of any instrumentality, because the process has changed the person into being in contact with the heavens, which was the purpose behind it all.

Well, there is a... there is another statement made by King Benjamin that I want to suggest, too, as another way to look into the same, the same.... Mosiah chapter 2, verses 20 and 21: "*I say unto you, my brethren, that...*"

(Oh that's right, we're not in sacrament meeting—you can actually open your scriptures if you have them. Now by that I mean no disrespect. I'm honoring the letter from the First Presidency that says, Stop opening your scriptures in sacrament meeting.)

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another— I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another

—

Then he goes on to say that you're still unprofitable after all of that.

So, if you find yourself out here at the extremity of the mortal condition, you are still supported from moment to moment. The breath that you are taking in is loaned to you by God who gives you the power to live and breath and move and has sustained you from moment to moment. So if that's where you find yourself, then the deeper you look inside yourself—the farther in you go—the closer you will come to the point of contact between yourself and God.

We have a very coarse kind of intellect in the West. We have a "give us a rule; give us a formula—if I follow the steps, then, as a result of following the steps, I will produce the relevant gas, explosion, fire, compound, cake, cookie, whatever. So, all I want from you, therefore, is a list. And if I follow my list, I will produce, at the end, the fire I want, the taste I'm looking for, the whatever-it-is-that-I'm-trying-to-build." And so when **we** pick up the scriptures, it ceases to be for us a Urim and Thummim, and it turns into a rule book. It ceases to be a contact point between God and us, in which God, himself, can be speaking, and the manner of revelation that He gives to us are the words contained by other prophets elsewhere. It ceases to be that, and it turns into a bibliography for our behavior; a justification for what we're all about; a way to say, "I'm right; you're wrong." It becomes clutter and noise and nonsense—and useless.

What is inside you, sustaining you from moment to moment, is God.

What organized you and keeps you intact, moment to moment, is God.

What lies at the deepest core inside you is God.

What you should be trying to regress back to, and find within yourself, is God.

The kingdom of heaven is within you, said Christ. Well, if the kingdom of heaven is within you, if—in your core—there is a contact between you and God, then our rule books don't do us a whole lot of good.

There's another way of looking at the mangled mess that we find in the minds that we have with us. And, by the way, the vision of Daniel (where it was necessary, in the last days, to grind up Babylon into dust)—despite the fact that Babylon has been gone for 2500 years—is because Babylon's still alive and well and running around inside your head. That's the manner in which you think. You're the product of Babylon; you're the product of the Medes and Persians; you're the product of the Greeks; you're the product of the Romans. You're the product of all those things, as they've accumulated and been handed down. Therefore, **it** must be ground to dust in a regression back to a point where—within you—you find that simplicity.

There's another tradition: it hails from the East; it is, in fact, the tradition out of which Christ Himself came, and that was one that focused upon the transcendent. The Gospel of John was written by someone who fully bought into the notion of transcendence, that there is this great and powerful and over-governing word (or order or truth or light). And that the greatest embodiment of that word (or notion or truth or light) finds itself embodied fully in the person of Jesus Christ. And that great light, that great truth, came down here in the person of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us.

See and there's a statement rather on point with that in the scriptures as well. Doctrine and Covenants section 88, beginning at verse 6:

*He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in...and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; [And] the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth...life, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in **all things**, which giveth life to **all things**, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:6-13, emphasis added)*

When we read that, we say, "Cool, wonder how that science works? Wonder what rules we've got to learn in order to have that happen?" But an Eastern mystic would say, "Yes, I have seen that; yes, I have felt that."

I have stepped outside the door of a house, on a perfectly still day when there was no wind, and the temperature outside was the same temperature as what is in my body, and there was no difference in the feel between myself and the air all around me. And I was, at that moment, connected by my body and by my mind to all that is and all that ever was. And I felt behind me a bird flying, because the pressure of the wings of the bird in flight touched me, though it was distant from me; because I was it, and it was me, and the light in it and the light in me were all one. And I could feel the freedom of flight, and in that I saw God. And we would say, "Oh I get it, it's poetry! Okay, so now, let's see; that's probably 'free verse.'" And we miss what is going on. We miss the Divine connection that exists. To stand in the presence of God results in people feeling inadequate and ashamed. Isaiah's words were, "*Woe is me! ...I am undone; ...I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell [among] a people of unclean lips*" (Isaiah 6:5). Well, why is that? Because of the accumulation of junk that exists inside the clutter of our minds—and the inability to see in the simplest of things.

I'm sitting at a baseball game, and my son is playing on the Alta Hawks, and there's a bird overhead making a relentless noise, and it's distracting. And I'm the scorekeeper, and I don't spend much time paying attention to those things. But I finally look up between innings, and it's a hawk; and there aren't many hawks that fly in Sandy, Utah around baseball diamonds. And I think, "Huh, that's strange." Then I thought, "What are you doing? This might be a message. There might be something to this." So I thought, "What on earth could the meaning of the hawk be? If it's a message, what is it?" And I came up with nothing, as is almost invariably the case. When I come up with a good question, I usually have to get a lot of help to get a good answer.

Well, the next time I look up, there are two hawks circling the ball field at the Jordan baseball field—so we're on hostile territory—this is being a [BYU] Cougar up at Utah

State: we're on "evil" ground here. And there are two hawks circling the field above, going in a clockwise fashion. So it occurs to me: "I know clockwise generally means blessing; counter-clockwise generally means cursing. So, two hawks circling the field—a blessing of some sort." And I think, "Well, what on earth— what on earth could that mean?" We make it a regular habit to pray for our kids, no matter what they're doing, and on this particular occasion, we'd been praying, and my son is involved in a baseball game, and there's a hawk overhead—which is the symbol of his team, and there were two of them—and my kid comes up to bat, and I look up, and the hawks are gone. And I think, "Huh, that's strange." But we'd been praying about everything, including our kid. My son hit a double. And I thought to myself: "Okay, so that I would not miss the point that God answers prayers. So that I might not miss the point that God's hand is in everything."

One of the greatest baseball movies ever made is *The Last Samurai*, which all you good Mormons have not seen because it's rated R. It is a terrific baseball movie, because when this Western, alcoholic, civil-war veteran soldier gets immersed into this Eastern culture and tries to assimilate to their method of warfare, he's completely unable to master the art, and he's beaten every time he goes up against the fellow who is his chief nemesis. Until finally, the kid with whom he had been residing comes up to him and says, "Too many minds; too many minds. One mind." And so the character, the soldier, he finally gets it, and he ceases to worry about anything other than the reaction to the moment in which he finds himself.

One of the reasons why skiing is appealing—snow skiing—is appealing to people is because you can't plan for tomorrow, and you can't worry about yesterday, because if you take your mind off this moment, if you're anywhere other than the now, you're going to go down, and you're gonna get hurt. Riding a motorcycle's rather the same way. If you take your mind off it is— Skiing and riding a motorcycle are both very childlike experiences. God is in everything. He's absolutely everywhere. It's necessary for you to pay attention to that, in order to open yourself up to that. Because the process of revelation— In the East, what people would do to try and get a revelation would be to ponder, to meditate, and to open themselves up. In the West, what we would do to get a revelation is to fast and pray and offer God commitments of 50 different things if He—

Please, please, please, please, please, please, just this one time, just oh, please, please ever so much this, and I'll do that; I'll do that, and I'll agree to do this. And okay, what am I not doing and why... What else could... I didn't wear a white shirt to sacrament last—I'll always wear a white shirt every time I go... and I believe they ask for dads to volunteer to bless the sacrament with their sons, but I know it's something I need to do... I'm gonna bless the sacrament... and there's a list of 50 things I think, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...

And God's up there saying, "Hey I put the answer to the prayer right there—it's in the front yard, ya know."

Oh, ooooh! I gotta bake some bread and go make some bread and take it to the neighbor and welcome him to the neighborhood, and this next door neighbor who's got this attitude problem... I'll go over and tell them how wonderful sacrament meeting is— I'll get it done, I'll get it done, I'll get it done —Give me the revelation, will ya!

And the revelation was sitting right in your front yard, waiting for you to come out and to notice.

And we look upon those things and we keep ourselves distracted from, disconnected with, and incapable of opening ourselves up to the revelation which God, at all points, is offering to us. The world is filled with revelation. And our problem is that the manner in which we choose to go about asking for and opening ourselves up to it is so limited in scope, so poor in quality, so alien to the teachings of Christ, that it doesn't matter that the Lord is shouting at us all around. We simply won't pay any attention or give any heed to what it is that He has been offering all along.

Full of love. By the way, "patience of the child" is the relentless openness that a child has to instruction—to receiving more—the perpetual walking about with the empty cup. "I would like my cup to be filled." It is always— The child is always standing with the cupped hand, asking for you to fill it. And **we** go about saying, "I'm gonna offer a prayer now—what's that formula? Oh, we thank thee; we ask thee." We close ourselves off, when the child would open themselves up and extend a hand in a petition asking for God to give them something. And it doesn't matter how many different ways the Lord goes about trying to teach us that, either with scriptures or symbols or signs—it doesn't matter. We, nevertheless, remain committed to closing ourselves off from—and refusing to open up and receive—what things the Lord would offer if we simply would be patient, humble, submissive, and come to Him with an open recognition that we lack.

Full of love. Full of love is one of those things which— It's really a reflection of how close you've drawn to the center point. John, who we call Beloved, seems to have had his eyes opened as to the Savior, because at one point he defines the Lord as love. God is love. You draw nearer to that—and it's not a process of drawing nearer without difficulties. When you read, in particular, the strugglings that Enos had in the Book of Mormon, the closer you draw to the center point, the closer it is you reach to the point of love. And you begin to realize that there are people you don't love; indeed, there are people you despise. But the nearer you approach to God, the more you realize that— despite the fact that you have legitimate reasons for harboring resentments or grudges or attitudes about others—it is, nevertheless, the case that if you love, you can't hold onto those things. I could say "I hate it, I just hate this love that I have to show to other people, but I can't resist it. You know, that guy, he deserves to get what's coming to him, and here I have no more disposition to give it to him. I can actually look upon him with compassion." And yet in my rational mind, "I sure hope the Lord doesn't because he deserves to get stomped on at some point. I'm not going to do it. You know, live and let live; let him go. I bring no accusation against him."

And then the phrase, "*Willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*" (Mosiah 3:19). That's a long phrase that's capturing one idea; that is, that from the vantage point at which the connection is made between the two, at the moment in which the clarity comes, at the moment when you realize what it is God would have you do, it ceases to be a question of whether or not you're willing to do it. If you knew God wanted you to do (I don't know, choose the "thing")—sell all you have and give it to the poor? That was what was asked of the rich young man, and he didn't do it. But I commented on that fellow in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* and what he would have been involved with had he sold all he had and gone with the Lord. He would have been there for those—that final trek into and all of the events that occurred at Jerusalem. He said, "*Come follow me*" (Luke 18:22)—sell all he had and give it to the poor and come. In essence, "You're gonna be right there for the greatest moments in history. You're going to ride alongside of me." Now, we look at that as kind of a fool's bargain, because he went away mourning because he had great riches, and he didn't want to give them up. But what he didn't know was this was the last opportunity he had to see Christ alive, and he would have and could have been there for everything—all the way from there to the resurrection—had he been on board and done what he was invited to do.

Well, I'm running out of time. There are portions of the endowment (if you've been through the endowment) that suggests this chiasmic pattern. But the biggest problem is that as adults, we don't see things that children **can** see because our minds are cluttered with craftiness, cunning—we are suspicious of other people; we can be mean; we can be manipulative; we can be jealous; we can be skeptical. Much of the clutter that's in our mind we learned as we entered into and participate in adulthood and the adult services. In order to go forward, we need to go back. In order to get back in contact with God, the regression that is shown in the symbol of chiasmus is part of the process of going back to both an earlier point in time (that is, your childlike attitude) and a more open and a more spiritually-welcoming portion that lies only deep withinside you, at this point.

You know I think enough of what I've said is what I would be willing to stand on in the presence of God and defend, and so let me end by bearing testimony to you that this stuff and this symbol and this meaning and this process is, in fact, the path back to God. When you go all the way out to the farthest reach of the universe and you find God sitting upon His throne, one of the shocking realizations that you'll make when you meet God is that God has always been with you, and that He is as close to you as the very next breath you take.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

2011.10.14 The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered

October 14, 2011
Spanish Fork, Utah

Well, if technology works, we've begun.

When you run into a phrase in which you find agreement between John and Paul and Moroni, and they use virtually identical language in what they're saying, then that sort of leaps out, because these divergent personalities converge on a thought, and the thought suggests something, I think, profound. I'm going to take the one that John wrote, which is in 1 John 4:15, and since this is not a sacrament meeting you won't offend me if you get your scriptures out and you choose to turn to 1 John 4:15. The statement that all three of them make is: "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

When it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which according to Joseph Smith comprehended all truth. It is our own fear that limits our capacity to gain from what's being offered. It's a measure of our ingratitude, when declining the invitation that Joseph extended to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, we elect to withdraw fearfully and conclude that we're just not interested in what might have been had.

It's actually a trick of the devil to get people to close their minds and close their hearts, because they fear what they may be learning will do damage to them. You see, when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit and then Satan called to their attention the fact that they were naked, that's the beginning of the mischief that gets visited on humanity by the adversary who seeks to bind and control and to limit the freedom of all mankind, to imprison them. He pointed out to them that they ought to be ashamed. And when therefore they heard the voice of God speaking they withdrew, not because of shame, but because the shame triggered within them – fear. They were afraid to come into the presence of that being who they knew to be just and holy, because now they were in a state in which fearfully they were naked. Their "nakedness" came to them as a consequence of understanding the difference between what they were and what they are, and that knowledge came to them by partaking, out of season, of the fruit that they weren't scheduled to receive a command to part of, until after a day of rest had been observed. So now, not only are they naked before God, they are also violating the Sabbath and beginning the labor of the mortal existence out of time, out of sequence, out of season. That's the way a great number of errors are made in humanity.

You see, we're commanded *not* to partake of some things out of season, and then we are commanded to partake within season, and when we get the timing wrong we wind up with difficulties and problems that ought not to have been visited. The other references on that same statement, about the opposite of love is fear, is 2 Timothy 1:7 and Moroni 8:16.

Repentance is a critical thing. It is the message of the Book of Mormon. It is the greatest message that's contained within the Book of Isaiah, and it is the message of all the true

prophets. The thing that stirs you up to repenting is actually two things: the first thing is to awaken to your awful situation, and the second thing is to arise, and that is to connect with the source which will cure what is wrong with you because we are not self-curing. We are filled with that same shame that came to us in the beginning as a consequence of doing what we were not supposed to be doing. The greatest way in which the adversary keeps us in a state of slumber is to prevent us from looking about and becoming awakened to the awful situation in which we find ourselves. Hugh Nibley commented on more than one occasion that there is nothing quite so terrible as being awaked out of a deep sleep. No one really likes that. When it comes right down to it, unconsciousness is a very good thing, particularly when what you are looking at is what we have here.

Alma the Younger, a fairly expert source on the subject of repentance, after he had been seasoned by his experience in being converted and his experience in preaching the Gospel, and his experience in fatherhood, gave some advice to his own children. After giving them a talk and an explanation about the demands of justice on the one hand, and mercy on the other, and how they are balanced with one another, and how mercy can overcome the demands of justice but it is not by robbing it, it's by satisfying it. It's just a brilliant doctrinal discourse. Then he turns in a series of statements at the end. This is in chapter 42 of Alma, beginning in verse 27. He says: "Therefore, O my son, whosoever come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come..." It is free, and it is not only free, it is non-compulsive. It is purely voluntary. Anyone is free to accept it, and anyone is free to reject it. But in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds. That is, offered freely, available to all, non-compulsory, but you are *accountable*. Therefore, when you elect to decline what is offered to you, then you receive at the last day the recompense that you merited. Those who refuse receive whatever it is that comes as a consequence of their refusal. Those who receive, receive what is offered.

28 If he has desired to do evil, and has not repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God.

29 And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance.

Don't trouble yourself, unless it is motivational, to have change. Repentance simply means change. Repentance actually means you turn from the way, the direction, you are facing. Whatever the direction is you happen to be facing, change from that and face God. When you turn to God and face Him, when that is the object of your focus and your attention, then you've repented.

30 O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let

the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility.

Well, that's a graphic expression: being "brought down to the dust." Dust is something that is below, it's beneath, it's on the ground. You've got to grovel in order to get there but that's the point. "Awaking and arising" begins from a position in which you are in the dust. You are in the dust anyway, we all are. It's only by virtue of waking up and discovering that you happen to be rather dusty that you decide to get up and dust yourself off. That is the condition in which we find ourselves.

Therefore, when we look at the voices that would like to call attention to whatever it is that they are trying to draw your attention to in this world, one of the things that Alma suggests might be helpful are those voices that happen to be saying that there is something amiss, there is something that deserves your attention; to repent, to change the course you are on, to turn and face God, and to allow the only one who can offer salvation to offer salvation.

In *Ten Parables* there is a story of "Hope and Tarwater" – which by the way is a parable that has multiple meanings, but the intended meaning is that both Hope and Tarwater are the pre-existence, but you run with that when you read it. Tonight what it's about is the attitude that you bring with you. You bring it from the pre-existence, but, the attitude that you bring with you to anything. You see, what Lance found in the forest was exactly what Lance thought he would find in the forest. What James found in the forest was exactly what James thought he would find in the forest. Neither one of them could escape the view that they brought with them into the condition in which they find themselves. It's a painful experience to have the suggestion made that the way in which you have always entertained the world view is, in fact, skewed, amiss, ugly, wrong, deceived, malevolent even.

When I was 19 – actually it started even earlier than that – but when I was 19 they succeeded at last in overcoming my opposition to the message that the missionaries brought to me. I expended with liberal abandon the quantity of missionaries who came to teach me. I was a "golden contact" because the mission field was a scurvy lot of hard-headed New Englanders who had no inclination to listen to what Mormons had to say about their religion. I made the error of complimenting a fellow and it was mistaken as interest, and so they were fetching me with pamphlets. I literally showed up with, "Hey, come in please." I literally showed up to missionary discussions with a six pack of beer. I asked if I could light a cigar in the living room. They were a BYU graduate, a Molly Mormon; I look back now and I cringe. I was a cretin and I had no idea. Eventually something happened which got me to pay attention and to entertain the criteria that they were saying was the correct criteria by which to measure the message that they were offering. The message they were offering required an entire shift to my world view. I'd been raised from my youth in Idaho to understand that Joseph Smith was a charlatan and a fraud, and that Mormons were deceived, misled, and worshipped a false god, on and on, all the ridiculousness that you hear in the political debates of our country even now.

I had to make the leap from the world view of *'Lance in the forest'* to the world view of *'James in the forest'* in order to say, "There might be something to this." That's the problem, after all, of the restored Gospel – there really might be something to this. If there is something to this, then how important is it, and if it's that important, then how thoroughly ought we to examine it? How relentlessly ought we to search into it? And, how carefully ought we consider it? If there is some additional light that can be shed about any topic, how freely, how openly ought we to discuss it? I have no fear whatsoever about examining Joseph Smith from top to bottom, through and through, every minute of his life. I don't have any concerns about that.

I think anyone who is **unwilling** to entertain a thorough going examination of the life and the ministry of Joseph Smith is demonstrating fear, which is the opposite of love. We don't have details about the life of Moses. We don't have details about the life of Peter. We have an extraordinary limited vantage point from which to examine either one of them. We don't have much in the way of detail about the life of Nephi. In fact, everything that we have about him is autobiographical. Therefore, to some extent, Nephi is going to tell us a narrative about himself that doesn't give a full, fair, and impartial accounting of why it was his brothers continually found themselves not persuaded by the message that Nephi was delivering. I understand there are those who are hard-hearted, and I understand there are those who resent and envy the younger brother when the younger brother supplants the older brother, particularly when the supplanting takes place very early on in a difficult life's journey, when he returns with the emblems of kingship, with the possession of the sword of Laban, with the brass plates, with all of the indicia that he is the leader. Then during the trek in the wilderness he actually assumes the role. By the time they get to the coast, now he is the one, and not his father, through whom the revelation is coming about the construction of the boat. The supplanting has been complete by the time they get to the coast. When Lehi dies in the new world, you've now taken off the one governing rallying point and the rebellion is in full swing, but what might have been done in the way of a list of legitimate criticisms of Nephi by Laman and Lemuel, if we were willing to hear their side of the story, we don't know and we don't have that. But when it comes to the Prophet Joseph Smith, I do have that! You see, I have the written accounts of those who hate him. I have the written accounts of those who conspired to kill him. I do not have autobiographical material. I have a wealth of information about him.

I can still choose to be *'Lance entering the forest.'* I can say I want to hear every word of criticism that anyone ever fabricated against the Prophet Joseph Smith, because it salves my conscience and it makes it easier on me. I needn't "awake" and I needn't "arise," I needn't do anything about a message that may be authentic and comes from God because I find flaws in the messenger. Praise Philastus Hilbert and those other ones; good for them. Even Sidney had some helpful things to add.

When you have the opportunity to take and reckon the stature of a prophet from both those who love him and those who hate him; both those who merely admire but are not converted by him, and those who resent and are unconverted by him but feel no need to

turn violent on the topic; when you have a mix of those various personalities, those various viewpoints converging on the meaning of the Joseph Smith; the more of that that I can gather in one place and consider – particularly as I consider it in light of the disposition of the person involved – the more of Joseph's humanity comes through. Joseph Smith was not a deeply flawed human. Joseph Smith had a great deal about him that was downright commendable. But he was too eager to take some people into his confidence and he was oftentimes misled because he attributed motives to people that reflected what his inner motives were.

You see, I have the virtue in my life of having been hired to handle the problems of other people as their attorney. The shine has been taken off of the business leader, the Church leader. The fraudulent purveyor of a security scan whose entrée into the trust of those that give him their money is the fact that they are an LDS bishop, or they are a stake president. I taught a course at BYU Education Week on fraud in one of their Education Week cycles many years ago. I offered it as one of the "badges of fraud," and a bad deal. If the person who is trying to get you to part with your money tells you in the first fifteen minutes what their religion is, and what their calling in the Church is, that is an indicator. The purpose behind the "sheep's clothing" always is to mislead. The only reason you don't see the clothing is because you hope that by appearing superficially to conform to an image you mislead and you deceive. It is always the substance that matters. It is always the underlying message that matters. And, in general, what matters is: does it cause you to awaken? Does it cause you to arise? Relentlessly, the condition in which we find ourselves is one in which it is absolutely necessary that you awake and arise and that you shake off the dust and that you get out of the slumber in which you find yourself. Now, there are those who have awakened only to find themselves in a nightmare of their own making because the reaction to awakening is violent.

I don't swim in the shallow end of the pool. The only end I've ever been in is the deep end of the pool. It began when, indoctrinated by a Baptist mother, I knew these missionaries were out to perpetuate fraud and I had to overcome that. By overcoming that and by putting it to the test I got an answer to prayer. There is no argument you can advance that will succeed in altering that reality. Therefore, when someone coming to me after that point says, "Yeah, but they didn't tell you that Joseph Smith had wives! Plural!" My reaction is, "Well, okay." I grew up in Idaho, mind you. I've said, translated into – I guess I've read on a blog that even this is offensive: "No crap!" But you know... "I've gotta look into that! Well sure enough, there it is, right there in Section 132! (gasp)" I suspended judgment on the entire plural marriage issue from the moment that a critic trying to dissuade me from conversion first raised the issue. I have to tell you it was a real low priority for me. It's weird, okay. I don't care if you're an advocate. I don't even care if you practice it. It's weird, okay? I love my wife. I don't want another one. In fact, my view is that the more you love your wife the less you want another one. The more delightful the relationship is the less need there is to multiply complexity or try to find... If Joseph was willing to take that on then some day I'll look into it and try and figure it. I suspended the judgment on the issue and I actually didn't reach closure on that topic until maybe four or five years ago; it just wasn't that important.

I've reached closure on the issue and you have the benefit of what it is now that I view the correct view of that topic is in the last book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and why Joseph practiced it. It's not what some folks suggest. There was news on this topic while I was still in manuscript form and I could have added the DNA testing that had gone on, because they've been updating that, and there was another study. My recollection is that the source that reported it was the Salt Lake Tribune and not the Deseret News which again, is a reflection somewhat of fearing to broach some topics because the circulation of the Desert News is a different demographic. We ought to be very open and we ought to be very fearless. Nevertheless, they've been trying to figure out all of the genetic markers that relate to Joseph Smith and his purported prodigious sexual exploits with the plural wives. Even as of a year and a half ago, the last remaining trail that could have led to Joseph Smith as having sired a child came to a dead end. Right now the only children that Joseph Smith has ever been able to demonstrable have fathered by genetic markers are those children of Emma Smith, and that's it. Now we have that story about Eliza R. Snow and the pregnancy, and all that, and we don't have any progeny from that. Therefore, you can put that one on the "you probably ought to investigate that further." Nevertheless, Joseph Smith fathered children with Emma Smith.

Joseph Smith – as I walk through my thinking on the topic in *Come Let Us Adore Him* – got the answer to his inquiry concerning plural wives in 1829. It came to him as they were translating Jacob chapter 2. Just like Joseph Smith, as they're translating the Book of Mormon, he encounters the topic of baptism and he goes and he inquires, and John the Baptist appears to him. It is translating the Book of Mormon that is the trigger for the inquiry. He translates the Jacob chapter 2 material. Now, keep in mind, he began with the record of Lehi abridged by Mormon, and he went all the way through 116 pages, at which point he entrusted Martin Harris. The 116 pages were lost and Joseph commenced the translation from the point that it stopped after the 116 pages to the end. When he got to the end then he was told, go back and take the small plates of Nephi that had been included for a wise purpose, and translate them. So he translated the small plates of Nephi in which we find from First Nephi, the words of Mormon. Therefore, in translation you pick up after that period King Mosiah, King Benjamin, to the end of the Book of Mormon, and then you move to the beginning of First Nephi. The translation and the raising of the topic in the translation of Jacob 2 occurs very late in the process. The Book of Mormon is all but finished. You still have some of Jacob. You still have Enos. You have Omni and the rest of those through Words of Mormon left to do, but the work is essentially complete by that point.

He inquires and he gets an answer to his inquiry. The answer that he gets informs him about the eternal marriage covenant. First of all, when something provokes a person to inquire of the Lord, particularly when what they are inquiring about is something that really matters to them about which they would really like to get an answer, they're struggling; an interior lighting problem with your barges, for example. That's a pretext used by the Lord in order to get you in a circumstance in which you are petitioning and open so that He can tell you something that really matters. We'll take care of your interior lighting problem right there. Now what did you see? Okay, let's get after it. Now

let's talk about redemption of you, Mahonri, from the fall, taking you back into my presence, and then let's give you a plenary tour through the endowment so that you can know how everything fits together. But the problem that he approached Him with was interior lighting.

Now, Joseph is approaching about the plural wife thing, and the answer that he gets begins with the eternal marriage covenant. The eternal marriage covenant, as we walk through in the book, "a wife," "a wife." Everything is phrased in the singular through all the beginning of this in which it is the mandatory commandment that must be obeyed, and then appended to the end of it is then the answer to the question that he posed. "Oh yeah. On that, we let some people do that under two specific circumstances that are outlined in the book."

We get Section 132 on July 12, 1843 when Hyrum asked Joseph to put it into writing so that Hyrum could take it to Emma and he could persuade Emma. When Joseph Smith dictates the revelation on July 12, 1843 he includes not just that first answer but he includes revelations generally on this topic all the way down through events that were then unfolding in Nauvoo. There are at least five different revelations contained in Section 132 but there were at least six revelations on the topic of plural marriage, one of which Joseph didn't bother putting into the narrative of Section 132. The one that is missing is the one in which Joseph was commanded by an 'angel with a drawn sword' to practice this, which he found to be detestable. Joseph Smith complied, after he had been told to comply, and after he had been told. Eliza R. Snow's account of that is the correct one, the most accurate one. He was told that he would forfeit priesthood if he did not comply with the requirement. Therefore, Joseph complied. It was a dreadful ordeal to him but he complied. After having complied, the revelation and his dictating picks up again, and Joseph is rewarded for having laid on the altar the thing that he did not want to lay on the altar. Against the Lord's commandment he complied. Joseph's calling and election is made sure. Joseph was given the sealing power. All of that happened before 1831 because Joseph uses the sealing power in 1831 in his ministry.

Which leads us then to the topic I intend to talk about tonight, which is The Mission of Elijah. We have a narrative on Elijah that you are welcome to accept. I'm going to explain only how I understand it. You are free to choose. You can "take the waters of life freely and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come." You don't need to come with me. You don't need to come with any man. You can be content as you are.

Well, the story of Elijah actually begins a long time ago. (I'm checking my recorder when I do that. I want to see what it does with that.) "Three years previous to the death of Adam he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah who were all High Priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. And the Lord appeared unto *THEM*. And they rose up and blessed Adam and called him Michael the Prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him, I have set thee to be at the head, a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince forever over them. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation

and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generations. These things were all written in the book of Enoch." (D&C 107: 53-57, emphasis added.) He was one of the seven who were invited. He was one of the seven who participated.

Here you have an interesting setting in which on the earth, previous to the death of Adam, we have a gathering in which there are seven people who are correctly qualified to stand before the Lord. The Lord comes and appears unto *THEM*. These seven who are present with Adam are now lineal descendents of Adam, members of the same family. Therefore, I would suspect they had all things in common. And the Lord came, even if only for this ceremonial moment, and dwelt among them.

One of the participants in that moment, on that day, in that group, was Enoch. Enoch is the one who records it. It will be testified of at the proper time.

Here we have the definition of Zion. It is diminutive, it is temporary, and it is tightly confined to a narrow group, and it is not this thundering congregation of 3.7 million temple recommend holders, all crowding like we see right now on Wall Street. (For goodness sake, get some Porta-Potties there.) It's a very small group. It is a group to whom it is possible for the Lord to come and dwell among them. Among their number, then, is Enoch. So we have Zion.

If you want the criteria, and we have a description, part of what we have in the Book of Moses given to us by Joseph Smith. By the way, I was reading in Doctrine and Covenants Section 107, verses 53-57, in the account of the appearance with Adam-ondi-Ahman. In Moses 7:16 we find this: "From that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them. But the Lord came and dwelt with his people and they dwelt in righteousness," which is an interesting contrast. Here you have wars and bloodshed on the one hand, but then you have the Lord, and the Lord dwelling among people who are living in righteousness. "The fear of the Lord was upon all nations so great was the glory of the Lord that was upon his people." (*Id.* v. 17). It was the "glory of the Lord upon his people", it was not the glory of the Lord, it was the people that intimidated. The Lord doesn't show Himself to the wicked except unto destruction, but the Lord shows Himself unto those who are prepared. And then the "glory of the Lord upon them" that others find intimidating. That was the case with the people of Zion.

"And the Lord blessed the land and they were blessed upon the mountains and upon the high places and did flourish." (Moses 7: 17.) That is literal. Zion is not in a valley. "And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart and one mind, dwelt in righteousness, and there were no poor among them. (*Id.* v. 18) — and the Lord dwelt among them. It's a socio-economic problem for us.

Let's take a look at Enoch then, because Enoch becomes the next figure that is important to understand Elijah. Again, I am explaining my understanding of the relevance of Elijah, which is not the story that other people tell concerning Elijah. You are free to accept what other folks say because, well, who am I?

So, we have Enoch in D&C 107:48. Enoch was 25 years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. And he was 65 "when Adam blessed him." That ought to tell you something right there. In *Passing the Heavenly Gift* one of the things that I suggest is useful to understand is that ordination is an invitation. The invitation is authoritative and available through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and it is the mechanism by which an authoritative invitation is extended to mankind after the days of Joseph Smith. You do not get an invitation elsewhere.

However, when you walk through the lives of all these men, whose lives have some import, even Nephi's brother Jacob, who was ordained by Nephi, talks about his ordination by his brother, and then later confirms, "I got my errand from the Lord." (Jacob 1:17.) There's a difference between the invite that is extended by ordination, and the blessing that comes when the authority is conferred, and when the power is conferred. You are seeing that dichotomy because Enoch was 25 years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. He was 65 when Adam blessed him and "he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God 365 years making him 430 years old and he was translated." (D&C 107:49.) So, he is ordained, he is blessed, he is "continually before the Lord". Then we pick up the story back again in Moses 6:25: "And Enoch lived 65 years and begat Methuselah."

Enoch had been ordained to the priesthood. These things matter. They matter more than you can possibly imagine unless you comprehend the Gospel of Christ. He is ordained at 25, he is blessed at 65, and he fathers a child at 65. There is something coincidental with Enoch becoming approved by the Lord and Enoch becoming completed as a person; because there is neither the man nor the woman separately in the Lord. They are both together. The narrative assumes that you might know something about the Gospel, and therefore assumes when you see this that you'll take note of it, because man cannot be saved separately and singly. Man is saved in a union that's designed, like God, to produce progeny. Without the woman there is no salvation. There is no happiness without the woman, and when you manage to cajole, intimidate, berate and belittle and to finally get reluctant submission by a woman, you haven't produced anything worthy of eternal preservation. You haven't produced anything that God will take note of and say, "Hey! This looks like Heaven. Let's hold on to *this* for all eternity. Because this is an environment inside of which we can produce progeny and they will grow up to something other than street hoodlums in the Kolob sector." It doesn't work that way.

If you have read the Tenth Parable, the thing which caused the stirring to begin was the notice the angels took that here on the ground, on the earth, there was something that looked like Heaven. There was a man and a woman whose experience and circumstances mirrored the same kind of things that the angels, who are watching, recognized from where they come from. They went and they got the Lord, and the Lord came and He evaluated, and he said, "We're going to save this one. Here's the to-do list. Now get busy." Eighteen years later they got busy.

Here we have in Moses. [Enoch] has fathered a child and "Enoch journeyed in the land among the people, and as he journeyed the spirit of God descended out of Heaven and abode upon him; and he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people." (Moses 6:27.) It goes by real quick, but God just took ownership of Enoch as His son. You ought to note that. That means something, too. "Enoch, my son." He said, "Prophesy unto this people, and say unto them—Repent, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people and my fierce anger is kindled against them for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off. And for these many generations, (ever) since the day that I created them, they have gone astray, and have denied me, and have sought their own counsels in the dark; and in their own abominations have they devised murder, and have not kept the commandments, which I have given unto the father, Adam." (Moses 6:27-28.)

"And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth, before the Lord, and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; (that doesn't mean what you think it means) wherefore am I thy servant?" He is not slow of speech. He was a brilliant man; he was an articulate man. He was a capable man. He wrote the record. He is envisioned as the Great Scribe. He is thought, he is the one that brings wisdom, that brings knowledge.

He is "slow of speech" because, quite frankly, he's rather think about it than talk about it. He would rather consider it than speak about it. He would rather be left alone than to be made public. He would rather have his privacy and his family than he would to minister to people who don't give a damn about what he has to say, and who think that he is a wild man come among them, because he has no business delivering the message.

Well, the Lord wouldn't take that. "Go forth, do as I have commanded thee." (Id. v. 32.) The Lord says, "Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good. Say unto this people: Choose ye this day, to serve the Lord God who made you. Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify." (Id. vs. 32-34.)

Enoch is told at this point that in this walk that he is assuming, being a person "slow of speech," and a reluctant draftee, that the mountains will flee before him and the rivers will turn their course and Enoch will abide in Him. Enoch will abide in the Lord and the Lord will abide in Enoch.

This is a statement that is made when he is 65. But you have to understand that it is some several hundred years later before the word of Enoch has the effect that the Lord says will take place at this point, because the Lord, who has all things in front of Him, can see where this is going. But Enoch, who is down here, though a seer, isn't there yet. It's not "pixie dust." It is acquired in exactly the same way in every generation, by everyone who acquires it, and it is acquired through the exercise of faith. The way by which people exercise faith is to conform their actions to the things that they believe in,

even when the actions that they take are difficult. Even with what the Lord asks of you is something which you are very reluctant to lay on the altar. Even when everyone will hate you for what it is that you do. Nevertheless, he did what he was asked. This is interesting. His ministry gets covered there in Moses Chapter 6 – really interesting, but we're not going to have time to go through all that in detail.

The Lord gives to Enoch a description of the Holy Ghost. The description that he gives in Moses 6:61 are these words: "Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment." That is the definition of the Holy Ghost. On the list was the word "Comforter." It is a definition that Jesus will endorse later. I don't know if He had the record of Enoch in front of Him when He made that endorsement. But it was Jesus speaking to Enoch at the time that this revelation was given, so that shows up as a common thing.

If you take verse 61 and you say, this is the definition of the Holy Ghost: The Holy Ghost is the "record of Heaven." The Holy Ghost is the "Comforter." The Holy Ghost is "the peaceable things of immortal glory." The Holy Ghost is "the truth of all things." The Holy Ghost is "that which quickeneth all things which maketh alive all things." The Holy Ghost is "that which knoweth all things and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment." You will get a lot closer to understanding about why it is that the Holy Ghost is a "personage of spirit that dwelleth within you" and is not a personage of tabernacle because otherwise it could not dwell within you, and other such interesting things,

Well, Enoch launches his ministry, and at some point in his ministry he does do what the Lord said he would do some hundreds of years earlier. In Moses Chapter 7 now, we are a whole chapter later and this is verse 13: "And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him." That is one of the unique attributes about the existence of Zion. When you have Zion in place then it is the Lord who fights the battles against it. You do not need to have a weapon's budget in the Zion camp. It doesn't happen. The battle to be fought is fought by the Lord. In the descriptions given through the Prophet Joseph Smith about the last days the people decide that they will not take on Zion, because Zion is too terrible because of the Lord. It is not their munitions. In fact, the description includes a statement that those who will not take up arms against their neighbor are the only ones that flee to Zion and the only ones that aren't out killing.

Which then raises the conundrum: Why does the remnant which will build Zion "tear in pieces and trample under foot" the gentiles? Why do they do that? Oh, stop thinking with a damn howitzer in your hand, and start thinking about the image of Babylon that is

going to be torn in pieces and be trodden under foot. You do not need anything other than the truth to tear in pieces the Gentile's kingdom. And it will be trodden under foot by the truth.

Zion's final development says: "The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish." (Moses 7:17.) That's where you'll find Zion. Not on a plain and not in a valley. You will find it in the high places on the mount, not merely symbolically. No one will have a height from which to peek down into the goings-on in Zion. They will be beneath, and Zion will be above. Zion's presence will be terrible. *I'm not going up there. You going up there? I've got a flak vest and I'm not going up there.* It's the same problem Israel had before the mountain when Moses was up on the mountain communing with the Lord.

Mountaintops are acceptable substitutes for temples. I doubt the people of Zion are going to have a budget with which to build what needs to be built. Well, the Lord has a way of making do. "The Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart, and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them." (Moses 7:18.) There were no poor among them physically; there were no poor among them spiritually. They did not compete, they cooperated. They did not envy, they shared. They did not look to pass a zoning law. I will tell you how to ruin Zion, how to keep it from coming – pass a zoning law. Let's police the neighborhood. Let's get some restrictive covenants. The instant you start to regulate Zion it's gone. It's slipped right between your fingers. No man need say to another: 'know ye the Lord; for they're all going to know him who dwell in Zion.'

I've thought about writing a fictional account of this curious city in which people who have children live in big houses, and people who have no children live in small houses. No one has a job or a schedule but everyone works. One day the lead character gets up, walks outside, and notices that the lawn could use mowing. So he goes and finds a lawn mower and he starts mowing. He mows from one place in his house across the city to the other side. Everywhere he goes that he finds grass, he mows. When he finishes after a couple of weeks he returns to his house and says, "Hey, the grass has grown." So he starts mowing again. He does this because he feels like mowing the grass for the time being.

Then after a season he notices that there is only one person working in the bakery. Well, he's never worked in a bakery, but he decides he'll go see what it's like to work in a bakery—and he rather likes that. So he spends a year in the bakery doing that. And he wonders whatever happened to the lawns. They've have been cut, but he doesn't know who has been cutting them. On his way to try and find someone who is cutting the yards, because he liked doing that, he has something in common with them. He would like to know how they liked it and what their pattern was. "How did you do that?" But on his way, he gets distracted by the orchard that needs harvesting, so he spends the fall harvesting that.

So the story just ends, with complete chaos. A total ungoverned society, in which everyone is at peace, and no one has a job, and everyone works, and the only thing that motivates is what needs doing. "Hey, let's go do it." And let's do it for as long as we feel like doing it, and then let's do something else.

Our vision of Zion is regimented, regulated. "This is your assignment. We have called you; we are going to sustain you. We're gonna put your ass in this position, and you are going to park it there, and you're going to do this stuff, and you magnify that job!" Now, we're not sure what "magnify" means, but I can tell you, you better be calling attention to yourself so that everyone notices, because we can't have the invisible lawn mower. We can't have the invisible baker. We can't have the invisible in harmony with everyone around them orchard harvester because this is the "Zion Reich!" As soon as you do that, it is gone. It's slipped between your fingers. Zion is without compulsion. Zion will occur when the Lord brings again Zion. And it will happen perfectly naturally.

We've got to get after this because we're trying to figure out what the role of Elijah is.

(Moses 7:20-21, 23): "And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed. And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch" and he saw everything. And "...Zion was taken up into heaven, Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were before him;" and so on. So Enoch and his city depart.

Now we have not only the example from Section 107 of the appearance of the Lord with... [Momentary banter with audience.] (Yee-haw! We're going to build us some Zion!)

Enoch and his city were taken up. Noah remained behind. Again, here I am offering you my view. I am not offering you something which has been endorsed by anyone, although there are those folk on the fringe who have suggested the same thing that I think. But it is my view that Melchizedek is the new name given to Shem, and that Shem is the son of Noah. When it's talking about the priesthood through the fathers unto Noah as the basis for a doctrinal interpretation, that that means that there were generations separating Noah from Melchizedek; that's not how I read the verse. I read it to say, "Through the fathers, that is, from Adam down to Noah," and the connection between Noah and Melchizedek is immediate, father and son, and Shem is the son, which is why then the next appearance of Zion happens as a connection. These initial appearances of Zion in this world are connected, because the first one in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman occurs, and Enoch is present. The second one occurs with Enoch, who was present when the Lord had dwelt with people before. The third one will occur when Melchizedek, who was acquainted with those on the other side of the flood – he's an adult when they enter the Ark. He knew of Enoch, and the option. At that moment in history, here's the dilemma: God is going to destroy the world but a group inside the world had attained the status of Zion. Since they are in the state of being Zion the world cannot destroy them. It is fair game for the wicked to destroy the righteous. The wicked are allowed to destroy the righteous all the time. If you don't believe that then go ask

Amulek, whose suggestion to Alma was rejected because Alma was saying, "Oh, no, this is a good deal. Let them burn. The Lord is getting mad right now. Something's going to happen." These people are received up in glory. These people being killed by the wicked, the wicked get to kill them! And they get to kill them because then God will judge the wicked by the taking of the lives. That's the system. The most righteous man who ever lived was allowed to be killed by the wicked. In fact, was indispensable that the wicked get to kill the righteous because otherwise there could not have an Atonement then made. Therefore, Christ was slain at the hands of wicked men. But we have a problem with Zion because when the Lord sets about to destroy, the Lord cannot destroy the righteous, and He's going to obliterate life on the earth except for those who were in the Ark or those in Zion. The wicked can't come against them and all are going to be destroyed.

So what do you do? Well, we've got a new status for humanity. The new status is you take them into heaven. But you don't take people into heaven without an associated calling. There is no reason ever to take a person off the earth, even if they're righteous. Abraham died and was buried. Christ died and He was more righteous than any who ever lived. You don't take them off the earth unless they have a calling to minister, so we have a calling to minister. Enoch and his city could not be destroyed when the Lord was going to destroy. [He] and his city were called and they were given two callings: Their first assignment is as ministering angels, not only here but elsewhere. Their second calling – I don't want to appear irreverent but really they're the crowd – they're the cheering group backing up the Lord at His Coming. They are the ones when He comes in the clouds with the angels. That group is Enoch's people. They are the certifiers, they are the testifiers, they are the chorus, they are the entourage.

There is a reason why our tinhorn dictators and our phony idols have an entourage. It's to mimic the real deal, because when the Lord comes again in His glory he's going to come with an entourage. So they got the job, Enoch and his folk.

Melchizedek, who was acquainted with that condition, in my view had to be offered the option. Going on the Ark and staying down here when there is a group that are going to be leaving and going elsewhere, Noah was qualified to leave. All of them were qualified to leave and they had to be willing to stay. When you are allowed the option, and when you are going to stay but you know that there are those who are taken up, it seems like a reasonable request for Melchizedek to make, that after he finishes his ministry here that he also should be allowed to take a people with him.

In the course of events Melchizedek established a city, a City of Peace, a city of righteousness. He was the king and he was the priest, and he presided over his people in righteousness. Abraham, who was converted to the truth, came to Melchizedek. They had a ceremonial get-together in which, among other things, there is a sacral meal. Melchizedek, who has been waiting for this moment, *'hands the football'* to Abraham and says, "At last! Me and my people are gone!" And so, once again, Zion flees.

When Zion flees again, now we have the people of Melchizedek. Notice, if you will, that the Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God has been renamed the Priesthood of Enoch, and then renamed again the Melchizedek priesthood. That name has become rather more enduring because in each case they came and they established Zion, and when they established Zion they were taken with their people up into heaven.

Now we have...I was going to read this stuff about Melchizedek. You'll find that in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis Chapter 14. It's a long enough section that it's back in the back of your bible, beginning with verse 25:

"And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram. Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch," (Vs. 25-27.) He's got the same covenant as had been previously made with Enoch. That tells you something if you're paying attention. "It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as (received) his name." (Vs. 28-29.)

Joseph Smith tells us when he got the Melchizedek Priesthood, in my view. And in my view it was not an incident that occurred in which Peter, James and John were present. But it was "the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county" (D&C 128:21) when Joseph received the Melchizedek priesthood. Peter, James and John, like other angelic ministrants, came to deliver keys but not Melchizedek Priesthood because the priesthood of Melchizedek comes but of God. "It was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. We can ordain people all day long, but the manner the ordination assumes power is by 'the calling of God's own voice'." That's the description given by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the translation of Genesis 14. He tells us that event took place from the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, as referred to in D&C 128:21.

D&C 128 is a letter Joseph Smith wrote in Nauvoo. It's late in his ministry. It's a letter that Joseph wrote while he is in hiding in Nauvoo and he's trying to stay in contact with the saints. I make no reference to this in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* but it is another example, just as it is a glaring omission from the testimony of Oliver Cowdery, that he makes no mention of Elijah's appearance in what we have in D&C Section 110. So also, in the listing of the angelic ministrants who came to Joseph Smith, in a letter that he composed in Nauvoo in 1842, six years after the appearance of Elijah. To our current way of informing one another he does not include Elijah in the letter or the list. And throughout the time period that he's speaking in Nauvoo – you can look at the Nauvoo talks, and we will look at some of them – Joseph speaks of the return of Elijah as a still future event. If the return of Elijah is a still future event in 1842, 1843, and 1844, then the appearance of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple cannot answer to the mission of Elijah.

But now we're ahead of the story. Let's go back to Melchizedek for a moment. In the case of Melchizedek, once again we see a repetition of the pattern in which there is a prophet-ministrant and a people who respond to the message of repentance, and people coming up to the state in which the Lord can come and dwell with them and then they are taken up into heaven. And then the narrative of the appearance of Zion evaporates from the scriptural record. Now, we do have the Nephite experience where the Lord came and He dwelt among them. They were not taken up into heaven. For a moment I want to stay on the idea of Zion's ascent up the heavenly corridor. Just like the first Zion with Adam, all of those, including Adam, died, except Enoch and his city, and they did not die, they were taken up into heaven. Then we have Melchizedek, and his city was taken up into heaven. The subsequent experiences where the Lord visited with people, whether it is in Jerusalem or whether it is in the new world, did not result in Zion going up and ascending into heaven. It didn't happen. But there is another incident which occurs when Moses is taken up into heaven. And then there is yet another incident that occurs when Elijah is taken up into heaven.

Let's turn to some of what we have going on with Elijah. Elijah is an interesting fellow. He raises someone from the dead. He helps the widow. This is in 1 Kings Chapter 17. He helps the widow of Zarephath, miraculously saved. He goes up on the mountain. On the mountain he encounters the Lord. The Lord tells him the way in which he can recognize the voice of God forever thereafter. He confronts the priests of Baal and he calls down fire from heaven. It's a rather remarkable demonstration, after they have dumped water all over – this is in 1 Kings Chapter 18 – and fills the trench with water after they've made the sacrifice. He calls down fire from heaven and then kills 400 priests of Baal. All of this going on rather testifies that Elijah is now in possession of some of the power and spirit of God, and at this point in his career he's developed to becoming quite adept at its use. He's also stopped being inhibited about its public display, and so Elijah kills 400 of these guys.

Then the moment comes when Elijah is going to leave. It's interesting because... Well, I don't know how much of that to get into. Elijah's coming departure is not a secret. When Elisha and Elijah are on their way to the place at which, on the day on which Elijah's going to be taken up into heaven, as they're going along there are folks saying, "Hey, Elisha, you're losing Elijah today." This is the day he's going. It's not a secret. It's going to happen. So Elijah's on his way and Elisha's with him, and Elijah wants to know, "Hey, you know this priesthood you've got and this thing you do." (There's a movie about that.) He's saying, "Can I get some of that?" Elijah, recognizing that this is not a connection which men form among men but this kind of connection is one that requires a connection to heaven, tells Elisha, "If you're with me when I'm taken up." The heavens are opened; the presence of God is there. The witness will be there and the power will be conferred. "So if you witness it, it will be yours as well." Elisha was with him when he was taken up. In a sign of benevolence and charity Elijah cast his mantle down and Elisha picked it up. When he got to the River Jordan he struck it with the mantle and the river stopped and he walked over on dry ground, and Elisha knew 'now has that descended upon me,' and then Elisha's ministry continues from there.

This, in my view, is the reason why Elijah must return. In the last days that system that began at first with Zion going up to heaven is going to invert. It is going to open again but this time instead of Zion leaving, Zion is going to stay and it is going to be joined by those who went away. They will come again. There is this marvelous description of how, when they return, they will fall on one another's necks and they will kiss one another, because Zion below and Zion above will be joined.

The purpose of the return of Elijah, which Joseph talked about being a yet future event in Nauvoo, has everything to do with the return and the Second Coming. You can look at the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. I have a copy of those with me. The *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are really based upon the diaries of those who were present and recorded what they heard in their diaries on the days that Joseph gave the talks. Then they took an amalgamation of what was said from the various note takers and compiled them into a consolidated version, edited it for grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and that becomes the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. But if you want the actual journals or diaries, that is found in the *Words of Joseph Smith...* (It's a Harley engine. I have this Pavlovian response to a Harley engine and I'm somewhere else for a moment.) In the *Words of Joseph Smith* – which is now out of print and extravagantly expensive if you decide to buy a copy. The last I heard they were going for over \$300 for one in not very good condition. You can find them in an LDS electronic library, there are those that are available, but I understand that there is work underway to bring it back current in print and to add a second volume to it that will be the same kind of thing, the public addresses of Joseph Smith from the Kirtland era. The *Words of Joseph Smith* in its current version is the Nauvoo era discourses and I think it is going to come back as a two volume set. Andy Ehat is the one that is working on that.

In January of 1844, this is some eight years post Kirtland temple, Joseph is talking about Elijah and he said:

This is taken from [a talk] in front of Robert E. Foster's hotel nearby the Nauvoo temple, then under construction, from Wilford Woodruff's journal. (He put quotes in it too. Good for Wilford. He's better than my transcription machine in that respect.)

"The Bible says, 'I will send you Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord (of course, he misspelled "dreadful". He spells it like "dreadlocks" instead,) Come that he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children & the hearts of the Children to their fathers lest I Come & smite the whole earth with a Curse,' Now the word turn here should be translated (bind or seal) But what is the object of this important mission or how is it to be fulfilled, The keys are to be delivered the spirit of Elijah is to Come, to be delivered, to come, the gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, & and the Saints to Come up as saviors on Mount Zion but how are they to become Saviors on mount Zion[?] by building temples erecting Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances, Baptisms, Confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors who are

dead & redeem them that they may Come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones of glory with us."

Then Joseph laments. This is the only guy. This is an important talk, and this is the only guy who records this, Wilford Woodruff. Woodruff records Joseph saying:

"I would to God that this temple was now done that we might go into it & go to work & improve our time & make use of the seals while they are on the earth & the Saints have none to much time to save & redeem their dead, & gather together their living relatives that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten."

This is the place where Joseph says – he is talking about Elijah. He is talking about the seals being on the earth, and he's talking about preparing for Zion. In this context, in January of 1844, this is where Joseph says:

"Their has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation it has been like splitting hemlock knots with a Corn doger for a wedge & a pumpkin for a beetle, Even the Saints are slow to understand I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God, but we frequently see some of them after suffering all they have for the work of God will fly to pieces like glass as soon as any thing Comes that is Contrary to their traditions, they Cannot stand the fire at all, How many will be able to abide a Celestial law & go through to receive their exhaltation I am unable to say but many are Called & few are Chosen."

In March of 1844 he picks up the subject again; on March 10, 1844. This time, when he is talking about Elijah, he says, "The spirit & calling of Elijah is ye have power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oracles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchezedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the Earth & to receive, obtain and perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the fathers unto the children & the hearts of the **children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven.**"

The hearts of the fathers who are in heaven; that's the mission of Elijah. If you will receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah – that we redeem our dead and connect ourselves with our "fathers which are in heaven." Our dead through us, us to our "fathers in heaven." Who are our "fathers in heaven" to whom we are to be connected? We want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven. Those who are in the spirit world, our dead, the ones that need redemption from us, are not redeemed. They cannot be in heaven because they need us to be redeemed. We need to be redeemed by our connecting to the "fathers who are in heaven". The dead have to be redeemed. The fathers are in heaven. Joseph understood this doctrine.

It is my view that the notion that you go to the temple and do genealogical work to answer the coming of Elijah does not conform to the description we are reading here from Joseph Smith. Our ancestors, our kindred dead, they need to be redeemed. They all have an interest in you and your life. The work that is being done needs to be done.

But the gulf that needs to be bridged through the work of Elijah, in the words of Joseph Smith, is "to form a bond or connection." Who was the last one who lived on the earth, not to hold the sealing power but to ascend to heaven and to draw together heaven and earth by his ascent, representing the opening of that way through which Zion above and Zion below will be connected with one another? Who was the last guide, as a mortal man, to have walked this path? When the Lord comes He is coming with an entourage, and the path needs to be opened beforehand. The path, once it's open, allows men on the earth to be prepared for the coming again of those who are Zion above. Elijah answers, because Elijah is the one who made that connection.

The doctrine of sealing power of Elijah is as follows: "If you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty, the first thing you do is you go & seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, & yourself **unto your fathers in eternal glory**."

"Unto your fathers in eternal glory." That is not your kindred dead, they are relying upon you to be redeemed. The connection that needs to be formed is between you and the fathers who dwell in glory.

Who are the "fathers who dwell in glory?" If we go back to the revelation in which Joseph Smith received the sealing power, he received the sealing power some time before 1831. In that portion of the revelation known as D&C 132:49: "I the Lord thy God will be with thee even unto the end of the world and through all eternity for verily I seal upon your exaltation. Prepare your throne for you **in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.**" (Emphasis added.) "I say unto you whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth in my name by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens. Whosoever's sins are remitted on earth shall be eternally remitted eternally in heaven" and so on.

Just before that portion of the revelation, in verse 37 he talks about Abraham, he talks about Isaac, and he talks about Jacob. Concerning those three, the Lord says to Joseph: "Because they did none other things in that which they were commanded they have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and **sit upon thrones and are not angels but are Gods.**" (Emphasis added.)

This is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are the ones who are Gods.

I think that Christ is deliberate about everything He says, about the analogies that He uses, and about the stories that He tells. When Christ takes occasion in a parable to tell someone about the status of heaven, the story that He tells is about Lazarus and a Rich Man. It says concerning the beggar, Lazarus, when he died, he was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." The dead man Lazarus, with an angelic accompaniment, is taken to Abraham's bosom when he dies. The definition of a reward in the afterlife is to go to "the bosom of Abraham."

The rich man is dead and he cries. The rich man, who is now in a state of torment, he cries out. He does not cry out, in Jesus' story, to God. He cries out to Abraham.

When Jesus is describing positions of authority in the afterlife, a person He puts into a position of authority in the afterlife to answer the petition of the dead rich man for relief from his torment, is Abraham. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime received the good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented." There is an equation. Everything will balance. The things that you suffer from, it is the Lord's intention to wipe away every tear. And, if you are one that chooses to inflict tears then that will be recompensed as well. Because what will be restored unto you is exactly, as we began with Alma, what you send out. It is an equation, after all.

The rich man cried out, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: (Send Lazarus to my father's house.) For I have five brethren; that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went into them from the dead, they will repent. He said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," foreshadowing of course the rejection of the Lord's resurrection and testimony as well.

One of the things that we've got going on in our Elijah theology is the notion that on the Mount of Transfiguration there came Elijah and there came Moses, and there was this get-together rather analogous to what happened in the Kirtland Temple. Out of that mix came forth the sealing power keys to Peter, James, and John and so on. One of the reasons why the narrative we have concerning that ought to be something you think about is because, take a look in Matthew chapter 17 where the account is given, where after six days He took Peter, James, and John and takes them up on the high mountain. He is transfigured before them. There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with them. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall come and restore all things. But I say unto you, Elias is come already, they knew him not, they have done unto him as they listed. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:1-13.)

And so on the Mount of Transfiguration the "Elias" that is suggested here is John the Baptist, not Elijah. An even clearer account appears in Mark chapter 9 beginning in verse 2:

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow;

4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

In the Joseph Smith translation he says – this is Joseph's Smith's insertion: "or in other words, John the Baptist and Moses." Who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, according to Joseph Smith in the Joseph Smith translation of the incident, just like Matthew attributes it to being John the Baptist, so also Joseph Smith in the Joseph Smith translation attributes it to John the Baptist. In fact, he clarifies the text.

Therefore, when I consider these things, I reach a different conclusion than the Elijah narrative that we generally talk about. The conclusion that I reach is that when it comes to Elijah's role and Elijah's mission the purpose was, in the last days on the cusp of the Lord's return, in order to open the channel through which the Zion that has been taken above can return, there will be a ministry, just as Joseph put it, still future in 1844 – March, April, May, June, three months before the death of the Prophet, yet future – the purpose of which is to make possible the reuniting of those that dwell above with those that dwell below, formed by a people who are capable of bearing the presence of the Lord, coming back into His presence and not withering at the sight. Coming back into His presence and being able to dwell at peace.

I would suggest that the peace of Zion has much less to do with whether or not the outward hostilities of those who will be burned at His coming are fighting with one another and those inside the city are not taking up arms, but it is rather the peace that comes as a consequence of having shed your sins and being able to endure the presence of the Lord. These are those people who have "let virtue garnish their thoughts unceasingly because their bowels have been full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith." Imagine that. Can you imagine that it's necessary that you have charity for those who are within your own household of faith? Can you imagine that I need to tolerate and even love those inside my own community of belief who think me an emissary of the devil? Who think me an apostate? Toward them I must show charity?

And "let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." Because you see, if you are not so constituted within your own heart – where there can't be any lies – if within your heart you are not at peace in charity toward those who would in the name of your own religion spitefully use you, then your "confidence [cannot] wax strong in the presence of God." And all of this is connected to "the doctrine of the priesthood."

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly, then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews of heaven." It will just condense there because when you do that, you reach 'dew point.' (If Neal Maxwell were here he'd write that down. He would use it, too. I might send that to Cory. Say hey, hey! Go ahead and put it in his book and give him credit. Audience laughter.)

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth;" I want a scepter! Because can't you use those

things to bash people in the head and say 'big me, little you?' Scepters have nothing to do with ruling and reigning. Scepters have to do with serving and kneeling. He who thought Himself the least, kneeled and washed the dirt from the feet of those who in every respect He excelled. He wanted to give them the chief seats. He didn't envy those He raised. He didn't envy those that presided over Him. He declared the truth and He declared it boldly because He knew what the truth was. To the extent that He could do so diplomatically, He did. When the moment came and it was necessary to lay it out, it was He who chose the moment of sacrifice. It was He that went up to Jerusalem to be crucified, and it was He who drove the fury that resulted in the sacrifice at the appropriate moment because the fullness of time had come for the offering on that Passover, and He knew that. [I talk about that in *Come Let Us Adore Him*.] Because when the time had come, the time had come.

The peace that is in Zion is the peace that Joseph is describing in the letter from Liberty Jail, from which I have just been reading (D&C 121).

It is in the account from Enoch as well. The statement that's made concerning the Priesthood, Moses 6:7: "Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also." That statement, "the same Priesthood that was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also," when you take that and put it together with the statements that say, "as it was in the days of Noah, so shall also it be at the time of the coming of the Son of man," every time you encounter the existence of Zion, the Zion that we read about, the first one had seven High Priests within it. There was a residue associated with them who were righteous but among them you had the seven High Priests. I have to assume that they each had families, and I have to assume that the families were the ones that were raised by these High Priests in righteousness. I have to assume that that included multiple generations, and so that collection of people was essentially seven families.

The Zion that was established by Enoch thereafter, we don't have any geographic description or numeric description apart from the statement that we get in the book of Jude, which is really quoting from an earlier text of Enoch about the return of Enoch with his ten thousands, "with his ten-thousands" of angels. If that is a representation – and those kinds of things are not particularly reliable, because ten thousands, given the way in which the numeric compilations occurred in those days – the error, if there is one, is an overstatement not an understatement. In other words there would *not* be millions described as ten thousands; but there could be hundreds described as ten thousands.

The area occupied apparently by the people of Melchizedek and his city, in an agrarian setting, could have been located on something that is as small as 20 city blocks of our current type of area.

The significance of Zion is not its numerosity. The significance of Zion is its spiritual endowment. It is the power of heaven, and not the voting block. It's not that you've got big numbers here that intimidate the ungodly. It's that even a handful is sufficient.

Remember from the account of John that when they came to arrest the Savior and He declared, "I am He," the guard stumbled backwards and fell down. The imposing figure of the righteous Lord was enough to intimidate those who came with swords and with shields, protected and armed, and Him clothed only with the garments that He had upon Him. At that moment in that garden, in that presence confined to the person of one individual, there was Zion. I do not think the picture that we have in our head of the role, mission, ministry and purpose of the return of Elijah is necessarily the one that is accurate. Nor do I think that the role, mission, ministry and the effort of Elijah is something from our past. Just as Joseph predicted the future return in January and March of 1844, I think the role and mission of Elijah is intimately connected with the immediate return. An opening up the capacity for the salvation of a group of people who will be greeted at the return of those that last went through that opening when they come and they fall upon one another's necks, and they kiss one another.

No rivalry, no disparity, no hierarchy. All things in common are rather difficult when you've got "big" and "little" people; when you've got important and wealthy, and you've got obscure and poor, when you have those who are mighty and wonderful and those who are nothing.

Hugh Nibley used to talk I think rather tongue in cheek about how he would be content to be nothing more than a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord, because if he were he would be standing next to "the keeper of the gate who is the Holy One of Israel who employeth no servant there." (2 Ne. 9:41.)

Well, I wrote a book and I made some people angry, but I also returned some people back to activity. I don't want there to be any mistake about my view of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If anything, I feel more strongly now than I did when I was baptized at age 19, of not only the relevance but the importance of the Church. It is the body that was set in motion by the hand of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is authorized by commandment to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel. It has been commanded to preach, teach, exhort, expound. It has been commanded to baptize. It has been commanded to lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. It has been commanded to bless and pass the sacrament. If you want to get baptized then you need to leave the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Catholics and even Reverend Lovejoy's "Presby-Lutherans" and you need to come to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Dallin Oaks gave a talk in General Conference just a few years ago [April, 2006]. He was talking about the presence of revelation in the Church and the presence of the workings of God, the hand of God in the affairs of the Church. All of the examples that he used in his General Conference address were drawn from the experiences of those in the lowest level of the Church. It is at the lowest levels of the Church that I have always resided. And it is at the lowest levels of the Church – if you've been on a mission and you've bourn testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and you've had someone read it and get a testimony themselves, you know the hand of God is still

over the work that is going on within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is, and it will continue to be there.

Any of you who choose to preach the Gospel as a missionary in the Church, and interface with people, and bring them aboard, you will find the hand of God is still working among the saints. But it is my view and it is my conviction to my core that if I were to encourage any of you to stop short of pressing forward to finding your Lord that I would risk damnation. Because it's my view I would do that at the peril of contradicting the invitation extended to every one of you through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants. You read D&C 93:1 and you tell me who has a right to say to you that you should not press forward to see His face and know that He is — not believe, not trust, not hope, but know. Know that He is.

There should be an entire chorus of Latter-day Saints who are able to say these words as their own testimony, and not just a quote from the Prophet Joseph Smith: "I had actually seen a light and in the midst of that light I saw two personages and they did in reality speak to me. And though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision yet it was true and while they were persecuting me and reviling me and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying I was lead to say in my heart, Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, and why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation." (JS-H 1: 25.)

It is not the purpose of the restored Gospel to have you get a testimony of the Book of Mormon, and then be co-opted into depending upon anyone other than God for the knowledge of the truth of all things. "And when you shall receive these things I would exhort you that you would ask God the Eternal Father in the name of Christ if these things are not true. If ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ He will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost and by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things." (Moroni 10:4-5.) All things.

It is a terrible thing for anyone to presume they can proscribe and limit the scope of truth into which any of you can inquire and get an answer for yourselves. It is a terrible responsibility. I would suggest that anyone who tries to keep you from inquiring of your Father to know the truth of all things is, like Satan, trying to use fear in order to eliminate your approach to that Being who loves you more than life itself. Who would gather you as a hen gathers her chicks. Who would have done that and brought again Zion time after time after time, but WE would not. I know that there are people that write books about the coming of Zion, and I know that they use quotes from those who think differently than I do. I'm not trying to persuade anyone of anything. You are free to believe whatever you want to believe. I only attempt to explain what I believe and why I believe it.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2012.02.12 Mormon Stories Podcast, Part 1

Interview with John Dehlin

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Salt Lake City, Utah

John Dehlin: Hello, and welcome to another edition of Mormon Stories podcast. I'm your host, John Dehlin. I'm very excited to have a new guest with me today. Before I launch into introducing my guest and talking about him I want to provide just a little bit of a disclaimer generally and then dive in.

Recently I've been receiving a lot of feedback from my listeners who are expressing frustration. It's usually from the more believing side of my listenership. The sentiment that they've been expressing to me is basically that what they've always enjoyed about Mormon Stories is that it's open and respectful of all points of view, affirming of belief, or supportive of belief and not denigrating, but also supporting disbelief, and just wanting to hear all sides. Some of the feedback I've received lately is that people feel like Mormon Stories has dwindled a bit into being a little bit more critical or hostile towards belief and that is something we never, ever, ever want to do. I want my listenership to know that I'm sorry if they feel that way and I'm going to do everything I can. I've talked to my board of directors about this, which is full of believers and non-believers, and we are going to do what we can to right that ship, so I want to make the promise to you guys. This interview actually fits along that purpose quite nicely.

Today I've invited someone on this show whose name many of you may not know. His name is Denver Snuffer. He is an attorney in Salt Lake City. He is an author and sort of a social commentator or religious commentator on modern-day Mormonism. Denver is the author of at least eight books. Denver, welcome on Mormon Stories.

Denver Snuffer: It's good to be here [laughs]. If I'm your gesture towards the orthodox believing community then I'm pleased to hold down that end of the spectrum.

John: I want to tell the listeners right off why they really need to listen to this interview because it's not going to be boring, I can promise you. Denver, you've written several books. There are a couple that I've been made aware of. One is *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*. Isn't your main premise there that members of the Church can actually potentially have a personal, I don't want to say visit, but can have a personal witness of Jesus. Is that kind of the approach of that book?

Denver: It is. I would go one step further and take the step that you were reluctant to take, and that is, yes, have a visit with the Lord.

John: You actually believe that that can happen in this life?

Denver: Correct. Yes, I do.

John: Maybe you even know people who've had that experience?

Denver: I do, in fact.

John: We'll talk about that today. We're not going to talk about that now. You also have a book you've written recently called *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. What's the main premise of that book?

Denver: It's taking a look at the Church's history, dividing it into four phases through which we have passed, and discussing the contrast and the definitional differences between the first phase in which Joseph Smith was around and the subsequent three phases after his death.

John: Okay. Just because I'm wanting to give my audience a sense for who they're listening to, you're unique because a lot of my listeners, they study the Church history, and for them the conclusion that they take from the history is that it's not credible, that it's fraudulent, and a lot of them end up just not believing and leaving the Church. The reason why I think you're such a fascinating interview is because you've dug into the history probably as much as any of us and it's taken you the other direction, almost. The term "fundamentalist" is dangerous because it's got with it associations like Warren Jeffs and all that stuff.

Denver: Right.

John: I would say you come out of a fundamentalist impulse which is: Your studies of the Church has even made your beliefs stronger but it's pointed you in two sort of impulses. One is to really look back into what Joseph did and what the Lord did through Joseph, and to really put the emphasis back on the early Church. And then, that also leads you to be a bit of a critic – and I don't mean critic in a nonconstructive way – but you are sort of a Hugh Nibley-esq kind of critic to the Church today. Is that fair to say?

Denver: Yes. There are things about the current Church I find exasperating. And yes, I do think that if Joseph Smith is an authentic agent for God then the real question that we ought to try to get to the bottom of is: What was God attempting to do in calling Joseph Smith? Not even what Joseph meant or what Joseph intended, but what was God trying to do through the agency of Joseph Smith, and the trail back to God's presence really picks up at the last place where we had a good deal of contact with God, and that's early in the restoration, early in Mormonism.

John: That's what we are going to be talking about today. We're going to be talking to a man who believes, who knows all the history, yet maintains a sincere belief in the restoration, and who believes that not only should we eschew atheism and agnosticism and ex-Mormonism, but is calling us to consider that maybe we can each have a personal witness of Christ, a literal personal witness of Christ. This is a man who is a successful professional, who lives in Salt Lake City, who many find to be very reputable and respectable. That's the intro, Denver.

Let's begin by just giving us a brief introduction to your story, a few of the relevant points or stories that inform your impulse or your brand of Mormonism today.

Denver: Well, I'm a convert, I joined in 1973, but I joined out of a family in which my mother and my sister were Baptists. My sister still is Baptist. The process of even considering Mormonism was one that arose out of what I would now call a polemical environment, because when my mom found out I was interested in the Mormon church all of that inoculation she'd hoped to have done earlier was followed up with a lot of pamphlets and anti-Mormon information to try and discourage the conversion. At the outset, when I joined the Church I came through a tidal wave of criticism and objections to the Church, and I feel comfortable. The idea that there is a criticism that ought to be leveled against either the faith or the founder or the current practices of the Church is the milieu out of which my faith originated. So I don't find that uncomfortable, I don't find that distressing.

John: You've been inoculated against criticisms from the start. You're a convert to the Church. Let's just talk about – did you serve a mission? Did you get married in the temple? Did you go to BYU? Tell us just a little bit about your bona fides, so to speak.

Denver: I joined the Church. I've been married in the temple. I attended the law school at Brigham Young University. In fact, Paul Toscano was a year ahead of me at the law school and he and I were first acquainted with one another there. He was classmates with Cory Maxwell, Neal Maxwell's son, who is down at Deseret Book now, previously at Bookcraft. The environment of the law school was an interesting one at BYU. Rex Lee was the Dean back then. Ed Kimball was my Criminal Law professor. My first marriage, which was a temple marriage, ended in divorce. I was subsequently married again. My current wife and I raised the four children from the first marriage and then she and I had five more of our own, so we've had nine children in the home though most of them, or the majority of them, are now gone. We're down to the final three. I've been on the High Council. I've taught Gospel Doctrine or the priesthood for 21 years. I've given a lot of care, time, attention, to both participating meaningfully in the religious process and in supporting and helping it.

John: You were a high councilman relatively recently, right?

Denver: I was. In fact, I understand the system well enough that I probably shouldn't tell people the machinations I used to get me in my current calling, but when they released me from the High Council I went over to teach the Priests. At the time I had a son who was still at home. He's now in college, and that was the calling I wanted, so using what I understood through participating on the High Council I was able to get called to teach the Priests, which I still do.

John: You're active in the Church, believing and committed to the Gospel, or to the restoration, I guess?

Denver Yes. In fact, here is a bona fide for you, if it's of any worth. I literally cannot recall the last time I wasn't a 100% home teacher. It's been so many years [laughs]. There's a benchmark that some people will understand.

John: Wow, that's a pretty high bar. This is what we are going to do. I want you – we're not going to be able to go into too much depth, but I want you to give us your perspective. There's going to be a couple of parts to this podcast. One is give us your perspective on a history of the Church that might be different from the correlated version, that gives us an overview of what you feel like God was actually trying to do with the restoration and through Joseph, so that we can get sort of an understanding, not only of what he was trying to do, but then how it went awry.

Denver: Okay.

John: Part one is what was he trying to do. Part two is how did it go awry, just at a high level. Part three is what are the problems with where we are now. And then part four is what can we do about it, for those who are believers who view your perspective. How do we be constructive parts of bringing about Zion, or whatever it is, does that make sense? Somewhere in there we have to throw your teachings about the second witness.

Denver: I think that the first part of that, when you go back to the first part of that; the origin, where we began and what was happening early on is connected to the very topic that you raise last, and that is man reuniting with God.

John: That's James 1:5, right? That's what the founding of Joseph – of the Church – started with, right?

Denver: Right. In fact, that's one of the comments that I make in the last book, and that is that Joseph Smith really stands foremost as a witness that James 1:5 works. And James 1:5 puts the burden on each individual then to ask God and to see if God will not answer them and give them information. It's what the missionaries go out and they tell everyone to do, "Here is our testimony. Here's our book. Here's our program. Now you pray and ask God if it isn't true." That's Moroni 10:4-5, those are the verses that the missionaries ask you to invoke. I just happen to think that that is not a right of passage to be experienced one time at the beginning and never thereafter to be broken out, polished off, and used again. I think that's the heart and core of the process, that is continually ask God, who does give to all men liberally and doesn't upbraid you, doesn't scold you, doesn't send you away after asking for a loaf of bread with a rock, or after asking for a fish send you away with a serpent. He gives to all men liberally, meaning that what he gives is even better than what you were asking for, and I think that is the process. It was not intended to say, "Check it out. If it's true we want to baptize you now. Get in line, pay your tithing, show up faithfully, do what we ask you to do, never turn down a calling, and be a good little Mormon." I think it was always intended that we continually increase in light and knowledge until we arrive at the perfect day, which is

taken from the Doctrine and Covenants, the goal being the perfect day, not simply to witness the sunrise but to also arrive at noonday when the shadows are gone.

John: I want to return at the end, and maybe this will be a hook for our listeners. I want to return in the end of this discussion, maybe two hours from now, about how in the world it's possible to experience Christ now. But let's put that off, and for now, Joseph has this witness somewhere between the ages of 12 and 16; we don't know exactly the year.

Denver: Right.

John: But then a lot of other stuff happens. There's golden plates, there's Book of Mormon. There's the founding of the Church. There's the restoration. Supposedly there's the Aaronic priesthood and the Melchizedek priesthood. Then it moves into ordinances, and temple rituals, and polygamy. And then Joseph gets martyred, and then Brigham Young takes over. What of that stuff, which of the things that I mentioned, and other things, do you still see as valid and important? Do you see any of that stuff as well, as being distractions or side projects or missing the mark?

Denver: Well, there are 10,000 little nuances to every step of that, and that would take a great deal more time than we have in the interview. In general, what I see along the way is that the basic outline of Joseph praying, having contact with God, God directing Joseph, and him setting out on an adventure – that though at the end of that we can put into an overall narrative – at the beginning of that I don't think Joseph had a single clue where it was headed. In fact, the earliest accounts he gives of his First Vision are really a conversion story. It's a tale of personal redemption. It did not assume cosmic importance and have relevance for your salvation and mine until some years later. Joseph didn't approach this as a youth thinking that the entire universe was going to be reshaped through the experiences he was having. He was simply being converted. It assumed greater proportion as it went along in the understanding of Joseph. But I think at the beginning God's contact with Joseph was purposeful and intended ultimately to affect you and to affect me, and to affect mankind.

John: Where are you on the importance of authority, of priesthood, of rituals like baptism and the endowment to get into heaven? Do you see all of that as sort of punch passes that you need to go through to be exalted or do you see those as kind of bureaucratic distractions or side trips?

Denver: I think the purpose of the ordinances is to extend an invitation. That they are instructional; they are to initiate you into an understanding of a different culture than the one from which we hail in order to get you mentally and spiritually adapted to looking at the way that God deals with man. Man's culture and man's ways are not – culturally we are divided from God. When we go to more primitive cultures – in fact, we've even got the phrase, "the magic world view" that we have coined in order to describe the attitude that we think we're more sophisticated and we can look down upon, whereas, in the teachings of the Savior the more correct way would be the child's view, or becoming

more childlike. We all remember in our childhood how believing we could be in all kinds of stories. The purpose of the ordinances, in my view, is to initiate us into another way of viewing things, another way of opening ourselves up to receiving those kinds of influences which, if there is a God – and I believe that there is – He would have embedded everywhere. And therefore, ordinances ought to heighten our sensitivities and create within each of us an expectation, not merely that we're going to go through a ceremony in which it's depicted that we will encounter God through the veil, but that that is a deliberate effort to invite us to experience the transcendent and to make the connection between ourselves and God through a veil, through that which apparently separates us, to reach up and to have Him reach down, and to make that connection. So I think the ordinances are educational. I think they are invitations. I think they are an extension of God's care, concern, and invitation to each one of us, and if they are received in that light I think they serve a marvelous purpose in inviting us. They are not the real thing but they are a depiction of the real thing, and an invitation to receive the real thing, which involves God and man.

John: That's a different way than it's talked about in Church. An immediate implication that comes to mind for me is: Is the question of what's happening with all of other God's children that aren't LDS, and what I'm hoping to hear you say – although I don't want to lead the witness – what I'm hoping to hear you say is that this is an inclusive perspective that then allows for God's power to manifest, to be available to all of his children, not just through the institutional LDS church. Am I hoping vainly or is there something to that?

Denver: I believe that God is as interested in *every* man as he is interested in *any* man. Christ may have come, lived, and died in a Jewish culture but the atonement that he wrought was intended universally. It was intended for all. In fact, some of the problem we have in coming into some unified understanding is that we do tend to be rather chauvinist, rather exclusivist, about what we have. Until we have had a far more widespread transcendent experience I'm not sure that we have any ground from which to boast about our own religious validity. Look at what has happened with transcendence among Buddhists, transcendence among the Hindu, even transcendence among Islam. The fact is that our ordinances were intended to invite us but we're the ones who have to pick up and accept that invitation and then do something further with it.

The endowment, if you look at it from Section 128 and 129 perspective, is Joseph's effort to lay out in ceremonial form the kind of experiences that he lived through. We tend to take them and transfer them out of the context in which Joseph could provide that initiation and say, "Oh, it's historical." But the story that is shown in the temple endowment is your life, it is my life, it is everyone's life. We arrive here in a state of innocence. We at some point become corrupted and therefore accountable. We begin from a position in which we know God; at least we, as a child, have no problem both believing in and feeling comforted by a divine being. It's everywhere. In fact, it is so promiscuous among the little children that they can believe in the Easter bunny and ten thousand other fairy tales, the tooth fairy. And then we arrive at a point in which we

begin to feel alienated from Him. The endowment is your life, you've been cast out of that garden. Now the problem is trying to figure out from the mess in which we find ourselves in this lone – we are now alone – and dreary world. The Book of Mormon uses that phrase, "alone without God in the world" several times, it's a really pregnant with meaning phrase that I think captures the problem of where we are, and then find our way back. Where are the true messengers? Who does come now bearing a message from God? And, by the way, that is not always someone who presides over either our Church or any church. It can sometimes be a frail old woman ministering to the lepers in Calcutta, who gives up her life in order to live a celibate nun's life ministering relief to the poor and the outcast in the far flung reaches of the world, and yet, here she is, a visible manifestation of exactly what Christ was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount.

John: So for you, there's this godly impulse or this godly desire to communicate with man that's certainly manifested itself in Mormonism, but that is also manifesting itself outside of Mormonism. And Mormonism is maybe one strand of that attempt from God to connect with his children, is that fair to say?

Denver: Yes. At the second coming we do not expect that the only people who will survive the return of the Lord will be Latter-day Saints. In fact, it's a common teaching, going all the way back to the beginning, that during the millennium there will be missionary work to be done. If there is going to be work to be done during the millennium then Mormonism is not the exclusive place you will find the kind of worthy people who will survive and rejoice at the Lord's return. And I don't even think some of those who survive the Lord's return will necessarily even be religious, they'll just be good people, principled people.

John: So even my atheist and agnostic friends, there's hope for them, too?

Denver: I absolutely believe so, and I think that an honest atheist who is concerned about what's good and what's right is better than the cynical, critical hypocritical religious folk who think themselves better. In fact, I think that the folks who are proud of their own religious worthiness in standing before God are probably the very ones that won't survive His return.

John: It's clear that that was Christ's message in the New Testament.

Denver: It is.

John: So the restoration for you was less about keys in terms of doors that are literally locked, that can't be opened without the keys, in terms of – I had a cousin of mine once describe it as the country club kind of approach, or the franchise approach, to salvation, that unless you buy into the franchise and have the right membership card you're not getting to heaven, and that's even how the temple ceremony has been interpreted by some. You have to literally not only have been through the right specific ordinances to make it to heaven but you have to actually know the right signs or tokens or whatever to

even have a chance of getting back there. I'm hearing from you a simultaneously fundamentalist but also very inclusive framing of the restoration.

Denver: If you take the approach that you just suggested, then if you are a true believing Mormon, and if you think that the temple possesses that kind of power, then you're immediately confronted with the fact that we have made changes in my lifetime, not just by the removal of the penalty but the alteration of a sign. If they are, in fact, how you unlock the door, all of those folks who came through after 1990 are institutionally dispossessed of the capacity to open the door. Therefore it can't mean that, it must mean something else. And if it means something else then we ought to be exploring what are we trying, what are the hints that are contained in that, what are the underlying teachings that are contained in that, what is the invitation or the communication from God intended by that, not "Hey, I've got this bundle of keys and that's going to get me somewhere," because frankly, Jerald and Sandra Tanner have possession of the keys. They've been publishing them, and they don't believe in Mormonism at all. And yet they clearly are in possession of those kinds of things that in the first scenario you described, the possession of magic movements to unlock doors. Therefore it can't mean that. There must be something more to it.

John: I think I get a sense for what you view the restoration was all about. And now we've got what, a hundred and fifty, two hundred years of Mormon history that has been layered on top of what I see you arguing for as some very plain and precious truths. So talk us through your views on how – well, there's a lot that's been done, right. There's a lot that happened in Nauvoo, and then with Brigham Young in Salt Lake, all the way through the renunciation of polygamy and correlation to the modern Church. Talk us through your view of how the Church has progressed historically, and when we've gotten it right and when we've gotten wrong, sort of in a 2000 foot view.

Denver: It's very difficult at the 2000 foot view other than to say in aggregate, from the time he began until the day of Joseph's death, from the beginning of the 1820 experience and lasting – if we can trust the 1820 dating, because we all know that that 1820 beautiful spring morning may have been 1823, or it may have been some other spring morning – but whenever that spring morning occurred, from that date until June 27th of 1844, Joseph's work was primarily additive. The religion that he was working on was increasing in volume, in content, in complexity, in nuance, and in depth. From that date until today the institutional Church, and when Joseph was here there may have been an institution, it's true, but the Church was immediately responsive to Joseph Smith. From the death of Joseph Smith until today the institutional Church has been primarily deductive, deductive in the sense of doctrine, nuance, ordinance, practice. It has grown immeasurably in wealth, in numbers, and in worldly success, but in terms of the underlying cosmos, the religious center that it precedes forth from, it's been simplified, it's been reductionist, it's been growing progressively less while at the same time succeeding in popularity more.

John: That resonates with me and I know it's going to resonate with a lot of listeners because the Church seems so insistent on claiming to have prophets, seers, and revelators, yet people who are really thoughtful about that are asking: Where's the prophecy? Where's the seeing? Where's the revelation? It's true that some things have been added to the Doctrine and Covenants, for example, the official declarations, almost as responses to social pressure. But the reorganized church is much more expansive than the traditional LDS church. You know, at least their D&C grows over time and ours tends to either change or kind of stay the same, so I resonate with that premise.

Let's first talk about the expansion. Joseph Smith added all of these things, right? He added the teachings about the institutional Church. He added the Melchizedek priesthood. He added baptisms for the dead, and celestial marriage, and the endowment. He even added polygamy. So before we talk about where we are with those now, tell me how you view those additions and how we know which of those additions were true and proper, versus him just experimenting or just coming up with stuff that isn't binding.

Denver: I've tried to work through at the up close and personal level all of those issues in that last book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. In general, from the 10,000 foot level, there are roles which other people played in the life of Joseph Smith that we really need to take into account when we're trying to reconstruct what went on there.

Let me use one little vignette as an example because everyone's familiar with this. Martin Harris, who is bankrolling the publication – well, he's bankrolling the translation as well as the publication of the Book of Mormon – wants to be able to get his wife on board with what he's doing in giving this young prophet the financial support that he's lending to him, and he persuades Joseph to inquire about allowing him to get possession of those 116 pages. We all know that ultimately, after having been told no a couple of times, Joseph is allowed to give the 116 pages and disaster ensued. They were lost, they were taken, they were apparently adulterated, yet it would be interesting to try and find a copy of those around somewhere today. But through that incident, what we see is that Joseph Smith can be persuaded by someone who is an intimate with him, in doing something which the Lord told him is a bad idea, and it turned out it was, in fact, a bad idea. So if you accept that premise, and I think everyone would, whether they are extremely devout or whether they are skeptical; Joseph could be influenced. And then you introduce the events that occur with the conversion of Sidney Rigdon and the people that he brought on board.

I think that Mormonism at the beginning, during that first phase when Joseph was here, includes some very interesting accretions – additions – as a consequence of the influence of Sidney Rigdon. Sidney wanted a New Testament church. Sidney really wanted a restoration through an authoritative prophet; that was what he was teaching about in the western reserve of Ohio when he was a Campbellite minister. That was what he wanted to have, and when he got converted to Mormonism he ran to Joseph Smith and he became an immediate intimate, which irritated some folks like David

Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery. Joseph was awfully quick to take Sidney on board. But Sidney, after all, created numeric success. When he came on board that whole commune at Isaac Morley's farm essentially were converted en masse. They brought on board big numbers and therefore he legitimately had influence. Sidney is responsible for getting Joseph to work really focused on the New Testament church. I think that if you look at the restoration before Sidney's presence, and then you begin again after Sidney is disaffected in the 1838-1839 time frame and you say, what was Joseph doing pre-Rigdon and post-Rigdon, the look and feel of Mormonism is quite different than a New Testament church orientation.

What Joseph was trying to, or what the Lord, through Joseph, was trying to bring about, was something really quite ancient. The temple ordinances, though you have a lot of Mormon scholars working them into a New Testament motif and undoubtedly that case can be made, it really hails from something much earlier, something that is patriarchal, Egyptian, earliest age of man kind of faith. I can detect, even if you just take Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants – Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants is an attempt to get direction about how to manage the New Testament church. In the middle of talking about the New Testament church inquiries, you have this side show going on where the Lord is not just talking about what Joseph and Sidney were interested in knowing about, but the earliest stages of man. The first get together in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman three years previous to the death of Adam, in which seven high priests gather together, the Lord appears and administers comfort to Adam and calls him Michael, the Prince. And so you have this enormous antiquity that the Lord was interested in. In the same revelation that you have what Joseph and Sidney was interested in – and I think therein lies the real purpose behind the Lord calling Joseph in the first instance – when you go to the New Testament, Christ is talking about a second coming. He analogizes that to the time of Noah, that the model for what mankind needs to look like at His coming to survive the ordeal, the model is what it looked like much earlier than the New Testament, the patriarchal era, an era dominated by Enoch and Noah and shortly following on the heels of the death of Adam. And so the religion that Joseph was really working his way back into, after Rigdon's departure, was a much more ancient form than what we have today.

John: You are saying that's a good thing?

Denver: I'm saying that's a good thing. What we have done – what Mormons have done – what we have done with the restoration is akin to what happened with the children of Israel at the time of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king, we want to be like other people." The Lord was offering us something through Joseph Smith and we were saying, "Give us a church! Give us a New Testament church!" and the Lord gave us what we were asking for, and we've got it. We've got the best New Testament model church in existence anywhere. We don't have popes, we have prophets. We don't have cardinals, we have apostles. We don't have archbishops, we have seventies. We have authentic names derived from a real New Testament model. But was that really what we were shooting for, merely a New Testament walk back? Are we supposed to be walking back to something even further and more ancient still? I think Joseph's life,

when you look at it as pre-Rigdon, post-Rigdon, allows you to say, "huh". Rigdon had an enormous influence much like Martin Harris with the 116 pages had that influence. And when you divorce Rigdon and you say, where was it headed before him, where did it return to after him, and you allow Rigdon to have his responsibility and his influence, then Joseph's mission began and ended in a much, much more ancient setting, one where we've yet to really reconcile ourselves with.

John: What I'm hearing you say is that there's something more profound and spiritual and connective to the divine that the restoration was trying to offer us, than simply to emulate the New Testament.

Denver: Yes.

John: And, more importantly, to create some type of corporate bureaucratic structure. The original question was: What do we do with all of Joseph's innovations with the endowment and with celestial marriage and even polygamy? I need you to simplify it for me a little bit. What I hear you say is that there were people influencing Joseph in different ways, because I think anyone's going to agree that in some ways he was sort of a sponge for feeling what was going on and reading what was going on, and then synthesizing and incorporating things. But let me just ask you again: How do we know whether polygamy is something that God wants us to be doing or not? How do we know whether celestial marriage is a doctrine or not? Because all of these things that Joseph added the Church has backed away from, but there's also the possibility that Joseph just took someone's idea and ran with it, but maybe it was taking us in the wrong direction.

Denver: In the difficulty – and I'm not trying to be evasive – but the difficulty is that all of the details really matter. And so when you get to something like that, details matter a great deal and we'd spend the rest of the time just on the details. I'm not trying to be evasive because I have written about this in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. My view is that when Joseph made the inquiry about what to do about the plural wives, that that inquiry was provoked in 1829 with the translation of Jacob Chapter 2. That was when he asked about it. The answer that he got is really the first part of Section 132 that would not be reduced to writing until July of 1843. So Joseph is in possession of an answer in 1829 that he doesn't put in writing until 1843.

John: You're talking about polygamy, right?

Denver: I'm talking about the original inquiry that is the beginning part of Section 132. That beginning part, as I walk through in *Passing The Heavenly Gift*, has a series of verses that are devoted to the eternal duration of the marriage covenant, the possession of eternal progeny, the connection between the man and the woman and the image of God, and the preservation or perpetuation of the family of man. Throughout all of that, throughout that entire section dealing with the eternal marriage covenant, it is *a wife*, singular – a wife, a wife, a wife. I walk through that in the book; it's always singular. After completing the description of the eternal nature of the marriage

covenant then He answers the question Joseph put, which is about the plural marriage, and that is separate from the eternal marriage covenant. But to go back to – is that a bone fide? Was Joseph out in the woods when he was talking about the eternal nature of the marriage covenant?

When you read the text of Genesis the word that is used to identify God in the original Hebrew is a plural word and the image of God is clarified to be male and female. Therefore, in the original Jewish text, you have a plural deity comprised of a male and a female, right in the text of Genesis from the original text. Was Joseph innovating? Was he out in the woods? Or was he merely returning to something that goes back to the original and is quite ancient when it comes to the eternal marriage covenant. I happen to think that the plural marriage issue, which is the second part of the beginning verses of Section 132 – and I think Section 132 is at least five different revelations – the first one deals with the marriage covenant for eternity as one subject, plural wives as a second subject. I happen to think that they were an authentic answer, and that the limitations which are extraordinarily limited in Joseph Smith's original practice got blown way out of proportion in the Brigham Young follow-on, and I don't think plural wives are essential for someone's exaltation, and I explain why in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

John: Just to summarize, you're saying that eternal marriage, and even theosis of a man and a wife becoming a god, in the sense that a companionship that achieves God's status...

Denver: Look at it this way, you are finite. You, as a mortal man in your individual state as a person, you are finite. You and your wife, despite the fact you're composed of flesh and blood and you're both going to die and be buried, you and your wife together are not finite because you produce offspring. And after you produce offspring, your offspring produce offspring. And so when that continues, when the man and the woman are together and that continues, assuming your progeny remains man and woman in every generation following hereafter – you, John Dehlin, become though you are flesh and blood and mortal – you become eternal and infinite because your seed will continue forever. That is the kind of symbol, that is the kind of expression found in the eternal marriage covenant that is a mortal experience that reflects the infinite nature of God.

John: So you're okay with eternal marriage, and you're okay with theosis of man and woman becoming joint heirs to God's inheritance.

Denver: Right.

John: As far as polygamy goes, you're seeing that maybe is something that God wanted Joseph to do, but not necessarily something that was intended for all of God's children, or for the eternities?

Denver: [laughing] Or for mass exploitation. Yes, I think that got off the rails at that point. Frankly, if you go back to Joseph's practice and you say, *how many plural wives?* Joseph tolerated inner circle practice of multiple wives, he tolerated that. But you go

back and you research how many sealing of plural marriages Joseph Smith performed apart from his own. Go back and look at that because you'll be shocked at how many there *aren't*, there are not. Joseph was in one category and the narrow reasons in the answer found in Section 132 were satisfied, and the others weren't and didn't satisfy the criteria. He used plural marriage as a kind of litmus test. "Hey, bring me your wife, and I'm going to marry your wife because this is a principle." John Taylor brings him his wife, delivers his wife to him, and Joseph says, "Hey, you passed the test," and he seals them together.

There are a number of problems in analyzing what went on with Joseph Smith, the plural wives and the history of that, for absolutely understandable reasons including the fact that they wanted to keep it secret. They wanted to hide a great deal of what was going on. But when you boil it down to the final analysis Joseph did not seal in plural marriages as an eternal covenant, apart from himself, more than one man. And if it was an essential for salvation, if there is something salvific about plurality of wives, you can't prove that in the practices of Joseph Smith. The sealing of the plural wives was a practice really begun and expanded, beyond the person of Joseph Smith and one other, after Joseph's death and under the administration of Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve, beginning in Nauvoo.

John: Just to summarize, you are saying that we have to look at the doctrines that we ascribe to Joseph carefully. Some of them we've misunderstood, some of them he may have even just been experimenting, and some of them there are clear, sort of divine influences and justifications for. In your view, just to use polygamy as an example, it's certainly not something we're supposed to be practicing today. Is that fair to say?

Denver: Oh, yes. It does not belong to us today. In fact, if you go back and you look back at the journals and even the public talks, the general authorities, the presidents of the Church, have been saying that they don't even have the keys to practice that any more, they've been removed. I'm looking at Section 132 right at the moment. If you look throughout the first part of that, "a wife." In verse 15 "with her," and just throughout this beginning, "a wife," "a wife," – verse 26 "a wife". It's in the singular. You don't get to the second topic, which is the one he inquired about, until you get about verse 29. So I don't think that it is correct to equate eternal marriage with plurality of wives as we have done, but I get into that in some detail in *Approaching the Heavenly Gift*.

John: I'll ask you for which parts of the restoration you agree with and don't, just so that we can have a bit of a summary. You don't have to provide justification for each one but just in general. Give us your quick view on, let's just say, the endowment; I guess you already have. You're saying that there's spiritual value to the endowment.

Denver: Correct. But it's also clear if you read the explanations of Facsimile No. 2 that Joseph provided, and if you look at the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that he wasn't done with what he regarded to be the ultimate temple ceremonies. What we have from him is the beginning of the work. The Nauvoo temple was never completed during Joseph's life, he died before it got to the second floor. He did some initiations in

the red brick store. What would have been provided, had he survived to the completion of the temple, probably would have had a different look and feel, a more expansive look and feel. Because look at Facsimile No. 2 and the notes there. There's stuff yet coming. There's things not yet restored. And then Joseph talked about there is a place in the restoration for a return of animal sacrifice – not the law of Moses, that's been fulfilled – but that animal sacrifice has a place in the restoration. In fact, as he talked about that he said, "That portion that existed before the law of Moses", meaning you're going now back to that original era of the earth I was talking about before. That kind of religion is really the target ultimately of what the restoration was intended to include. The endowment, I think, is the beginning of where it was headed.

John: It's a bit refreshing in that it invites us to want to be expansive and creative, not this narrowing and legalizing of the restoration, but instead this sensibility is calling us to our more creative, higher expansive impulses to say, Mormonism – Joseph just started it. And there's so much more, so many better places we can take it if we tap into this sort of divine source. Is that kind of what you're saying?

Denver: Yes. Go connect up with that same source to which Joseph was connected and then watch where it takes you, because it won't leave you where you are now. You will wind up going somewhere that Joseph was headed. Let's face it, the farther back you go in the family of man, the more united we all become, genealogically, physiologically, genetically. There is a convergence when you get back. You go to the earliest pre-flood era, and emerging from the flood in the tales that we are told in our Old Testament there is one family, and we all began united under Adam, and we got fractured. We all got reunited – as kindred, as brothers of a common father, as sisters in a common family – again at Noah. And when you look at the promise of the Second Coming, one of the things that it hails for us is the opportunity once again to reunite as a single people, to become unified under the presiding direction of this benign, loving, self-sacrificing God whose purpose it is to bring us back into unity. And so yes, Mormonism should be a unifying faith, a creative faith, an inviting and a loving faith, and not a strangely militant, closed minded, arrogant group of proud folk.

John: I'm going to just ask you to do very quick, and I mean just a few sentences, just reviews of a couple of the things that people – I'll refer people to *Passing the Heavenly Gift* for your full explanations. But just really quickly: Blacks not getting the priesthood, thoughts on that? Just a few sentences, just a summary.

Denver: I point out in the book that one of the really interesting little details is that the same fellow who ordained Elijah Abel to the priesthood is the fellow who repeated the statement about Joseph did not want priesthood going to the slaves, the African-Americans. It's one of those little bits of irony where, okay, you ordained him, and you're the one who's bringing that along. Needless to say, that is a very problematic moment in Church history. And, if you take what Brigham Young said at face value, and you say that as the orthodox today claim, which is that the president of the church can never lead us astray, Brigham Young was adamant that if the Church were ever to give priesthood to the blacks then the Church would lose all priesthood. Your choice is:

Presidents of the church can, in fact, make mistakes, so everything's okay or, presidents of the church cannot make mistakes, Brigham Young was right, and the Church has no priesthood because we've conferred it upon blacks. We really do have moments in our history on that issue in which we are pointing in both directions.

John: So for you it's that God never intended blacks to have the priesthood withheld from them.

Denver: Yes. Joseph made no effort in Kirtland or in Nauvoo to exclude or to not ordain. And if Joseph represents the best practice then we have a lot of embarrassing dialogue. The problem is that Brigham Young won the argument and the majority of the Church followed Brigham Young. Brigham Young becomes the narrow neck, the funnel through which Mormonism is strained in its most popular iteration in the world today. Therefore you have to confront Brigham in all his language. And when you confront Brigham with all his language, you could not – it was impossible to convey priesthood. You have all those problems. I think we either have to be a little softer on the point that church presidents can never lead the Church astray on the one hand, or we have to be a whole lot more humble about declaring that we are in possession of all authority on the other hand, because you cannot assert those two propositions and harmonize them and so you are left with the horns of the dilemma, if you're someone that believes that current position. By the way, Brigham Young didn't think that the president of the church couldn't lead the church astray. He talked about how that was not only possible but a grave risk that we needed to guard ourselves against.

[crosstalk]

John: That's right, that's totally right. Let me just ask you quickly – my listeners are probably bored with me asking this question so I'm going to just make it really brief. Is it important, in your epistemology, your Mormon world view, that the Book of Mormon be an historical document in the sense that a Nephi and a Lehi actually existed, and that there were actual golden plates, and that the Book of Mormon is a historical document? Is that a pretty important part or are you flexible on that? And the same with the Book of Abraham.

Denver: I think the Book of Mormon is an important document, independent of its point of origin. However, one of the things that I pointed out is that it becomes really problematic to say that there is no historicity to it when Martin Harris and David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery say they saw one of the characters of the book. When they say they saw Moroni, then we know at least one of the people that the Book of Mormon describes showed up in an angelic form and was seen by three – well, four counting Joseph – people. If four people say that they saw him and they never relented in the position that they did see him, then we have the problem with, "Oh, we cited one of the characters." Therefore, if we cited one of the characters, how do we displace all but him, given the fact that he comes at the end and he's talking about the preservation of plates and the passing of the plates along. I think if you're fair-minded the better view is: If you accept what the four witnesses – Joseph and the other three – say about having seen the plates through the auspices of Moroni, then dismissing its historicity

becomes a bit of a challenge. I accept the Book of Mormon as being an authentic ancient book. I don't know that it matters as much as the content, the doctrinal content, and the import of the doctrinal content, but I do accept it as being an actual record of an ancient and fallen people who saw our day and nailed us. I mean, they nailed us.

John: You mean they foresaw our day and got the predictions right, and are telling us what we need to know to get out of the mess we're in, is that kind of what you mean?

Denver: Yes, I mean that when it gets to talking about the religious environment of the last days and you accept their definition of gentile as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I think that is the context it was meant in, then the Book of Mormon is talking loudly and relevantly to us. And, by the way, they don't flatter us.

John: [Laughs] Right, right. And Book of Abraham?

Denver: Okay, Book of Abraham. Clearly the text that Joseph translated is not the text that we found in the Metropolitan Museum. Nibley's work on *[The Message of] the Joseph Smith Papyri - An Egyptian Endowment* walks through the history of the Church where he's describing the papyrus from which he was translating. The material that we have recovered of the Joseph Smith papyri are clearly different in appearance than what he said it came from. We don't have that papyrus any more. I think that what we have is an authentic Abrahamic collection of material but I don't know that it has a thing to do with the papyrus, and I think Nibley did a good job of acquitting Joseph in his *[The Message of] the Joseph Smith Papyri - An Egyptian Endowment* work. But again, that is one of those texts that I've spent a lot of time looking at and, in fact, looking at the facsimiles and Facsimile No. 2 in particular. There's some interesting material there. I'm not prepared to publish anything on that but I've tried to read everything pro and con that I can get my hands on because it appears to me to be an important text to look into.

John: I'm pulling this straight from your blog, which is DenverSnuffer.blogspot.com. There's going to be some people that sort of say, "Man! He's talking about angels, and he's talking about plates, and that's where you lose me, Denver." What you wrote on your blog – and I'm not saying this to be sensational – but you wrote, "I've seen angels. I've been taught by them." I think that's a proper quoting. I guess I'm only saying that because your approach is that we really can have access to the divine, and so because you've had an experience yourself then you, obviously, would be more inclined to trust the three witnesses and the eight witnesses instead of just dismiss them as fictional hogwash or deluded people, right?

Denver: Yes, a fantasy, whatever. In fact, when I first joined the Church I joined with the full expectation that this was the common experience for Latter-day Saints, that it was expected that you would have that kind of an encounter, and that that was normal for Mormons. I thought, Joseph Smith opened the heavens, Mormons believe in an open heavens, therefore Mormons with regularity have some contact with the hosts of heaven, the angelic and the divine, and it required me to move to Utah before it became abundantly apparent that most Mormons actually don't think it possible. There's a lot of

people who believe it's possible but confined narrowly to the group at the very top, and that somehow God's always in touch with the guys at the very top, but for the rank and file that isn't the way God deals with us any more. He's given his authority to men, and he deals with the big men, and he leaves everyone else alone. Well, happily, in my naiveté early on, and with the full expectation that God would talk to me as he talked to Joseph, I had encounters that satisfied me that even if no one else believed in it, that it was appropriate to believe in, and it can and does and will happen.

2012.02.12 Mormon Stories Podcast, Part 2

Interview with John Dehlin

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Salt Lake City, Utah

John Dehlin: Denver, I think we got a good sense for your high level summary view of how you view the restoration. Let's, at a high level, about from Brigham to now, and if you could give just a high level how you see the Church evolve, and when you started seeing some of the influences and policies being introduced that may have been important contributors to the mess maybe we're in now. I would love to hear you talk about it. You've talked about four phases, or something like that. I don't know if that's the right framing for this question but hopefully get a sense for what I'm asking.

Denver Snuffer: The second phase of Mormonism began at the death of Joseph Smith and it lasted – the second phase we clarified a bunch of problems including what do we do now that both Joseph and Hyrum are dead, and how do we perpetuate the institution in an existence that will allow it to survive, we figured that out. But the second phase largely is defined by the plural marriage issue. It ends when the practice of plural marriage ends publicly in 1890 and then privately in 1904 with the second letter of President Joseph F. Smith actually ending the practice. The third phase of Mormonism...

[crosstalk]

John: Wait, what was it about that phase that was important or distinctive for you?

Denver: In that second phase of Mormonism, what the Church was really trying to do was to preserve what it was that Joseph had handed, and then to live it no matter the hazard, live what it was that Joseph had handed down.

John: What they thought he had handed down, right?

Denver: Correct, and they became quite militant about that. The idea was that if God originated this work that all they needed to do was to show enough fidelity to it and then God would come out of his hiding place and protect it. The militancy about that, and then I think the single most challenging doctrine, was the one that Brigham Young chose to use as the whipping post to get everyone into line on, and that was the plural marriage doctrine. If you can live that then you can be approved of God because you're sacrificing so much to make this work. The enormity of the sacrifices that were involved in trying to make that work, I don't think they can be overstated. People that have gone back and done very good work – Todd Compton and others that have written in the area – show you this was a very difficult practice, and there was no reason to engage in this kind of stuff except out of a religious conviction. The women in particular, who tried to make that system work, who bore children and who raised them under that system – I don't care if you think that they were completely mistaken – there is a nobility and a self sacrifice and a self discipline about that that you really have to respect despite the fact that I don't think they should have been doing that, and it dominated the landscape.

When you get to the end and you begin to look at how we managed to extract ourselves, it was a political compromise with the United States, pure and simple. There wasn't a revelation to end the practice. In fact, when you read the private journals of those who were involved, the idea that they would renounce it temporarily and get statehood was what they started with. They made incremental compromises along the way, and in the final moment when plural marriage ends, it's really a moment that occurs with an attorney preparing President Wilford Woodruff to testify before the special master regarding the property belonging to the Church that the federal legislation had taken away and the guidance that the lawyer gave on how the questions ought to be answered. Wilford Woodruff goes off then, he testifies in court, and when he comes back you read in the journals – they are all saying in a kind of horrified recognition that now that he's testified that way we really have ended the practice. It's not coming back. And that wasn't where they set off to get. It was a series of pressures brought about upon the Church and it ended. The horrified reaction of those who were critical because they'd sacrificed so much lead President Woodruff then to claim that he wouldn't be doing it if it hadn't been approved by the Lord. Then the legacy of that comment becomes the notion that the president of the Church can never lead the Church astray.

The thing that is most important as I look at that second phase is really what happens when it finally turns and we step into the third phase, because the third phase not only changes the...

John: Wait. Denver, let me just jump in for a second. So what I heard you say from the beginning was that maybe it wasn't even God's will that the practice of polygamy even persists past Joseph.

Denver: Certainly not widespread, certainly not in the form that it assumed, and certainly not for the reasons that Brigham taught.

John: And so the foundations of this second phase, which is protecting and defending polygamy, you're saying maybe that whole thing was on a faulty premise.

Denver: I'm saying that it was a wildly enthusiastic overstatement of what it was that Joseph was doing. Joseph's purpose behind plural marriage and the limitations are spelled out in the second portion of D&C Section 132. His behavior and his practice was far more limited in scope than what it became in the second phase of Mormonism. I think ultimately for salvation and the realization of the highest blessings Section 132 doesn't even support doctrinally the idea that it is mandatory. That is a second phase teaching: to be saved you must have celestial marriage, and the definition of celestial marriage is not a man and a woman, it is *a man and women*—plural. And yet Section 132 is phrased in the singular, "a wife", "a wife", "a wife".

John: So since God never intended it, of course it is going to be a legalistic, lawyerly thing that it gets taken away, right?

Denver: Yes, the Church got taken on by Washington and then Washington won. And in the process of winning, we became not just American, we became *uber* American [laughs]. We have been proving our bona fides ever since then.

John: Okay, so third phase then.

Denver: The most important tool to Mormonism in the third phase became the idea that you can renounce a central doctrine, a doctrine that you say is essential to exaltation. Not only can you abandon that but you can abandon it and renounce it. And not only abandon and renounce it, but I can excommunicate you for what was before essential to your salvation. Now I can excommunicate you for continuing the practice. What that does to Mormonism is so fundamental, so radical, so far reaching, that that allows Mormonism – from that moment in the institutional Church – it can become anything. There are no limits. It is completely unanchored. Because if, as the second phase emphasized, you can't get to heaven without it, and in the third phase I can excommunicate you if you do it, then Mormonism has now assumed a flexible standard, a dimension of capacity to change, and not just change but reverse, and not just change and reverse but to militantly do so, consigning you to hell for doing what used to be required for your salvation – well, now the possibilities are endless and unanchored. It is radical beyond radical.

John: You are saying endlessly potentially terrible, right?

Denver: I'm saying we don't wind up where we are today unless you make that transition. That enables the metamorphosis without bounds of Mormonism. It's unchecked at this point.

John: So you are not a big fond of the innovation. I'm just trying to summarize. You're not a big friend or fan of the decline of what Joseph brought us and the reinterpretations of it. You're not a big fan of sort of the resoluteness with which the early prophets and leaders clung to those false interpretations. You're not a big fan of the way that they have assured us that they'll never lead us astray. And you are certainly not a fan of what they've started to do, which is to punish and excommunicate people who counter their authority, right?

Denver: I would agree with most of that. I might phrase it differently but we're quibbling. Here is the point that... Let's assume that I am right about the errancy of the second phase practice of plural wives, okay?

John: Okay.

Denver: Why would I ever excommunicate someone who sincerely believes that their salvation is dependent upon having a plural wife? I disagree with that, I think differently, but they sincerely believe it, so much so that they are willing – both the man and his women – to undergo the pain, the sacrifice, the difficulty, and the strangeness of that

kind of a marital union. Why would I excommunicate them? Why wouldn't I fellowship with them, invite them to my sacrament meeting, preach to them, let them preach to me, and see if we can't together reason our way through this gulf of understanding between where they are and where I am. I don't know that we need the kind of intolerance and militancy of saying now that we've changed our view other views are anathema. We're going to consign you – assuming we possess the power to do so – to hell because we are going to excommunicate you. Why not instead say, "The history of this is pretty checkered, the events as they unfolded were pretty ugly. Let's get together and let's talk it through." Now I know why we didn't do it initially, because you read the Reed Smoot senate confirmation hearings and you know what a hot button issue that was, and the Church did react the way that it reacted in order to preserve its credibility in the American public's mind. Nevertheless, I don't think the American public's mind would be scandalized if fundamentalist Mormons were told, "You can return and attend church. We're going to preach against you, we're going to disagree with you, we're going to try and reclaim you, but you're welcome to come and you're welcome to participate, and you're welcome to be among us." I know there are those who say we can't do that because as soon as you do that then their poison will spread, but look – someone's got a better view, and if we study it all out and we share the information that everyone thinks is relevant on the topic, and we come to a consensus to disagree with one another, then why don't we be friendly about our disagreement and tolerate one another's presence and say, "We just will never agree on that point but let's move on."

There are people who do fellowship who don't think the Book of Mormon is a historic document. I happen to think it is. But their skepticism over its historicity does not affect my conviction about its historicity, and we can have intelligent conversations and share a faithful retelling of morality evidenced in the book without agreeing about its basic historicity. Why is that important?

John: So you are calling for a more, not only just inclusive, but sort of a bold brand of Mormonism that isn't so scared, that isn't so afraid to be inclusive and have open dialogue and to even support disagreement or debate, but a robust discourse within the walls of the Church, right?

Denver: Yes. In fact, that statement that we quote, about "*giving apostles and prophets... that we all may come to the unity of the faith*", that Paul wrote, that statement is not so that in a police state we can cast away those with whom we have disagreements. That is a statement about persuasion. That is a statement about preaching and coming to a unity of faith through a lively exchange of discussion, preaching, exhorting, expounding, until we all say, "Okay, I've heard enough now to make my mind up and I'm on board with..." or, "I haven't heard enough, I disagree with, I still retain this view," but you know what, someone who walks in, who has a different view than me, if I listen to them they will either persuade me that I have left something out of the equation I need to think about, or they will raise questions in my mind that will send me back to looking and studying and trying to come to peace with the issue. But what I shouldn't do, in my view, is to say, "Wait a minute, you're saying something I disagree with. Get away from me. You are toxic. Get away from me. My mind must be

protected from what you have to say." But again, this goes all the way back to that beginning when I said I came into the faith from a polemical environment. I'm okay with the fact that people I love and respect – my own mother, my own sister – think my religion utterly false and worse than that, corrupt.

John: Have you talked about the fourth phase yet?

Denver: I've not. [laughs]

John: So the third phase is punishing dissenters, right?

Denver: The third phase opens up the possibility that Mormonism can now morph into anything. It does not have an anchored center including the highest – at that point they preached in the second phase the highest salvific union was the plural marriage. We're going right to the core of that, we're tearing it out, we're throwing it away, we're looking at it lying there on the floor and we're saying, "Anyone that wants to stand on that ground with that principle is excommunicated." That is an enormous; that moment in the history of Mormonism is as profound a deviation from where it began as the death of Joseph Smith represented in the first instance.

John: I'm torn with that. On the one hand I read Joseph as being very inclusive, very expansive, I guess inclusive would be repetitive. [crosstalk 18:29] On the other hand let's be honest. He was the guy who excommunicated Oliver Cowdery when Oliver Cowdery accused him of doing some improprieties. He was the one who told Hiram Page, or whoever it was, "Oh, no, no, that seering that you're doing, you can't. I'm the one who's in charge of the Church and you can't go be doing that if it contradicts what I have to say." And so I kind of feel like both the expansiveness and inclusiveness and the attempts at censoring are both rooted in Joseph, aren't they?

Denver: You have to go back to what was going on contemporaneous with the events involving John Page and the revelations themselves of John [Hiram] Page. Joseph Smith welcomed the revelations of others. He recorded in his own history. You go to the Joseph Smith papers and he's celebrating the fact that other people are having these spiritual experiences. He's retelling other's spiritual experiences with the kind of enthusiasm that some people repeat testimonies heard by people today, when they think that there's been some great spiritual manifestation. Joseph was just like that. But in the case of John [Hiram] Page, what John [Hiram] Page was doing had false doctrinal significance. In fact, there's an incident, and I have a friend who very, very much disagrees with me about this incident, but if you'll indulge me for a moment. There's an incident that occurs that I think has some real significance.

This is Lehi in the 8th chapter of First Nephi talking about a spiritual experience that Lehi had. Lehi encounters this man dressed in a white robe (1 Nephi 8:5). There's a man in a white robe, and he follows him, he follows this man. He bid him to follow him and he followed him. So Lehi follows him. And then he travels for the space of many

hours in darkness, and while he is in darkness he begins to pray. It's not until he's followed a man in a white robe, he's gone into a dark place, and he's been there for hours that he begins to pray, and he's lead out of that and he has this great theophony.

Joseph Smith, in his First Vision experience, replicates something that you can read about in that "hearken all ye people" recreation of the shouting Methodist tradition. The shouting Methodists were trying to get bound. They were trying to go out and have an encounter where they were bound up and they couldn't move, and they couldn't speak, and Joseph went through that. That was an authentic shouting Methodist experience. Except, like Lehi, he then pressed through the experience to find the theophony. Joseph did not allow himself to merely have a spiritual experience, he pushed through to the authentic encounter with God just like Lehi did. What the John Page experience represents in the first part of that, which is the spiritual deception, and not the second part of pressing through to find the authentic presence of God. Just like Moses on the mountain encounters Satan, who wants him to worship him, and Moses on the mountain presses through that and says, "I've been in the presence of God. You're darkness. This isn't authentic," and he winds up frightened, confronted, and in combat. John [Hiram] Page illustrates...

John: Is it Hiram Page or John Page?

Denver. Excuse me, yes.

John: Just making sure.

Denver: That incident with the false stone, with the false spirit, with the false doctrine doesn't represent militancy against authentic revelation. It represents militancy against someone getting false revelation and then stepping forward and saying, "I'm in charge. I'm going to lead people in the way that I'm going to lead them."

In fact, you go back to all of the revelations concerning Joseph Smith and a big question still in my mind, neither raised nor answered about Mormonism, is this question: Do all of the statements of limitation of Joseph's prerogative to reveal get immediately transferred to his successor in office, or are those statements exclusive to Joseph? That is, Joseph Smith is the one whose words you give heed to. I don't care who follows in an office, whoever follows in the office can't change what Joseph received. Or instead does it mean Joseph Smith, or the fungible office in which Joseph found himself, is the one you must give heed to. That question in Mormonism is presumed to have already been answered and the answer is presumed to be that it is fungibility. Joseph Smith does not equal "the person" Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith equals "the office" he held. Therefore, anyone that walks in possessing the same office gets that same prerogative. That is not clear in my mind. That is a leap that we have made that I'm not satisfied was an appropriate leap to have made – a prophet, a seer, and a revelator in the form of Joseph Smith, and an office holder whose title is, by virtue of the office they hold, prophet, seer, and revelator. Unquestionably, inside the institutional Church has the absolute authority and prerogative of that office. They are the ones that

control the tithing budgets. They are the ones that staff the church. And they alone can organize stakes. They alone can conduct the affairs of the Church, and no one else has that right to step in because the common consent has put them in that position. Does that mean that they have the unfettered discretion that Joseph Smith unquestionably held because he actually spoke with and for God, to have all their words heeded in the same like fashion? Or are they under the same obligation as me and you and anyone else to say, "We better give pretty strict heed to what it was the Joseph Smith restored, and we better be awfully careful about deviating from what it was that came from him, because he was the one through whom the Lord restored this." It's like saying, does the high priest Caiaphas, who sits in Moses' seat, as Christ acknowledged, and was entitled to our respect because he sits in Moses' seat – does Caiaphas have the right to go back and rewrite Leviticus, to rewrite and amend Exodus... Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists and the later tradition in the second temple period –we're in the middle of Margaret Barker now. The fact is that you would never say that Caiaphas is Moses' equal. You would never say Moses yields the floor when Caiaphas speaks. You would say, "Caiaphas, you've deviated from what Moses said, get back in line." Despite the fact that Jesus gave homage to the high priest of their day, and we are obligated in like manner to give homage to the authorities that are set in the Church. Do they have the prerogative to claim what Joseph claimed, to change what Joseph said, to demand co-equal authority with? That question we think we've resolved but I'm not sure we've even adequately asked it yet, much less kicked it around in a wholesome open environment to reach a conclusion about it.

John: You are saying what Joseph did with Hiram Page wasn't because he didn't want to keep inviting others to have a similar experience as his, it wasn't even necessarily an authority play, it was more his denunciation of what he didn't see as an authentic interaction with the divine.

Denver: Once you get into spiritual experiences, not every spiritual experience is from God. There are spiritual experiences that come from a place of darkness. Joseph Smith demonstrated a capacity to distinguish between the two in the experience he had in the First Vision. He demonstrates it again in Section 128 when, in his letter, he says that Michael detected the devil when he appeared as an angel of light in the wilderness; that's just a passing reference to it. He demonstrates it again in Section 76, when in the vision of God the Father, and the Son, and the throne theophony that is set out in Section 76, he also talks about outer darkness. Time and time again there is the contrast, the authentic spiritual experience, the one that gets through to God, invariably tempers you through darkness. There must be exposure. You have to know the difference between the light and the truth and the darkness and the false.

Joseph and Moses and Enoch and Sidney Rigdon in Section 76 – all of the experiences that take you beyond this veil and get you ultimately to a throne theophony, for example, will invariably take you through a place of darkness and deceit and despair and deception. One of the reasons Joseph made the comment that you can fall victim to spirits in the coming world if you don't have enough knowledge is directly related to the ability of false spirits to mislead and deceive. Part of the authentic, part of the

experience of Lehi in seeing the man dressed in white, and being lead into a dark place, is every man. We can't just say spiritual encounters invariably equal authentic access to the divine because some of those are authentic experiences, but they are with the darkness, the deceiver, the trickster, the one who will deceive and ultimately destroy.

John: Joseph did excommunicate a lot of people, right?

Denver: Yes. But watch how quickly some people got reinstated when they got – and what were they excommunicated for? We have people hailed up in the highest councils of the Church for adultery, who when they are getting ready to excommunicate them because of adultery, they confessed their sin and they say, "Okay, you confessed your sin, you're forsaking it, you're confessing it, let's move on." They don't excommunicate them. Some people reach a point where they're excommunicated and then how quickly are they reinstated? How much effort was required in order for them to repent and return, even members at the highest level, including the Quorum of the Twelve, who got thrown out. Succession in Brigham Young's case was affected by the Pratt brother departure and return. How forgiving, how quick to forgive was Joseph. How tolerant was he of the returning sinner, the one who said, "I'd like to put it behind me." He was quick to forgive.

There's that incident with W. W. Phelps and the "friends at first, are friends at last" poignant moment. Joseph was put through hell and he weathered it rather well, I think [laughs]. He was a broad-minded man. In fact, his confession, "If I hadn't lived this I don't know that I would have believed it if someone else was telling me," that comes from a place of tolerance, acceptance, and realism because Joseph's being authentic when he says that. He wouldn't blame us if we don't believe him, and that to me is the sign of someone telling you the truth.

John: This is just a total aside; I don't want to spend more than 30 seconds on it. But do you see Joseph as being capable of even bad or terrible things, like some would say the polyandry, the sending these men on missions while he propositioned their wife, or pressuring these young girls with their salvation, or even what he wrote in [Section] 132 with Emma. Do you see it possible that Joseph was both inspired and potentially capable of even really bad things?

Denver: I think Joseph was capable of really stupid things. I think he did some boneheaded stuff. But I think, at his heart, that Joseph was trying to cope with things in a way that he was trying to understand them as he went along. Some of the things are astonishingly stupid. It would be really interesting to have a chance to discuss with him what he learned from some of the experimentation that went on. I don't think that he ever figured out what to do with the notion of the plural wives, and I think that was as poorly executed and as befuddling a proposition as ever confronted a man, and I would fault him for some pretty dumb things. But I don't know that even in his dumbest moments that I would attribute malevolence to him, because his explanation and the way he acquits himself I'll give him the benefit of the doubt on, where I can. Where I come down on a lot of things are that he did some stupid things.

John: I want to quickly talk about the fourth era and then get into the Church today, and where we go forward. What's the fourth phase about?

Denver: It's the modern Church. It's the growing Church. It's the centrally correlated Church. It's the culted personality around the presiding president of the church. It's a distinct phase.

The presidency of Heber J. Grant was unpopular. He was one of the least liked presidents of the Church. The David O. McKay administration targeted the problem of getting the Church on board with where the leadership wanted to take it, and the solution was one of the hallmarks of fourth phase Mormonism, the culted personality or the immediate identification of a living prophet. As soon as you use the words, "a living prophet," disagreement with someone that you hold in that regard becomes heresy, apostasy, you're really threatening your own salvation if you differ from that position, whereas, in the first three phases of Mormonism when you use the word "prophet," the word prophet meant Joseph, or it meant the prophet Joseph Smith. It was President Young, it was President Taylor, it was President Woodruff. No one viewed themselves as being Joseph's equal and the phrase, "prophets, seers, and revelators" were connected with the office. The idea of a living prophet in the sense that it has manifest itself today is a real fourth phase, culted personality development.

I walk through the difference between the general conference comments made in the sustaining of, I believe it was Joseph F. Smith in general conference, and Thomas S. Monson in general conference. When the one was sustained the comments were like this: "I know this guy. He's a man of his word. He's told us what he's going to do and I believe he'll do it." In fourth phase Mormonism it's words like, "Mighty prophet of God." The quotes are all there in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. The contrasts between the two are really quite profound. What that enables fourth phase Mormonism to do, now that we've been through the third phase, which means that Mormonism can redefine itself as anything including denouncing prior practice as excommunicatable heresy – fourth phase Mormonism now wants and has achieved central command and control through the correlation process and therefore, when resistance to the central planning is resistance to the living prophet, fourth phase Mormonism can command and control from the center of the hierarchy all of the far-flung Mormon interests. Even your own thinking can be challenged, that your thinking isn't in harmony with the living oracle. One of the oddities about all that is that credit is given to David O. McKay for accomplishing the correlation department when, in fact, David O. McKay was saying that the correlated Church, in the way that was envisioned by Harold B. Lee, would ultimately lead to the Church's apostasy. And yet when Harold B. Lee defended the correlation program he gave credit for it, the inspiration for it, to the very man, David O. McKay, who thought it was troubling and potentially damaging and leading to the apostasy of the Church.

So the fourth phase is really the modern church, and it's an interesting amalgamation that requires all of this prior history in order to see the flowing current. The fourth phase

of Mormonism has the confidence now, and has the discipline established within the Church, that they can go back and make dramatic changes to the temple ordinances that were, at one time, thought to be unchangeable, eternal, and salvific, and people say, "Well, it's a living prophet, it must be right." All resistance to the change is overcome by that.

At this point fourth phase Mormonism really is whatever the person at the top wants to redefine it as. It can be anything. It can become more evangelical, more Catholic, more American, more international, more whatever it needs to be, and they've harnessed the power of the social sciences to gather the social data that allows them to follow trends and conform with trends. Mormonism is ambidextrous. It's nimble, and it's centrally planned and it will bear progressively less resemblance to what it was that it started with, with Joseph.

John: This reminds me of Paul Toscano. It reminds me of Hugh Nibley. It reminds me of – I'll just say it – I'll say critics of the Church, yet you are a member of the Church. You serve in callings, and you're part of this institution. How do you do it? How do you view the Church as almost – I don't know if you would go as far as to say it's gone into apostasy – but how can you stay a member and yet view the Church as if it's gone in this direction?

Denver: Christ gave his Bread of Life talk and a lot of people thought he had gone way too far at that point and everyone started peeling off. Christ turned to the apostles and said, "Are you guys going to leave me too?" and Peter said, "Where else can we go? You're the one who has..."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a mechanism in the form of common consent that puts men in positions that were originally established through Joseph Smith. No matter what else we have done or not done we have the obligation to go out and teach the Book of Mormon, and to worship, gather together, mourn with those that mourn, bear one another's burdens. It's an opportunity to serve. The Church believes the Book of Mormon, at least it prints it and it distributes it, and it publishes the revelations of Joseph Smith, and it is a place for fellowship. So far it has been willing to allow those that want to search deeply into the history of the Church and the teachings of Joseph to do that and to tolerate their presence. Until they decide that it's no longer welcoming to people that want to look into and consider carefully the history and the teachings, I don't see any reason to run off. I certainly don't think that I have any right to manage the Church. No one's sustained me. Everyone has sustained President Monson; well, everyone in the Church that votes in General Conference, that's the place where the votes are taken, and in our Stake Conferences. These guys – just as Christ was deferential to Caiaphas, how can we not be deferential? If Christ can put up with Caiaphas in the chief seat and say, "He sits in Moses' seat, show him respect." Tom Monson, and the brethren and the leaders of the Church, and the people who preside are a whole lot better than Caiaphas. These are good, decent men whose lives are lived on stage. They are doing a difficult job in a difficult era. They were handed a tradition. How can they see outside of the tradition inside of which they grew up?

That series I'm putting up on the blog about interpreting history, I have sympathy for people who grew up LDS. To a lot of people who are conditioned, traditional Mormons, the kinds of things I am willing to think about would be painfully agonizing for them to even consider. I get it, I understand why they plug their ears and they start shouting, "No, no, tell me no more." I get that and I'm sympathetic with that. But I can tell you that if I were to take my views of Mormonism and the restoration and Joseph Smith, and go sit in a Catholic church or a Baptist church or a Lutheran church, they'd have no use for me there, and I don't want to go sit in a Fundamentalist group because I don't have any use for that practice, though I'd be happy to talk to them about it. Where else are you going to go?

The Church has a commission. It was divinely ordained, and I think when God picks up the thread again and begins to move humanity forward, the place at which He will pick that thread up to run with it is going to be the very place where He last was working with humanity, and in my view that is going to be at or very near the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

John: Or at least in harmony with the impulses of its founding, right?

Denver: Sure, yes. The Book of Mormon foretells latter-day malaise and the Doctrine and Covenants predict a later reformation. We are not forgotten. God's hand is going to be I think once again fairly evident, and so why would you go somewhere else? Stay around, the show's going to get better, far more interesting.

John: That's fascinating. I don't want to end but time is escaping from us. I want to end thanking you for joining us. I want to end encouraging everyone to check out your blog and your books. Again, DenverSnuffer.blogspot.com.

One of the things that people asked me to interview you about was what we've already alluded to, which is the belief that man – the bold belief that Joseph started with, that you're now sort of encouraging, and interestingly enough, I don't hear this encouraged as much at church. Can you talk to us about whatever you're comfortable sharing about your own experiences with the divine, and how someone who... In my case I've prayed to ask if the Book of Mormon is true. I couldn't even get the burning in the bosom I was expecting to get, let alone a visitation from an angel or Christ Himself. So can you, A) Tell us whatever you can about your own experiences and, B) Tell those of us who would still be open and interested in having that type of experience how we could achieve it, even though we're in an age of increasing secularism, agnosticism, and atheism; give us a case for why we should even try and, if so, how it can happen.

Denver: It took 170,000 words in the book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord*, to lay the entire plan out and I would commend that book to you.

Let me just tell a little vignette experience dealing with the topic of the Second Comforter. I have a friend. He's a former stake president, a former mission president,

who had an occasion to be alone with Mark E. Peterson, the member of the Quorum of the Twelve who was considered *the* doctrinal authority in his day. It was Mark E. Peterson who was asked to identify all the errors Bruce R. McConkie made in *Mormon Doctrine*. This was the doctrinal go-to man. My friend had a chance to be alone with him. While alone with him in a private conversation that he repeated to me, he said that he raised the topic of the Second Comforter with Elder Peterson. And Elder Peterson's response to the inquiry about the Second Comforter was this: "Jesus was sent to the lost tribes of Israel. He was not sent to the gentiles. The gentiles are supposed to be converted through the records of the children of Israel. I, (this is Elder Peterson speaking) am a gentile apostle to a gentile church, and the Second Comforter isn't available to me." Now, after my friend told me the story he said, "What is your response to that statement?" and I said, "Oh, I would have said, 'Elder Peterson, in 1 Nephi 14:1 it says that *if the gentiles shall hearken to the Lamb of God in that day, (that is, when the Book of Mormon comes forth) He will manifest Himself to unto them, in word, and in power, and in very deed*'." The limitation in 3 Nephi was not a limitation on gentile access to the Lord. It was a limitation on the Lord's immediate post resurrection ministry to go and visit with organized bodies of the children of Israel scattered throughout the globe. Nephi's prophecy about our day is saying that the purpose of the Lord in our day is to manifest Himself in very deed.

I do not believe there is anything extraordinary about me, period. In fact, I would say when it comes to basic human goodness and decency, since I am acquainted with all of the mistakes that I have made over the course of a lifetime, my guess is you, John, and your listeners, and most of the people I know, and everyone in my ward practically, are better people than me.

John: You're not saying that just to be false modest, right?

Denver: No, I'm not. I'm saying if I have to evaluate myself on a goodness meter I am as wretched a man as you will ever meet. I practice law. I deal with people's fights. I have not lived a life that has been free from setbacks, errors, mistakes, and my first temple marriage ended in divorce. There's nothing about me that says, "Hey, here's a guy who's lived a life of such virtue that there's no question God would want to talk to him." I am not Joel Osteen, I am not Thomas Monson, I am not some great person, but I believed God could forgive me. I believed God wanted to forgive me, and I believed what Joseph said, and the scriptures teach to be true. And, I asked. Then I followed the process laid out in the book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord*, and eventually, on the Lord's timing and in the Lord's control, not mine, He did in fact make Himself known to me.

Now that was not the only spiritual encounter I had. Earlier I alluded to the fact that there is always the trickster, there's always the deceiver, there's always the darkness before the light. You have to press through that because there are forces that want to mislead, deceive, and hijack us, and I'm acquainted with those forces, as well as with the light and the truth. I can tell you I don't believe I am a very good student. You quoted from the blog where I said, "Angels have instructed me." I'm not a very good

student. Angels have personalities. Angels are real, sentient beings and I'm confident there are those who have gone back, returned and reported, and said, "I don't know what you see in this guy. He's dumb."

We're about out of time but I'll tell you one incident where I was caught up. I was in the presence of an elderly looking gentleman dressed in a white robe with a white beard who gave me some instruction. I heard what he had to say, and when he finished what he had to say I was a tourist. I stood there and I looked around, and I noticed that the floor we stood on was transparent and the wall was transparent, and I'm standing there thinking, "Why would you go to the trouble of building a wall if you can see right through the wall? That seems kind of self defeating." And then I noticed there was a painting on the wall and I thought, "Are you kidding me? People up here have nothing better to do with their time than to paint paintings?" I thought that would be more of an earthly endeavor. Why would they be doing it up here? I'm paying attention to everything except the fact that I've just gotten a message. I've just gotten instruction, and I've got someone standing there waiting for me to ask a question, and I never asked a question. I'm sure that was unimpressive. I'm sure that angel's impression of me would have been, "This guy's a dud. Why on earth would I be sent to give that message to that man because there's not enough to this guy to worry about."

The divine and the forces that are out there are not limited to inaccessibility to the masses. Every one of us have within us the capacity for the transcendent. Every one of us have within us the ability to reach up to God. I have faith and I have confidence that if we do it and if we follow the manner – and I try and outline it in *The Second Comforter* – that was commended to us, that the success stories are not going to be limited to a Joseph Smith, or a Moses, or a Nephi; it was meant to be the common experience of mankind. That is the story you hear in the temple. That is the purpose of the endowment. You and I are supposed to be prepared in all things to receive, individually, further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil. That's what you're invited to do, that's what I'm invited to do, and you're probably a better candidate that was I. If God can reach down to someone like me, all the more someone like you.

John: This is going to be a teaser for the next time I interview you, where we talk about this more in depth.

Denver: [laughing] As if you got a willing participant to be interviewed this time. You had to talk me into this. You think you're getting me back?

John: It's true, I worked hard at it, but that's because a lot of people begged me to interview you. Let me just say this: Give me five steps to being able to have a divine experience. Is it pray, read your scriptures, do your home teaching, go to the temple, pay your tithing?

Denver: No. The best example is the one that I use first in outlining in the book, *The Second Comforter*; it's Nephi. Get Nephi in his context. What he does is, he's now out

in the desert. His father has had this extraordinary series of visions. He's got this message and Nephi, like the rest of the family – and the mother was leading the charge on this – Nephi can't even believe what Lehi is saying. He looks at what's going on and he's a skeptic. Nephi begins by praying and he says – the words he used are majestic. He says he was visited by the Lord. That sounds like a huge deal but it wasn't at that moment. It would become so, but the very first step was when Nephi prayed and *the Lord visited him by softening his heart so that he was able to believe the words of his father*. That's the first step.

John: Softening your heart.

Denver: The first step is reaching the point where you say, "God, I want to believe this." It's that Lamanite prayer, "O God, if there is a God, and if you are God, make yourself known and I'll follow you." We are no longer children. We are no longer soft-hearted. We are no longer in the garden talking with God. We have been cast out into the lone and dreary world. We are out here where everything about us is acidic and we have to first say, "You know, I would like to return. I would like to go back. I would like to believe."

The place it began with Nephi was extraordinarily humble, limited and small. He simply found the ability to begin to believe. Then, when he began to believe it was quite some time, and it required quite a good deal more effort, before he was able to get what was something in answer to prayer more than, "I can believe." And when he got an answer to prayer he did was he was instructed to do.

Man is so constituted. You're made and I'm made exactly of the same stuff. You have to get an answer from God that has all of the substance of gossamer. It's just an answer that comes into your mind and into your heart. Then you've got to take that and bring it into this concrete world because the answer to prayer is going to lead you to do something. It's when you are lead to do something in this concrete, physical world that you transfer from the state of mere belief into the point of having faith, because you've acted consistent with what you believe God has told you to do. Nephi did that. Great things unfold after you begin to believe, when you believe enough to be able to accept an answer, when you act on that answer, and you – in this physical world – begin to alter what it is you do here, to conform your behavior to what you believe to be God's will, because that will lead you to know it was of God. After that, Nephi went through angelic visitations, and after angelic visitations he met with the Lord.

Nephi took forty years to compose his record. If you read carefully the text it took him that long to think about it. When he put it together, he really put it together with an explanation of the process back to God's presence in mind. The Book of Mormon is a book about coming back into God's presence. Joseph Smith's message is the return to God's presence. The temple ordinances – in fact, all of the ordinances leading up to the conversation at the veil in the temple that Joseph Smith put down here – are an invitation back into God's presence. If you've got that much affirming that you can be back in God's presence, then trust it, act consistent with it, experiment upon it, and let it

grow within you. That's all that Nephi did, that's all that I did, and I don't think my results are as important as the recognition that that is possible for you, that it is possible for anyone. That's really the story, connecting you back to the transcendent.

Every one of us have something within us that is, in fact, connected to God, that is, in fact, holy. I don't care if you're an atheist, in your core there is something divine that longs for reunification with the divine, and more so, the divine longs to reunify with it, but we have the freedom to choose and we have the freedom to exclude, and for the most part we elect to bathe in this acidic environment and say, "I've been cast out of the garden. That was back in my childhood. I can't get back there. There's angels and a flaming sword guarding the way." And though there may be, they'll welcome you back if you'll follow the path.

John: Wow. All right, Denver Snuffer, I've thoroughly enjoyed our conversation today. I will again refer our listeners to DenverSnuffer.blogspot.com. Books include *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord through the Veil* and *Passing the Heavenly Gift* among many others. Please join us at MormonStories.org for further commentary and conversation. Denver, I hope you'll come up there and read the comments and respond as you have time.

Denver: Oh sure, yes. But I don't like doing these things so don't suggest part two to me [laughs].

John: Okay, we'll only do it if you feel like that same divine source that you encourage us to tap into, if that divine source happens to suggest that you come on for a second episode on Mormon Stories. Will you do it then?

Denver: Fair enough. Good talking to you.

John: All right, my good brother. Thanks for your time, and I appreciate you coming on Mormon Stories.

Denver: We'll see you, goodbye.

2012.04.18 Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom

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On March 4, 1849, Brigham Young summoned a convention to draft a constitution for the proposed State of Deseret. The convention's work was rapidly completed and an election held eight days later. Voters approved the constitution and elected Brigham Young, Governor, his First Counselor, Heber C. Kimball elected Chief Judge, and Second Counselor, Willard Richards, Secretary of State. All 674 votes approved each.

There were discrepancies between the constitutional officers and the slate of elected offices. Further, the constitution set the initial election to occur on "the first Monday in May," not eight days after the convention. This departure was because Brigham Young and the Council of Fifty predetermined the outcome. Voters ratified President Young's actions and ignored the constitution. Leonard Arrington attributed this discrepancy to "the informal manner in which Brigham Young and his coterie of associates ran things." That "informality" was possible because of the unique roles of Brigham Young.

The Council of Fifty was a shadow government originally established by Joseph Smith that influenced the thinking of Brigham Young throughout his time as Governor. The story of his 1851-1858 governorship therefore begins in 1844 when Joseph Smith first organized the Council of Fifty. The full name of the Council of Fifty was "The Kingdom of God and His Laws with the Keys and Power[s] thereof, and Judgment in the Hands of His Servants, Ahman Christ." The name was too long for convenience and therefore was not widely known or regularly used. The two most frequently used names were "The Kingdom of God" or "The Council of Fifty." Today, most Latter-day Saints aware of its existence would recognize it as the "Council of Fifty." However, the early Church leaders generally called it "The Kingdom of God" or "The Kingdom." It was the venue where Joseph Smith established his own "Kingship" by being chosen as "our prophet Priest, & King by Hosannas." When Joseph Smith spoke in the late-Nauvoo period about "the Kingdom," or "the keys of the Kingdom," he was referring to this council. It was to this council Joseph Smith gave "the keys of the Kingdom" so his inner group of followers could perpetuate this "Kingdom of God" after his death.

Joseph's anointing to king was the early culmination of salvation. God intended to "exalt" those who were worthy, a status associated with kingship in this life and godhood in the next. The revelation recorded July 12, 1843 states: "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; ... then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them."

Joseph lived and died in stratified antebellum America. Slavery was divisive. Nevertheless, a religious idea of subservient angels obeying the commands of a worthy and exalted man in a stratified afterlife was easy to understand and accept. We may find it conceptually hard in post-Civil War/post-Civil Rights America but Joseph and his

contemporaries lived in a differently ordered society. Like his predecessor, Brigham Young was also ordained a "King, Priest and Ruler over Israel." Remarks by Governor Young clearly indicate he viewed his status to rule over others as God-given and kingly. In a sermon delivered on June 19, 1853, two years into his initial term, Governor Young addressed the saints in the Salt Lake Tabernacle as the church president. He explained: "We have got a Territorial Government, and I am and will be Governor, and no power can hinder it, until the Lord Almighty, says, 'Brigham, you need not be Governor any longer,' and then I am willing to yield to another Governor." Arrington's explanation for the "informal manner in which Brigham and his coterie of associates ran things" is best understood against this other, less public Mormon practice. Brigham Young felt comfortable contradicting the draft Territorial constitution because he was king, and could therefore exercise kingly rule. He called the convention, gave them the mandate, and wanted Territorial recognition from Congress. He knew they would not approve a Rocky Mountain monarchy; therefore he at least wanted the appearance of democratic rule.

Kingship in the Americas is disapproved in the Book of Mormon. It directs: "[T]his land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon this land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles." Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon; Brigham Young was converted because of it. Therefore, we should consider the meaning of this limitation on kingship. Joseph Smith was anointed "king" before Brigham Young, but Joseph's kingship was entirely theological, private, and non-governmental. His precedent did little to support the form of "kingship" implemented by Brigham Young.

The earliest events in Utah combined church and state in the person of Brigham Young. Without him there was no order – social, religious or political. Everything revolved around the church, and after December 1847 the church revolved around him. Colonizer, Governor, Church President, Prophet, Apostle, Lion of the Lord, American Moses, orator, and first citizen; the society of saints were overshadowed by this leader in a way which mirrored, if not exceeded, the way colonial America respected and followed George Washington. Either man could have cut corners, had they elected to do so. In the case of Washington, we have no instance of him doing so. In the case of Brigham Young, however, corners were cut beginning with his initial election.

States have a monopoly on the power to take property, fine, punish, imprison, and even kill its citizens. Brigham Young's religion, however, held no such authority. "[W]e do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world's goods, or to put them in jeopardy of either life or limb, or to inflict any physical punishment upon them. They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship." When analyzing Brigham Young's tenure as Territorial Governor, it is impossible to distinguish between his role as head of state and head of church. Parsing his conduct on the basis of the kind of power used (i.e., the power to punish beyond fellowship) clarifies these two roles merged, for he ruled as if there were no separation between the two.

When the church members who followed the Quorum of the Twelve were expelled from Nauvoo mid-winter, they governed themselves through the church. "[C]hurch authorities believed that the Kingdom of God was a political as well as a spiritual kingdom, and that the Priesthood was directly responsible for the effective conduct of civil government." Before the United States provided any recognized appointments the church filled a vacuum. The church's existing structure was capable of governing. It only made sense the church would provide the structure of both church and state.

Despite all the practical reasons, and obvious necessity for the church to step into the void, the distinction between church and state does matter.

The power of the state is derived from the right of an individual in a state of nature to punish and retaliate for offenses to the individual. As John Locke stated in his Second Treatise on Civil Government:

[That,] he who has suffered the damage has a right to demand in his own name, ...the goods or service of the offender, by right of self-preservation, as every man has a power to punish the crime, to prevent its being committed again, by the right he has of preserving all mankind, and doing all reasonable things he can in order to that end: and thus it is, that every man, in the state of nature, has a power to kill a murderer, both to deter others from doing the like injury, ...and therefore may be destroyed as a lion or a tiger, one of those wild savage beasts, with whom men can have no society nor security..."

John Lockes' explanation of state power and Brigham Young's views were similar. The Book of Mormon has little to recommend combining both the office of "High Priest" over the church with "Chief Judge" over the land. Alma refused it, ceding the power of government to Nephihah and retaining the office of "High Priest over the Church" for himself. Likewise, Joseph Smith, by revelation, gave Hyrum the priesthood and made him co-President, as Joseph assumed the office of "king." Unlike Alma, Governor Young chose to remain both with such tenacity that it required an Act of Congress, the Commander in Chief, and the US Army to pry the governorship from his hands.

The application of becoming United States territory was controversial. Debate lasted for nearly a year in the US Senate. When finally passed, President Millard Fillmore signed the bill on September 9, 1850 and appointed Brigham Young the first territorial governor of the Territory of Utah. He was officially sworn into the office of territorial governor on February 3, 1851. "Brigham Young, Governor of Deseret by popular vote, was now Governor of Utah by presidential appointment[.]" This only confirmed the existing reality. Here is an illustration of the problem with holding two roles:

On June 15, 1851, speaking as Church President about horse theft and Indians, Brigham Young said, (after explaining Indians are taught to steal from birth and whites were taught not to steal): "[W]hile they are in their degraded state, it rests upon us to

use wisdom and judgment in their behalf. I say to the Saints, kill every white man you see stealing and not kill the Indian for it, for the white men know better. I speak to the Saints not as the Governor of Utah, but you and I are sent to save Israel not to kill them." Killing (an impermissible penalty for the church) is being advocated to an audience of "the Saints," yet he stressed he did not speak as "Governor of Utah." Six days later he told the Saints: "[W]e are a kingdom and must bring the kingdom in subject to the will of God." He conflated the two, because the two conflated in him.

President Young gave a definition of "liberty" in a sermon on June 29, 1851, some of which reads like John Locke:

The spirit of liberty is the spirit of submission. If you wish to enjoy liberty in your fullness you must submit to the rule to the land of liberty. The privilege of living in liberty to all eternity adopt every holy principle and gather together every thing on earth and make you happy... You are not at liberty to infringe on the rights of your neighbors. If a man injure me, I am at liberty to make him pay for it. Every person in heaven is at liberty when they have the privilege to organize a kingdom for themselves, but unless they are submissive to their presidents on earth, they never can have the privilege to the last day of eternity. If they are faithful here, they will be make gods in eternity.

Submission to "their presidents on earth," meaning church leaders, was the price of godhood in eternity. The prize offered for submitting to the earthly president will be eternal godhood. The bounds of the Mormon kingdom were never limited to the Great Basin. Governor Young explained: "All things will have to bow to Mormonism or eternal light and truth. We have the true government of all the earth." If Mormonism had the right to govern "all the earth" and Brigham Young was its earthly king, then it follows there should be no conceptual end of his kingdom.

Fiery rhetoric from Brigham Young was commonplace. Initially it was more alarming in tone than in effect. However, continuing fiery rhetoric combined with deteriorating environmental circumstances did finally result in unfortunate events which were only possible because church and state merged in Brigham Young.

In January 1852, Governor Young spoke to the Legislature about slavery, sin and punishment. Borrowing from the Law of Moses, he declared: "The time will come, that if a man will take the name of God in vain, he will be hewn down without judgment or trial!" He added: "The time will also come when if the parents are sanctified before the Lord, and their children rise up in disobedience against them, they will be hewn down." This talk contributes to controversy still within Mormonism today, that a man must be killed for his own sins.

In the days of ancient Israel, justice was dealt out in a manner that showed they understood principle, and revered the

commandments of God. It was a mercy to many to have justice and judgment executed upon them on the Earth, even to be slain and have their blood poured out upon the Earth, that it might be tolerable for them. God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed, that He would save them. When they committed sin, He slew them, that He might save them, by their spilling their blood as an offering. Had they lived in sin, they might have sinned so as not to have been forgiven or saved. It was mercy to slay them.

The next day he added: "It is the greatest blessing that could come to some men to shed their blood on the ground, and let it come up before the Lord as an atonement." Brigham Young, as king, thought it his burden to create righteous people, even if it required some to die to accomplish it. A few years later this kind of rhetoric would bring about the Mormon Reformation, which was the beginning of the end for his governorship.

In an address to the two houses of the Legislature on January 29, 1852, he commented: "we find it is a hard matter to enact human laws to govern a divine kingdom." The governor and church president, or 'priest and king,' saw the challenge. The Legislature were stewards over "human laws" but he was steward over "a divine kingdom." The solution to the challenge, he explained, was to "draw out from the laws which God has given for His divine Kingdom. And make enactments to control all people, to a certain extent under the divine control of His own Kingdom on Earth, this I also believe." To clarify that his ambition was not limited to the Territory of Utah, but would expand to dominate the whole world, Governor Young declared:

For as the Lord lives, and as this people lives, they have this to do sooner or later. They have to usher forth their enactments, to govern the Jews and the Gentiles, and all the nations which are included with Israel, and with the Gentiles, that every professed Christian, every religious denomination, and every government under the whole heaven may find shelter under this broad banner which shall be spread over them by the Lord Almighty. That I also believe.

If God owns this world, then His Kingdom ought to rule over all of it. As he put it: "Jehovah is my king. I care not what can be said to the contrary. The Lord Jehovah is my king and instructor, and I wish you to serve Him. That is the way I would do it if I was in the Legislature[.]"

Non-Mormon federal appointees left Utah accusing Governor Young of being a dictator. He responded that he had the right to dictate. There were no traditional American constraints because he answered to a much higher authority. God and the Council of Fifty made him king.

I am accused by our honorable judges who have left this Territory last fall of entering into the Legislative Hall and there dictating them. That is an objection that will be raised and will be presented to President Fillmore; that I entered into the Halls of Legislature and there dictate them. I do dictate and I never expect to see the day while I am Governor amongst this people that I don't do it, and I want it published abroad for it is what I believe in, and it is what you believe in. ...I want these Gentlemen to realize, to be fully sensible of, is simply this; that when they meet here in a legislative capacity, not to forget that they are Elders in Israel, Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are Saints of the Most High God, and I hope and pray that a feeling to the contrary of this may never arise in the bosom of anyone of these men. ...[Referring to pre-Territorial days] We then legislated for the benefit of the inhabitants of the State of Deseret. The most of them belonged to the council that is called the Council of Fifty.

On the possibility that he could be removed as Governor by President Fillmore, he added: "They may send another governor here, but I shall govern the people by the Eternal Priesthood of the Son of God."

Brigham Young wanted it so that even if a man wanted to apostatize from the religion their economic survival prevented it:

If any man is in darkness through the deceitfulness of riches, it is good policy for him to bind up his wealth in this Church, so that he cannot command it again, and he will be apt to cleave to the kingdom. If a man has the purse in his pocket, and he apostatizes, he takes it with him; but if his worldly interest is firmly united to the Kingdom of God, when he arises to go away, he finds the calf is bound, and, like the cow, he is unwilling to forsake it. If his calf is bound up here, he will be inclined to stay; all his interest is here, and ever likely the Lord will open his eyes, so that he will properly understand his true situation, and his heart will chime in with the will of his God in a very short time. Were we to dedicate our moral and intellectual influence, and our earthly wealth to the Lord, our hearts would be very likely to applaud our acts. This reasoning is for those who do not feel exactly to subscribe to all that has been said this morning, with regard to dedicating ourselves to the cause of truth. This is what you must do to obtain an exaltation. The Lord must be first and foremost in our affections, the building of His kingdom demands our first consideration.

President Young envisioned merging Saint to church, church to state, and himself in control of it all. One great beehive, united and working for one purpose: to support the king's efforts to further his King's will. There was something much bigger going on. "The

Millennium consists in this — every heart in the Church and Kingdom of God being united in one; the Kingdom increasing to the overcoming of everything opposed to the economy of heaven, and Satan being bound."

As criticism from all sides continued to mount, President Young declared in October 1852 how futile it was to consider removing him:

What says the United States? "Let us send a governor there; let us send our judges there." But what do they cry? "We have no influence or power, for there are other men there who rule, and we cannot help it; they have the reins of government and turn the people whithersoever they will, and we cannot help ourselves." What did a gentleman say to Mr. Fillmore? Said he, "You need not send anybody there, for Brigham Young is Governor, and he will govern the people all the time; and there is no other man that can govern them." If there is any truth in this, it is, he will do so as long as the Lord lets him.

He said exactly what he meant. Later events, including removing him from power over the state, the abolition of plural marriage, domestication of the church by the nation, all influence the way Mormons now interpret his words. Consider for a moment on the literal meaning of this: "How are this people to be ruled, to be dictated in their future course. The Lord Almighty had built up his kingdom, here is the church and kingdom of the Lord [God] Almighty upon the earth. This is the kingdom [the church] to this kingdom [the world]."

Five days later, speaking of those who killed Joseph Smith, including the governor and militia who were involved, Brigham Young said, "[if they] had come and had us to cut off their heads and let their blood be shed on the ground to atone for their sin. The nation might have redeemed themselves, if they had taken those murderers and spilt their blood, but they have held their peace."

In June 1853, President Young addressed a church conference complaining of Judge Brocchus, the Territorial judge appointed by the federal government who abandoned his position and returned to Washington to complain. "It is true, as it is said in the Report of these officers, if I had crooked my little finger, he would have been used up, but I did not bend it." He went on to caution "apostates, or men who never have made any profession of religion, had better be careful how they come here, lest I should bend my little finger."

He explained his right to remain head of state: "I have no fears whatever of Franklin Pierce excusing me from office, and saying that another man shall be the Governor of this territory." Referring to the history of Utah, he said that he told the original delegation "I will be Governor still, after you have done everything you possibly can do to prevent it." It was his right. God, and the Council of Fifty, had made him king. Therefore, "We have got a Territorial Government, and I am and will be Governor, and no power can

hinder it, until the Lord Almighty says, 'Brigham, you need not be Governor any longer,' and then I am willing to yield[.]"

By 1856, Willard Richards had died (March 11, 1854) and was replaced by Jedediah M. Grant in the church's First Presidency. Brigham Young had been Governor for five years. Political conditions were complicated by increased criticism in the territory and the nation. Plural wives had not been welcomed. The kingdom was struggling. A new national political party was emerging whose popularity was driven by its opposition to both slavery and polygamy.

In addition to political and social differences, President Young was also confronted by natural disasters beginning in 1855. "The first major calamity was a grasshopper plague. On April 30, 1855 Brigham Young noted that 'grasshoppers have made their appearance and are doing extensive damage.'" A drought was underway, and the grasshopper plague added to crop losses. Food became scarce. "The drought was followed by a severe winter. In an effort to find more suitable grazing, it was decided to move many cattle, including more of the church herd, northward to Cache Valley. Biting snow and extreme cold soon proved this to be an unwise decision, and the loss in stock was extensive. Brigham estimated that two-thirds of all church stock had perished, while Wilford Woodruff recorded that only five hundred cattle remained from a herd of twenty-six hundred."

The entire kingdom was threatened. These disasters "in one year, wiped out the entire social surplus and placed the 35,000 persons in the territory in the same position of semistarvation in which the early Salt Lake colonists found themselves before the Gold Rush." How was the king to view a kingdom being rebuked by nature's God? Where was the blame to be placed? What was to be done?

Although there were two possible explanations, Brigham Young only considered one. He did not consider the leaders had brought this onto the kingdom. Instead, it was his subjects who had failed. What followed was a "Mormon Reformation" designed to "rekindle faith and testimony throughout the Church."

Here is a semi-official explanation for the controversy:

The era of the Reformation is often regarded as a controversial period. Some critics have claimed that Blood Atonement was practiced at this time. While President Young did preach that forgiveness for certain sins could come only through the sinner's shedding his blood, such comments reflect his style more than his intent. Many of Brigham Young's utterances were rhetorical and designed to encourage (or even frighten) saints into gospel conformity. While publicly he threatened, privately he instructed Church leaders to forgive those who expressed sorrow for sin and repented.

Here is a contrary view by Polly Aird, which begins by quoting Peter McAuslan:

"With all their [the Mormons'] honesty, they have often been led to do wrong, even to the taking of the lives of their fellows. This I know by my experience in Utah. Two prominent instances of such you will remember when I mention the names of the places at which they occurred, Springville and Mountain Meadows."

George A. Hicks, to whom Peter reported in the Nauvoo Legion, wrote later that in this period "a spirit of secret murder stalked abroad among the people, and many of the 'undesirables' lost their lives by being murdered by unknown assassins, unknown so far as the general public were concerned." And Peter wrote, "I know from my experience in Mormonism that to give it [the church] the power it would rewrite the world's history with the blood of its inhabitants. This you may think is strong language but it is in accord with the spirit of the leaders of the Mormon Church when I was in Utah."

The first explanation is drawn largely from Mormon academics employed by the church. Their description relies on characterizations and subjective interpretation, and their sympathies are understandable. When choosing between these two opposing views, even though it is biting, the second appears more accurate. Polly Aird took statements from those who lived through the events. She is non-Mormon, but not anti-Mormon, and therefore can report what she thinks true without being accused of unfaithfulness. Faithful Mormons like me are often regarded as weak in the faith if both believing and candid. But human failure does not make any religion false. Governor Young's rhetoric, following the trials of 1855-56, put the blame for God's judgements onto the subjects of his kingdom. Something needed to be done to appease an angry Deity. Here are excerpts from his March 2, 1856 address, given as the kingdom was emerging from that difficult winter, facing starvation again in the early spring:

I will tell you what this people need, with regard to preaching; you need, figuratively, to have it rain pitchforks, tines downwards, from this pulpit, Sunday after Sunday. Instead of the smooth, beautiful, sweet, still, silk-velvet-lipped preaching, you should have sermons like peals of thunder, and perhaps we then can get the scales from our eyes. ...

I know the condition of this people, I know what induces them to do as they do, I know the secret springs to their actions, how they are beset, the temptations and evils that are around them, and how liable they are to be drawn away, consequently, I tell you, brethren, that you need to have the thunders of the Almighty and the forked lightnings of truth sent upon you, to wake you up out of your lethargy. ...

The time is coming when justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet; when we shall take the old broad sword and ask, "Are you for God?" and if you are not heartily on the Lord's side, you will be hewn down. I feel like reproving you;

you are like a wild ass that rears and almost breaks his neck before he will be tamed. It is so with this people. ...

To understand how direful circumstances were at the time, fourteen days later Brigham Young advised members of his kingdom to go no more than five days without eating something.

His followers were severely suffering. He made the diagnosis and he prescribed the cure. Mormonism needed to be reformed with repentance strict enough to remove God's ire. Brigham Young intended to set that in motion using fiery rhetoric and, failing that, fiery enforcement. As to his status as kingdom leader, he was confident the hand of God upheld him. Therefore, any anger he provoked from the US government was inconsequential:

I shall be Governor as long as the Lord Almighty wishes me to govern this people. Do you suppose that it is in the power of any man to thwart the doings of the Almighty? They may as well undertake to blot out the sun. I am in the hands of that God, so is the President of our nation, and so are kings, and emperors, and all rulers. He controls the destiny of all, and what are you and I going to do about it? Let us submit to Him, that we may share in this invisible, almighty, God-like power, which is the everlasting Priesthood.

The subjects of the kingdom needed to be purged. If they were unwilling or unable to conform to the demands of righteousness, then they would need to be cut off like a dead branch. Clearing away dead branches would only benefit the remainder. The entire Utah legislature was re-baptized as an official act. The purpose of the Reformation was twofold: Either increase devotion to the kingdom or scare all disloyal subjects into fleeing. The Utah Legislature increased devotion. Hundreds fled.

By September 1856, Jedediah Grant was preaching "Reformation." In the Reformation, Brigham Young linked salvation and killing sinners together. Here is an excerpt from one of his earliest sermons on the subject.

There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground... I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine; but it is to save them, not to destroy them.

I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood, that the smoke

thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

The Encyclopedia of Mormonism states: "Many of Brigham Young's utterances were rhetorical and designed to encourage (or even frighten) Saints into gospel conformity." The recent book co-authored by assistant LDS Church historian Richard Turley states: "From [Brigham] Young's perspective, the reformation accomplished a great deal of good, though tough talk about blood atonement and dissenters must have helped create a climate of violence in the territory, especially among those who chose to take license from it." D. Michael Quinn observes: "Despite the suffering imposed by anti-Mormons on them, despite hearing repeated sermons about blood atonement, despite singing hymns of vengeance, despite receiving patriarchal blessings promising them the privilege of taking revenge on their enemies, the historical evidence indicates that most early Mormons avoided violence and were saddened by the news of such incidents." By the time changes in 1890 abandoned polygamy and made statehood at last possible, Mormonism reached a point of "abandonment of its violent culture and the beginning of its selective memory of a turbulent past." Paul H. Peterson explained, "[A]s the Reformation progressed, it became clear to the church leaders that not all would reform and that community purity would never become a reality until all polluting elements were removed. Thus, getting rid of incorrigibles came to be nearly as important as purifying those who were earnest in their desire to do better."

We will not understand the full implications of Brigham Young's kingship unless we are also willing to recognize the trends of his administration. If we accept his words, he believed sincerely in his kingship. If we accept his rhetoric at face value, he intended to either frighten his wayward subjects to repent or flee. Failing repentance or removal from the kingdom, he fully expected some to be killed. The question is left to each of us to decide how much or how little we will allow of Brigham Young to be taken at face value. In the Reformation, "[s]uccess could also be measured by the plans of a certain class of people to leave Utah in the spring. Brigham Young summarized these indications of successful reformation in January 1857: 'the reformation still continues ... Meetings are frequent and well attended. You may believe that it makes the 'Sinner in Zion afraid, and fearfulness seize the hypocrite, and we trust it will be too warm for such characters to remain in our midst.'"

The New York Times reported in August:

We have another arrival from Mormondom. An emigrant train, containing a large number of women and children – one hundred persons in all – has just reached this city [Lawrence, Kansas] ... The members of this company are, or rather were, professors of the Mormon faith, but they have fled from the holy land, partly to escape from the relentless tyranny of the Brigham Young oligarchy, and partly to improve their pecuniary affairs. When they

left, there was great dissatisfaction among the Saints, and about a thousand persons abandoned Utah at the same time. Several trains departed for the States, and nearly four hundred started for Oregon. It was with difficulty that they escaped, and many threats were made that violence would be committed upon them if they attempted to leave the country. The large number of those who left is believed to have been their protection.

The exodus was deliberately provoked. The Reformation, including a twenty-seven question interrogation put to all the saints by inquisitorial Home Missionaries, included issues such as "betraying your brothers or sisters," committing adultery, or shedding innocent blood. These three sins were grounds for blood atonement. The questions brought into the homes of every resident of the kingdom the reality that their unfaithfulness may not be viewed with continuing tolerance.

In his August 17, 1856 address he [Brigham Young] proclaimed how complete surrender must be: [Either] surrender and follow the kingdom and its leader, or leave it. But he warned: If you leave, you will ultimately be destroyed by God; completely annihilated:

The moment a person decides to leave this people, he is cut off from every object that is durable for time and eternity, and I have told you the reason why. Everything that is opposed to God and His Son Jesus Christ, to the celestial kingdom and to celestial laws, those celestial laws and beings will hold warfare with, until every particle of the opposite is turned back to its native element, though it should take millions and millions of ages to accomplish it. Christ will never cease the warfare, until he destroys death and him that hath the power of it. Every possession and object of affection will be taken from those who forsake the truth, and their identity will eventually cease.

Beginning in mid-November 1856 through April 1857, President Young forbade the entire church from receiving the sacrament. In October and November, the Willie and Martin Handcart disaster happened. On December 1, 1856 President Young's fellow counselor and Mormon Reformation advocate, Jedediah Grant, died prematurely at age 40. The second terrible winter not only claimed livestock but several Salt Lake homes collapsed under the weight of the snow. The roof of the Bowery on the temple block also gave way. These signs reconfirmed to Brigham Young the need for rigor within his kingdom. He added a new threat: "frequently giv[ing] warning that if the people did not reform, they would be left without their leaders and lose the higher (Melchizedek) priesthood." To emphasize the threat, Brigham Young went into hiding for over a month.

Daniel H. Wells replaced Jedediah Grant in the First Presidency of the church. Wells was also the Lieutenant General leader of the Nauvoo Legion. Like Grant before him, his fidelity was to Brigham Young and the kingdom, not the United States. On February 8, 1857, President Young instructed his kingdom:

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance (in the last resurrection there will be) if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil, until our elder brother Jesus Christ raises them up – conquers death, hell and the grave. I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them. ... If you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind.

Two days prior to this talk, as he emerged from hiding, Governor Young issued letters on February 6, 1857 instructing violence be used to punish several targeted individuals known to have violated the law. One letter was addressed to three recipients, including stake president Isaac C. Haight at Cedar City. The letter stated:

Be on the lookout now, & have a few trusty men ready in the case of need to pursue, retake & punish. We do not suppose there would be any prosecutions for false imprisonment, or tale bearers for witnesses... Make no noise of this matter, & keep this letter safe. We write for your eye alone, & to men that can be trusted.

The letter resulted in the Santa Clara Ambush, which is the topic of Parshall's article in *The Utah Historical Quarterly*. News of the ambush found its way into newspapers throughout the United States. Parshall explains:

The Santa Clara ambush was not what Brigham Young intended, in that it was not two backsliding felons who were attacked in the dark. But the ambush was the result of events he set in motion. He directed subordinates to take extra-legal action under specified conditions, knowing that innocents might suffer with the guilty because no "tale bearers" were to be spared. If he did not intend Dame and Haight to read his instructions as they have been interpreted here, that reading is justified by the indirect phrasing of his letters. If residents of southern Utah went beyond the mark in implementing his instructions, no effective chastisements occurred. All of the men to whom letters were sent retained their church, civil and military positions as though nothing untoward happened. But something had happened, with repercussions beyond the injuries and losses to Tobin and his companions. News of the attack spread quickly through the nation, heightening

tensions on the eve of the Utah War. When the wounded victims were carried to San Bernadino, rumors flared that endangered the lives of Mormons living there. Lack of accountability following the Santa Clara ambush did nothing to allay a local impression that violence was a suitable response to a perceived threat, an impression, which seemingly played a role at Mountain Meadows later that year. Most chilling to contemplate, survival of the Santa Clara victims and their public exposure of the attack may have strengthened a determination at Mountain Meadows to spare no competent witness.

The Santa Clara ambush included unintended victims. It may have been beyond the intent of Brigham Young when he wrote the instructions. However, Parshall's explanation is inadequate. If Brigham Young wrote the letter as a king, heading both church and state, then the process was not "extra-legal" at all. It was a sovereign's right to issue the letter to impose order. As 1857 continued, the king's ire spread from "reigning pitchforks" from the podium, to the fruit of his rhetoric which cost lives. After Santa Clara the violence spread. As it spread, neither the church nor the state over which Brigham Young presided displayed any inclination to hold a single person accountable for the deaths. Beyond that, there was no curiosity to identify those involved. Parshall describes the events of that turbulent year:

Failure to hold anyone responsible for the Santa Clara ambush foreshadowed the silence to follow the Potter-Parish murders in Springville the next month, the massacre at Mountain Meadows in September, the October bludgeoning death of Richard Yates in Echo Canyon, the murders of the Aiken party near Nephi in November – a catalog of bloodshed without accountability in the surreal year of 1857.

The United States was buzzing with alarm. The Utah Territorial Legislature issued a proclamation claiming the Territory's law was superior to Federal Law. New First Presidency member and commander of the Nauvoo Legion, Daniel Wells, issued General Order 1 at the beginning of April. This order was "notifying Nauvoo Legion members that they now belonged to the armed forces of God's Kingdom." "President Buchanan in late May decided to unseat [Brigham Young] as governor and ordered the US Army to escort his successor to Great Salt Lake to restore federal authority in Utah." Given Brigham Young's widely reported refusal to surrender the governorship unless "God Almighty" would tell him to submit, President Buchanan concluded the US Army was necessary to install a new governor. This has been called The Utah War, or The Mormon Rebellion.

The Utah War has been characterized as a "bloodless" event. Recent scholarship has revisited the war, and at least one scholar changed his view from being "bloodless" to being quite bloody. His revised view is now:

Overlooked or intentionally excluded from these views is the Mountain Meadows Massacre as a wartime engagement on September 11, 1857. It was an atrocity in which a detachment of the Utah territorial militia (Nauvoo Legion) supported by Indian auxiliaries executed about 120 disarmed men, women and children, the largest organized mass murder of white civilians in American history until the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

That author goes on to conclude that the Utah War rivaled "Bleeding Kansas" in fatalities. A recent description by [an] LDS Church assistant historian explains it this way:

Scholars who have investigated violence in many cultures provide other insights based on group psychology. Episodes of violence often begin when one people classify another as "the other," stripping them of any humanity and mentally transforming them into enemies. Once this process of devaluing and demonizing occurs, stereotypes take over, rumors circulate, and pressure builds to conform to group action against the perceived threat. Those classified as the enemy are often seen as the transgressors, even as steps are being taken against them. When these tinderbox conditions exist, a single incident, small or ordinary in usual circumstances, may spark great violence ending in atrocity. The literature suggests other elements are often present when "good people" do terrible things. Usually there is an atmosphere of authority and obedience, which allows errant leaders to trump the moral instincts of their followers. Atrocities also occur when followers do not have clear messages about what is expected of them — when their culture or message from headquarters leave local leaders wondering what they should do. Poverty increases the likelihood of problems by raising concerns about survival. The conditions for mass killing — demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity, fear, and deprivation — all were present in southern Utah in 1857.

Of these conditions, Brigham Young's leadership supplied the demonizing, authority, obedience, peer pressure, ambiguity and fear. He said his purpose was to create this very environment. Brigham Young's own son would characterize the Reformation as "a reign of terror." One woman who lived through that time reflected: "it was a fearful ordeal, and fear is a slavish passion and is not begotten by the Spirit of God!"

Brigham Young declared he understood exactly how to govern to accomplish what was needed. He explained how few men were qualified, as he was, to accomplish what he wanted:

There are but few men who know how to govern in temporal things, fewer still who know how to control the feelings of the people, how to guide the power of any kingdom that was ever organized on the earth. Nations and kingdoms of this world rise up and flourish only for a season. What is the difficulty? They contain the seeds of their own destruction, sown therein by the framers of human governments; those combusive elements are organized in their constitution from the first. ...Why are they thus led to sow the seeds of their own destruction? Because the kingdoms of this world are not designed to stand. When men are placed at the head of government who are not actually controlled by the power of God by the Holy Ghost they can lay plans, they can frame constitutions, they can form governments and laws that have not the seeds of death within them, and no other men can do it.

If we take him at his word, then the deathly harvest of 1857 was what he hoped to accomplish. There is another rhetorical milestone immediately prior to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In August 1857, Governor Young knew the Army had been dispatched to install a new governor. He learned on the 11th that the Army had arrived 118 miles below Laramie. On the 16th he gave a talk about the Army, his intent to fight them, and the direful results the nation should expect if they persisted in moving forward into combat with the kingdom. Only 26 days prior to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Governor Young warned the United States:

Now if the United States send an army here and commences war on us, their travel across this country must stop; their train cannot cross. To accomplish this I need only say to them for the Indians will use them up; and they will do it. ...I warn them and fore warn the United States, that if they commence war upon us, they need not expect me to hold the Indians while they shoot them. ... Had it not been for the "Mormons" in these mountains, nineteen out of twenty of this seasons emigration would have been cut off by the Indians. Had it not for our settlements here, overland emigration would have been stopped years ago, and yet they turn around and condemn me and this people for conniving with the Indians. This people have always done good to the travelers; they have kept the Indians from injuring them and have done all in their power to save the lives of men, women and children, but all this will cease to be, if our enemies commence war upon us.

Twenty-six days later a Mormon-led attack killed over one-hundred twenty men, women and children. The slaughter was both staged to look Indian caused, and reported as an Indian attack; as if the event was quick proof of the Governor's warning about the perilous boast of waging war against his kingdom. The proximity of the talk and the attack appeared to be swift vindication, but did not deter the United States' determination to remove Governor Young. As the Army approached, Governor Young

warned not only that Indian uprisings afflict the United States, but God would also come out of His hiding place and fight for the kingdom. He predicted a spectacular defeat, with the unseen "soldiers of the Lord" defending the kingdom. The threatened war made Governor Young pleased at the prospects of the kingdom defeating the coming Army. He proclaimed:

I do not know that I have ever felt better in my life, more satisfied, more rejoicing in my heart, or had more of the testimony and witness of the Spirit within, than when I have said, You Latter day Saints may be driven to move, if you will take your own part, and "I the Lord your God am with you, and I will help you and I will fight your battles." It is rather a bold statement; it is rather a bold step for a handful of men here in the mountains to think that they can cope with the extensive government, the government of the United States, the powerful kingdoms of darkness. Upon natural principles we cannot, but we can fight them in the name of, God Almighty, and with his aid we can keep them off from us.

He warned them [the United States] not to come because they risked utter defeat. The whole world was watching the conflict, making God's Kingdom renown. The outcome of this conflict was certain. Brigham Young asked, "Cannot this kingdom be overthrown? No. They might as well try to obliterate the sun." It was not the kingdom Brigham Young led that was vulnerable, but the United States which was at peril and about to be destroyed by God. The destruction of the US Army was, according to Governor Young, part of God's design to acquire a respected name and a fearful character again in this world.

As King Brigham preached to the Utah Legislature during the winter of 1857, the US Army was quartered down for winter still hundreds of hard miles away. He said his kingdom was not only going to win the conflict, but the triumph would lead to control over all nations by God's kingdom:

The Lord should reign and rule over us in all our business transactions The Kingdom of God is one thing, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is another, yet it is one, and when the Kingdom of God is set up upon the earth it will be a temporal Kingdom, and that is the Kingdom Jesus referred to, and which his saints would fight for. The Kingdom of God is a temporal Kingdom and the Church of Jesus Christ is His Church and Kingdom. The Kingdom of God will enact laws that will govern and control all people whether Saint or sinner, whether they worship God, the Sun, Moon or Stars. The Law that will issue forth, from Zion will control the nations of the Earth, and give to each one his rights in the free exercise and enjoyment of his[.] ...Here is the Kingdom of God in embryo, which will enact laws for the Government of all people, nations, kindreds and tongues upon the face of the whole earth, and in our deliberations our eyes should be single to this point, that this doctrine has been preached and acted upon, and the Kingdom of God was organized in the days of Joseph [Smith], and was

called the council of Fifty, and that was the commencement for to issue forth laws for the nations of the earth.

But no higher authority rallied the Indians, nor came out from His hiding place to destroy the US Army, nor caused unseen soldiers to slay US forces. Instead, the Army came and Brigham Young negotiated an end to his earthly rule over the Utah Territory. He served a total of seven years, although appointed only for four because the act allowed him to continue "until his successor shall be appointed and qualified, unless sooner removed by the President of the United States." Governor Cumming peacefully assumed office in April of 1858.

A Telestial Kingship

Mormonism may have ended at the death of Joseph Smith if not for Brigham Young. Because he acted decisively, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints remains a body of believers, perpetuating the structure established through Joseph. Mormonism was preserved in structure, but altered in content by Brigham Young. History has acknowledged his great contribution in preserving the faith, but it has not adequately acknowledged how greatly he changed its content and practice.

Almost every religion has some doctrine beyond man's capacity to implement. Catholicism doubted man's ability to live the Sermon on the Mount for over a thousand years until Saint Francis accomplished it. Few have repeated his achievement. Nevertheless, the ideal remains firmly a part of Catholicism with Saint Francis a symbol of that ideal.

Kingship is perhaps both the greatest concept and worst temptation in Mormon theology. Its difficulty is on public display in the governorship of Brigham Young. He is a cautionary tale for us about the greatest challenge faced by faithful Mormons who hope to be sons of God and joint-heirs with His Son.

John Locke wrote in his Second Treatise of Civil Government that "all princes and rulers of independent governments all throughout the world, are in a state of nature[.]" Brigham Young as God's earthly head of an independent kingdom conformed his conduct to that view. Therefore, as John Locke would expect, his behavior was like man "in a state of nature" where he had the right to "restrain, or where it is necessary, destroy things noxious to [him]." Locke's description is apt.

If, during Brigham Young's lifetime, America viewed Mormonism as one of the "twin relics of barbarism," like the Republican platform Abraham Lincoln ran on described it, subsequent events domesticated Mormonism. Mormonism went from being a Great Basin monarchy to becoming an uber American, flag-waving, rock-solid red state on the most conservative side of the ledger at present. Both the state and church Brigham Young led have become 'house-broken' to Americanism. This years' Presidential election reflects the long road Governor Young's people have travelled.

The explanation for violence in Utah during the tenure of Governor Young is usually stated in these terms: "the point here is not to claim that no vigilante crimes by angry Mormons protecting their interests ever occurred in territorial Utah. The point is that over attention to such activities obscures the fact that they were very rare compared to elsewhere in the West, where no concerted effort to undermine a popularly supported government was going on as in Utah." This measure concedes too much. It presumes to compare God's kingdom to how others in this world behave; or in Mormon vocabulary, the standard is Celestial.

When Christ spoke of His kingdom, He declared it was "not of this world." The inspiration for Brigham Young's ambition to be king came from Joseph Smith and the Council of Fifty. But Joseph Smith surrendered his own life, "as a lamb to the slaughter" even when he had the largest militia in Illinois, the Nauvoo Legion, at his command to prevent his arrest. Christ was killed, Joseph Smith was killed, and both claimed an otherworldly kingship.

The form of kingship is approved in the Book of Mormon. In this form the king is servant, and not a master. This form of king is in God's service while kneeling and laboring to serve others, without boasting and without imposing grievous burdens. In other words, the Book of Mormon approves a Celestial kingship, which serves through self-sacrifice and meek example as the model of leadership, but utterly rejects control, compulsion and dominion by an earthly king. Hence the sad observation made by Joseph Smith that it is the nature of almost all men as soon as they have a little authority to begin to exercise unrighteous dominion over others.

Mormon apologists do not apply a Celestial standard for the Reformation. Nor do they use the Book of Mormon to measure Governor Young. Consistently, they compare the kingdom's conduct to gentiles elsewhere in the West. By that standard, Governor Young presided over a violent Celestial Kingdom and measured only an above average grade in the number of killings. In the end, whether you are sympathetic, dispassionate, or critical of this era of Mormon history, all writers, Mormon and non-Mormon alike, concede it was a Celestial Kingdom over which Governor Young reigned. By that standard he did well enough. However, is it enough to say he could have been responsible for more deaths if he had been brutal? Is Mormonism to be measured against its highest ideals, or instead it's better-than-average performance? If we use the steep incline in the number of killings beginning in 1857 as a trend, then the fruit of the Mormon Reformation was an ominous harvest. Had the US government not intervened to remove Governor Young in 1858, the trend suggests something even more dreadful was coming.

For President Young, in the absence of the Lord appearing "and personally dictat[ing to him] in the management of the people," hearing "the voice of Almighty God" was a matter of common sense. He told the kingdom, after learning that President Buchanan had ordered the Army to go to Utah, how he was able to conduct the kingdom's affairs: "I am not going to interpret dreams; for I don't profess to be such a Prophet as were Joseph Smith and Daniel; but I am a Yankee guesser[.]" From our vantage point, we

can question why he did not hear God's voice in the early death of Willard Richards, nor in the drought, grasshopper swarms, crop failures, bitter winters, livestock deaths, buildings collapsing under the weight of unusually heavy winter snows – including the church's Bowery, in the handcart company disasters, premature death of Jedediah Grant, nor in his own life-threatening illness in February 1857. God's voice throughout those difficulties only said to the Yankee guesser that God condemned the subjects of the kingdom for their lack of fidelity to the earthly king's righteous leadership.

The Book of Mormon promises the American continent was to remain a place of liberty. This land is not for kings and kingdoms. The gentile occupants are warned to never establish a king here, or they would be cursed. The collision between Brigham Young and the United States could be interpreted, using the Book of Mormon's teachings, as a conflict between God's decree against a kingship and Governor Young's insistence upon it. In that sense, the arrival of the Army to remove Governor Young was, at last, the voice of God Almighty, relieving Brigham Young of his kingship.

Brigham Young faced greater challenges than we do. We can no more view ourselves living in antebellum America than we can view ourselves in the shoes of Brigham Young. Therefore, even if we think we can understand him, we should hesitate to judge him. That judgment remains best left to God. The most we ought to offer is gratitude we were not given his responsibilities because that would expose to public view and history's memory our own assortment of human failure. Governor and President Brigham Young was a colonizer, leader, religious symbol, and American icon. He rightly deserves a place in American and Mormon history, even if some of the praise and criticism given him is both too little and too much.

Thank you.

[1:01:27] Introduction of Thomas G. Alexander

[1:04:08] Thomas G. Alexander: Actually, I would consider this a comment rather than a rebuttal. These will be things that I'll be dealing with. In considering Denver's paper I will frequently refer to the ideal of the expected and the actual of, an approach that was suggested by Robert Burkholder.

Denver argues that the Counsel of Fifty operated the government in Utah with Brigham Young. This may have been the ideal but it wasn't the actual. He cites Mike Quinn's excellent article but Mike points out that most of the time the Counsel of Fifty didn't operate at all. Rather, Quinn points out, "it symbolizes (and I'm quoting) the other worldly world order that would be established during the Millennial reign of Christ on earth." Mike says that after the initial flurry of activity from 1848 to 1850 in Utah, the Counsel of Fifty was a virtual relic during the remainder of Brigham Young's leadership. When it functioned, the Counsel was a rubber-stamp for the First Presidency and Twelve, who actually provided continuous leadership for the Mormons in religious, economic, political, and social matters.

Brigham Young outlined the ideal when he explained that the Constitution of the government of the kingdom of God. He called it both a republican theocracy and a true democratic theocracy. Young argued that the kingdom of God would "differ but little in form from our national, state, and territorial governments but its subjects will recognize the will and dictation of the Almighty. Everyone," Young says, "will be free to exercise religious and other civil rights that they should have been able to exercise under the Constitution."

In 1855 he said that the kingdom of god was not fully organized. In 1856 he said we've got to be rightly prepared to go to the spirit world in order to become kings. In 1863, in speaking to the shadow government of the State of Deseret, he used the future tense: "We are called the state legislature but when the time comes we shall be called the kingdom of god." In a sermon in 1866 he spoke of the kingdom of god as in the future.

Now, some of his sermons are inconsistent. In 1861 he said that Joseph Smith had organized the kingdom of god as prophesied by Daniel. In 1857 he spoke about the kingdom of god as being on the earth. In trying to reconcile these inconsistencies, it seems to me that the term "kingdom of god" as it relates to the organization on our terrestrial earth, was an ideal, symbolically embodied in the church. In the future however, he expected that it would be an actual organization governed by God and Christ. This is consistent with his view of kingship. In a sermon in June 1866 he said, "This kingdom is governed and controlled by him who knows all things; and he will bring forth the righteous, the just, the humble and the meek of the earth, all those who serve him and keep his commandments to the enjoyment of the fulness of his glory." In 1874, in promoting the United Order, he announced an uncanonized revelation from God, he called on the people to join the United Orders for the furtherance of God's Kingdom on earth.

Assertions that Young considered himself a king occur frequently in Denver's paper. For instance, the author inserts the words "priest and king" when he certainly makes clear that Young is speaking about God's own kingdom on earth, not Brigham Young's kingship. The general rule historians follow is to give evidence. Frankly, I've searched Brigham Young's sermons in vain for any place where he referred to himself as a king. Rather, he said, "the Lord Jehovah is my king and instructor." Moreover, the portions of Section 132 of the Doctrine & Covenants that Denver quotes, especially verses 19 and 20, refer to future conditions after the resurrection, not the condition on this Terrestrial earth.

The way Brigham Young functioned in this world is best understood as a territorial governor and church president rather than as a king. In fact, I would argue that in every place in his [Denver] paper where the word "king" appears in reference to Brigham Young, except where it is used symbolically it should be replaced by terms like president, governor, or prophet, depending on the context. Denver's discussion of the Book of Mormon is interesting in the ideal but it bears little relationship to the actual. In actuality, as governor and church president, Brigham Young made executive decisions in counsel with his close associates, generally members of the First Presidency and

Counsel of the Twelve. These were similar to president's cabinet meetings and Andrew Jackson's kitchen cabinet.

The saints established a provisional government of the State of Deseret and applied for admission to the Union. The leaders drafted a constitution as Peter Crawley has shown, without a convention. Brigham Young and his advisors clearly decided to hurry things along, and they held elections in a public meeting two days after the convention. We should note that such voting was not unusual in the 19th century and secret ballots were unknown until 1888. In 1888 Massachusetts was the first state to adopt the secret ballot. Kentucky was the last in 1891. Previously, states used systems where people announced their votes at the polls or parties drafted their own ballots.

The Mormons lived in what Joseph Smith called a theodemocracy. The First Presidency and Twelve acted under God's direction. God, not Brigham Young, was the king. Given the insignificant role of the Counsel of Fifty and the general perception that God governed the kingdom, I would argue that the crowning of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor was symbolic, that is an ideal rather than actual. Denver acknowledges that Joseph Smith's kingship was entirely theologic, private, and non governmental. In fact all three – Smith, Young, and Taylor – functioned as prophets, seers, and revelators rather than as kings.

With regard to relinquishing power Brigham Young says, as Denver indicated, that he would serve as governor, again not as king, and "no power can hinder it, until the Almighty says, 'Brigham, you need not be governor any longer,' and then I am willing to yield to another governor." He offered on at least two occasions to yield his governorship voluntarily. He volunteered to relinquish the governorship to Edward Steptoe in 1854 when he thought that President Franklin Pierce would appoint him as governor, and Steptoe declined the appointment. He actually relinquished his authority to Alfred Cumming in March 1858, when Thomas L. Kane brought him to Salt Lake City. Cumming said everywhere that he was greeted as governor when he came.

Significantly, the Army did not force Cumming on Brigham Young and the people of Utah. The army was still bivouacked at Fort Bridger when Cumming arrived in Salt Lake City. Since Brigham Young relinquished the governorship before the army arrived we should analyze the installation of Alfred Cumming and the dispatch of the Army as separate issues. We need to understand that the Mormon people, not just the leaders, feared the advancing Army because they had experienced state run armies in Missouri, and organized armies functioning outside of the authority of the state in Illinois. My own great-great-grandfather and his family lost property in their expulsion from Missouri and Nauvoo. Numerous Mormons died in Missouri and Illinois, either killed by the Army or by weather and starvation.

As the army advanced on Utah the people heard stories of the soldiers threatening to murder them. The Mormons used violence to hinder the Army's advance and many abandoned Salt Lake City and moved to Provo in a very expansive venture. They

wanted to stop the advance of the Army and they wanted assurance that the soldiers would not molest them. President James Buchanan's Peace Commission offered both amnesty and promises about the role of the Army. Brigham Young said that he accepted the amnesty even though he believed that he had done nothing to deserve it.

Utah was not in rebellion against the United States. Rather, the people of Utah wanted to avoid a murderous army, and instead to secure admission as a state into the Union. They did not want to escape the Union. Here we can separate their ideal, which was the kingdom of god on earth, from the expected, which was formal admission into the Union. Because of their theodemocracy and the practice of polygamy the actual was continued territorial status. In failed attempts they drafted constitutions and applied for statehood in 1849 and in 1856 while Brigham Young was governor. The territorial legislature also sent a number of memorials during the same period asking for admission as a state. Afterward they applied in vain four more times before they finally achieved admission in 1896.

While we acknowledge the Mormon theodemocracy we also need to understand the 19th century United States was a Protestant theodemocracy. Ernest (Tuckson?) argues that the United States owes more to the Protestant Reformation than to the enlightenment. On this subject I suggest Edward Digby Baltzell's books. Baltzell argues rightly, I believe, that in the 19th century "this class of Protestant patricians not only held the vast majority of positions at the very heart of the national power but also set styles in the arts and letters, in universities, in sports, and in the more popular culture which governs the aspirations and values of the masses." You may remember that when Methodist layman James B. McKean came to Utah in 1870 as chief justice of the territorial Supreme Court, he made it clear that he believed that God had sent him on a mission to Utah.

President Ulysses S. Grant turned over the operation of most of the Indian reservations in the United States and territories to religious organizations. He even included some Catholics but he excluded the Mormons. A number of states had established churches in the early American republic. Until the adoption of the 14th amendment, the provision of the US Constitution prohibiting establishment did not apply to the states. Connecticut had established a congregational church until 1819, and Massachusetts did so until 1833. Until the 20th century atheists couldn't hold office in eight states. In 1961 the Supreme Court ruled in *Torcaso vs Watkins* that the prohibitions prohibiting atheists from holding office in those states were invalid religious establishments. Beyond this, to argue that churches have nothing to do with secular matters and that these are another matter altogether, simply ignores the historic function of churches. Even today many Protestant and Catholic religious leaders continue to dictate political decisions to their congregations.

Regardless of the ideal laid out in Section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants, as an actual matter, churches have always involved themselves in state affairs. Religious

leaders give advice to members, to governments, and pressure both on all sorts of secular matters. Religious pressure often induces members of churches to support or oppose political candidates, secular issues of importance, and even questions of life and death. In the Mormon theodemocracy, the church leadership decided who should run for political offices and the memberships sustained them. Between 1870 and 1891 the LDS Church sponsored the People's Party and the membership generally voted to support the people's party line. As Denver indicates, the LDS Church did not separate the temporal and spiritual but neither did contemporary Protestants. In actual practice, most people opposed religious interference in secular affairs unless it is in behalf of issues that they support. For instance, what would have happened to the civil rights movement in the United States if the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. had not spoken out and acted so forcefully as a religious leader? Right now the Catholic clergy are resisting the inclusion of birth control in medical plans for their employees.

Now let me turn to the Reformation. As Denver points out, Brigham Young favored the death penalty. Well, this isn't unusual. Thirty-seven states have the death penalty today. What is outrageous, however, is that Young's ideal was that private organizations and individuals should exercise the death penalty. I would be the first to agree that both general authorities and members made many serious mistakes during the Reformation. Significantly, the General Authorities today recognize that even Church leaders can make mistakes. In his April 2012 sermon, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, "We consume such precious emotional and spiritual capital clinging tenaciously to the memory of...an incident in Church history that proved no more or less than that mortals will always struggle to measure up to the immortal hopes placed before them."

It seems clear that Brigham Young's ideal was that if people were righteous God would bless and protect them. Instead of measuring the actual by the expected, Brigham Young measured the actual by this ideal. Since Utah experienced grasshopper plagues and a drought, and harsh winters, he concluded that they must be unrighteous. As leaders tried to determine the level of the righteousness we can understand why home missionaries and block teachers asked the questions that they did.

What is impossible to understand, especially given the Book of Mormon doctrine that Christ's atonement is infinite, is the doctrine of blood atonement. In 1899 the First Presidency and Twelve repudiated blood atonement in an official declaration called "The Manifesto of the Apostles". Nevertheless, whether we perceive Brigham Young's sermons about blood atonement as ideal rhetoric or actual expectation, they are unacceptable as Church doctrine and practice. Unfortunately, the sermons may have had actual consequences. His sermons may well have influenced the decision of Bishop Aaron Johnson of Springville to order the murders of William and Beason Parish. Some historians have wrongly concluded that Young sent a letter to Johnson ordering the murders. (?) Marshall found the letter that Young actually sent and it has nothing to do with the Parishes. Young did not order those murders.

This brings us to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Given the available evidence it seems unlikely that Brigham Young ordered the massacre. It has always amazed me

that authors could blame Brigham Young for ordering the massacre when Laban Morrell and others on the Cedar City High Council refused to go along with Stake President Isaac Haight's plans. They made him agree to send James Haslam north to ask Brigham Young whether they should punish the immigrants. If Brigham Young had ordered the massacre, and he held as much power as critics say he did, why didn't President Haight simply tell the High Council members to get into line? Instead, Haight worked behind their backs to make sure that the murders took place. He'd already sent John D. Lee out to begin the raid without informing them, and even after he agreed to send Haslam north he didn't recall Lee. Later in the week he induced militia commander and Parowan Stake President William Dame to authorize the massacre, in spite of the fact that the Parowan Stake High Council had forbid it. Stake President Isaac Haight, not Brigham Young, bears the immediate responsibility for the massacre through his deceitful actions and orders.

Historically we expect that some people in any organization will consider themselves more orthodox than the prophet and will act in ways that damage the organization as Haight's actions did. In fact, as (Jeffrey N.) Walker (et. al.) have shown the immediate causes of the massacre were local disputes. We understand, however, that the caution of Elder George A. Smith to prepare for possible conflict may have contributed indirectly. If so, Brigham Young may also have contributed indirectly by sending Smith south to warn the saints to prepare for war. Significantly, conflicts took place in Utah Valley and in other places as the Baker-Fancher party came south. Smith had warned others also about the possible war but their actions did not lead to massacres and the conflicts in Cedar City should not have lead to a massacre either. Responsibility for this massacre lies with Stake President Isaac Haight, not Brigham Young. Thank you.

[1:25:40] Moderator: I would like to ask first Brother Snuffer, perhaps, if he would like to comment or respond to comments presented by Brother Alexander, if that changes in any way his opinions or conclusions as to Brigham Young's kingship assertion.

Denver: I would say no, because all of the instances he gave in which Brigham Young was back walking the concept of kingship were posed in 1860, 1861, 1865, 1867, 1870. These are after he's been deposed as governor.

Thomas: All of them are.

Denver: All of the dates that I recall hearing were deposing him. In fact, the title of the talk is based upon the mixture of church and state from 1851 to 1858. Therefore, anything that happened, that was learned as a consequence of being deposed by the arrival of the Army, which was the only reason why Governor Cumming was treated as he was... There's another narrative but it doesn't appear in this talk because I was limited in the amount of time that I could take.

In 1847 when they arrived in the valley, Brigham Young said, "If they'll give us ten years of peace I will ask no odds of the government." If they give me ten years I ask no odds of them. In 1857, which was ten years hence, when the army was sent out to put in a

new governor, Brigham Young repeated that: "I said if they gave me ten years I would ask no odds of them." Brigham Young fully intended to remain in charge of the government and his dialogue suggests that. The comments that get made post governorship, post resignation, informed Brigham Young by the course of history, the Yankee guesser could guess something as a consequence of that, that informed him. My view of his status as king runs from 1851 to 1857 and is derived from the things and the views that were held in that time period. In fact, a great deal changed in Brigham Young's mind after 1858.

Brigham Young was of the view, for example, the closer that they got to the establishment of an actual functioning temple, the closer Brigham Young came to the realization that part of what Joseph was doing in Nauvoo was beyond their grasp. They needed to have answers to questions in the temple that he didn't have answers to. His solution to that was the expectation that the resurrected Joseph Smith would come and deliver what was missing because the return of Joseph Smith as a resurrected person, with Jesus in the clouds of glory, was an expectation that Brigham Young held for his own lifetime. The closer he got to his death in the 1870s the more he modified that view as well. The idea that the kingdom would go on post his lifetime was an idea that didn't service what he was talking about early in life. It didn't answer to the question of the dilemmas that it was faced early in life, just as his views changed when he was no longer governor.

I readily agree that the Counsel of Fifty turned into something far more symbolic but the power, the influence, the keys, the status, the concept a right, and the authorization to establish it, derived wholly from the Counsel of Fifty. But just as Brigham Young became disenchanted with sharing leadership with the Quorum of the Twelve, after the successful campaign and vote in August of 1844 he determined he needed to be elected to be church president in 1847. Now, this was a move that was opposed by John Taylor, that was opposed by Parley Pratt, and Wilford Woodruff suggested to him he ought not do that in the absence of a revelation. Brigham Young spent a couple of days arguing with Wilford Woodruff over whether you can elect a church president in the absence of a revelation authorizing it. Ultimately the vote was held and Wilford Woodruff stood down from the argument, and he was elected, at which point one of his first comments was, "I can't wait to get back to Salt Lake and have John Taylor and Parley Pratt confess they're not Brigham Young."

Well, the ideal at the moment of the election in August 1844 was that the Quorum of the Twelve was going to run the church. But the practical implementation of that was that Brigham Young did not do well with opposition in order to garner a consensus; that was more difficult. Therefore, the Twelve became a source of frustration to him and he wanted a First Presidency because then he could confine the debate to three instead of twelve, and he succeeded in getting elected, and he succeeded in organizing the presidency, and he succeeded in establishing a precedent. But you must not confuse what Brigham Young would learn through sad experience after being deposed, with what he said he meant during the time that he was reigning as the governor.

[1:31:00] Q&A: We are out of time and we wanted to take questions, and there is another group following us at 3 o'clock. Does anyone have a question for either Brother Alexander or me that we can answer briefly?

Question 1: Why wasn't the name of John D. Lee ever mentioned in either discussion of the Mountain Meadow Massacre (cross talk).

Denver: Today, in this talk? This talk is an excerpt from a paper. This is about one-third of the paper, and I intend to release the paper on my blog. I wanted to hear the comments today before I clarify a few things, and I do intend to clarify. But the focus is not upon what Brigham Young learned as a consequence of these incidents, but that the focus was upon what was going on in real time at the time, and John D. Lee's name is in there, and it's in there more than once. You can read that. The paper will come out on the blog.

Question 2: You mentioned a Santa Clara Massacre. How many people were killed?

Denver: At the Santa Clara ambush no one was killed. There was an attempt to kill them. There were four victims that were involved with that. One of them was a relatively faithful member of the Church, I think he got shot in the nose and he was taken down to San Bernardino. He survived, and he lived through it all. He was a faithful member of the Church but the whole ambush left a bad taste. You've got to understand, Utah was big news back in those days, so all of the stuff that went on found its way to the national press. Impressions matter more than reality, particularly when these events were unfolding in Utah.

Brigham Young's own rhetoric is, in part, responsible, for what happened to him being removed as governor. He just said some very inflammatory things. I think he believed the church and kingdom were going to be delivered by God, and when it didn't happen, he learned from that. He went to school on it, and he adapted his understanding as a consequence of that. He would make statements later in light of what he learned from that. Just like I think the Black Hawk War was another bit of tuition in the education of Brigham Young, in which he envisioned, as a result or as a consequence of the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants prophecies about the Lamanites. The Lamanites are not supposed to go to war against the kingdom. The Lamanites were supposed to join in and protect the kingdom. The Black Hawk War taught Brigham Young something that he didn't know before that.

Brigham Young was a work in process, but the focus of my talk was the work of Brigham Young and the status that came from 1851 to 1858, not that he may have matured into it at a later time.

Thank you very much.

2012.10.28 The Temple

10-28-2012

Ogden, Utah

I stood in the back to try and listen to the opening prayer to get an idea what the acoustics was going to be like and I am satisfied that I need to talk slowly in order to be heard clearly in the back. If there is a problem with anyone hearing, yell out. Let me know. The object is not to be looked at, in fact it would be nice not to be looked at all, but to be heard. Preliminarily, for those of you who are going to be attending the Temple Conference tomorrow, I want to make a couple of comments about that conference. Margaret Barker was imposed upon by those who are personal friends of hers to consider coming out and attending the conference and she consented to do that. She is one of the most important voices when it comes to the topic of temple studies.

Unlike Latter Day Saints, in the Christian world at large, the subject of the temple is simply a matter of theoretical and historical discussion. Margaret Barker has elevated that discussion to a new level and she's done so, as something more than merely an honest scholar, because her views are not merely controversial. Her views are opposed by many of Christian academics. The reason why she is so compelling to Latter Day Saints, is because she reconstructs the first temple period, which is the period during which Lehi's family departed from Israel. They departed at the very end of the first temple period. She reconstructs the first temple period in a way that has a look and feel very much like what you find in The Book of Mormon and she did this without any knowledge about Joseph Smith, The Book of Mormon, or our faith. It takes integrity and it takes courage for her to put together what she has put together. Among Latter Day Saints, when **we** have scholars who speak about the temple, we can be vulnerable to pride and to self-satisfaction and to trying to collect recognition and acclaim for our scholarship. Pride is invidious. It creeps in everywhere, inadvertently; and sometimes the Latter Day Saint scholar suffers from the ill effects of pride. But Margaret Barker, to the contrary, required a great deal of meekness and honesty and humility to do what she has done. That's not to say that I am condemning anyone or judging anyone who is gonna speak tomorrow, in fact I've reviewed some of what is gonna be said tomorrow and there are some great things; well worth your time to go and hear.

We have a tendency, all of us, to take concepts or pictures or ideas and to put them in our heads and then to rely upon those pictures as we go forward learning new things. The object being to fit what we learned that is new into the framework of what we've already know or we're already familiar with. That can be handicapping. In the 28th chapter of Second Nephi, Nephi cautioned us about permitting, what he calls, the traditions of men to override, what he calls, the whisperings of the spirit. And he suggests that you run into mistakes, you run into errors, some of them terrible errors, when you permit those traditions, or those pictures that you already have inside your head, to be the framework from which you reconstruct new information that you learn. It's hard to do so, but when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, you would be best advised to start with a blank slate and to allow it to inform you as if you are hearing it for

the first time because those words in scripture don't necessarily mean what the picture in your head suggests that they mean.

Let me pull an example. If you've got your scriptures, you're welcome to pull them out, and turn the pages and make all the noise you want finding the Joseph Smith History. You are **not** in a Sacrament meeting and therefore your scriptures are welcome to be used. In the Joseph Smith History the, it's the eighth verse. He says about halfway through that eighth verse *"in process of time, my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them."* Once again, this is high praise for Margaret Barker, a Methodist scholar. But laying that aside; during the time of this period, there was a, particularly in the revivalist part of Methodism, there was a group called The Shouting Methodists; and The Shouting Methodists had a tradition. That tradition was to go into the woods alone to pray, and when they prayed alone in the woods, they were looking for some experience that would bind them up and when they got bound up, they knew that they had an experience with God and The Holy Ghost and they came back converted. The miracle of The First Vision of Joseph Smith does not consist in the fact that he went in the woods alone to pray, nor does it consist in the fact that when he's in the woods alone and praying that he got bound up by some darkness which entirely overcame him. The miracle of Joseph Smith is that when that happened, he rejected it as the source of conversion. He did not allow his fears to control him. He did not allow the tradition to control him but calling upon God, he then pressed through to receive what lays on the other side of the fears and of the darkness and of the things that put you off the trail to God. And he tells us about the vision of the Father and the Son telling him that he was to join none of them. He goes on for some space of years, and during that space of years, he talks about how he frequently fell into many foolish errors displayed by the weaknesses of youth and the foibles of human nature and then he talks about he was guilty of levity and sometimes associating with jovial company. One of the pictures I think you have in your head about me, if you've read what I've written and you've read my blog, is that you may entirely misapprehend, number one, how difficult it is for me to get up here and do **this**. And number two, how incredibly irreverent I am by my native nature. I am **not** a stoic religious person. I undertake to do what the Lord asks, what I think pleases Him; at the cost of personal inconvenience. I don't like being up here and it's being recorded by my voice and not by a camera because I don't want people recognizing me. I don't wanna be a celebrity. I want my privacy. And when it comes to a native cheery temperament, I have, I suppose, a wicked sense of humor.

Well, he called upon and he had confidence because he had previously received an answer, and verse 29, he had confidence that he would have an answer and a divine manifestation as he had previously had one. Then, he gives the account, in some detail, of the appearance of the angel Moroni, how it occupied the night and he passes through the events of his life until we get to the time in which, during the translation of The Book of Mormon, beginning in verse 68, they come upon the ordinance of baptism. They went into the woods, they prayed in May of 1829, and John the Baptist appears and confers authority upon them, and immediately after conferring the authority upon Joseph Smith, the angel says to him *"He said [that] this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying*

on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter," and then we get to verse 73, which is a description of what happened after being baptized:

73 Immediately on our coming [up] out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our [Father  ur] Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, [and] he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, [as] [so] soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation [of the children of men]. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.

74 Our minds [n w] being [now] enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we [ ould] never [could] attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of.

Now, here are the questions: He saw God the Father and he saw Jesus Christ in a vision. And if you'll read all of the accounts, you'll find out it was a vision that included a view into heaven for he saw the heavenly hosts because the Father does not appear without a host. The Son can appear alone, but the Father never does. If you see the Father, you are going to see a host.

And thereafter he is visited by the angel Moroni and he is tutored; not merely through the one night but in successive annual occurrences for four years; **and yet** the first time his testimony mentions the Holy Ghost is after baptism, and after baptism, using authority which the angel told him had not the right to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. That would happen at some subsequent occasion. Why then, without the laying on of hands by one having authority, did Joseph Smith receive the Holy Ghost? Not merely as a visitation, mind you; read the words. It lingered, it persisted. Because after they were baptized, "*we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed [t ] [unto] us.*"

That required scripture study over the ensuing weeks, months, years. There we encounter a word: Mysterious passages. You know that Peter in Second Peter chapter one, I don't know verse 16 maybe, you look it up. He says that the scriptures are not of any private interpretation. But holy men spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures were given by the power of the Holy Ghost, and now Joseph Smith is explaining that he could unravel their mysteries by the power of the Holy Ghost and things that did not make sense before, began to make sense. That was a hiccup. If you've read The Second Comforter, in the chapter about becoming as a little child, there is an excerpt taken from a book, Godel, Escher, Bach, a brilliant mathematical book

about Bongard problems. Bongard problems are designed to test a certain kind of reasoning using symbols in order to test the person evaluating them. And invariably, Bongard problems are solved by children and they confuse adults; because the children's minds have not become cluttered by the kind of mathematical complexity that we have bouncing around in our heads. As a consequence of which, they look at it simply. And they see things simply and they can solve the Bongard problems in a way in which adults fail to grasp. The gospel is adapted to the simple mind. The statements that are contained in scripture are given in simplicity and in plainness. So, when we encounter Joseph Smith, speaking to us now about having the mysteries of the gospel laid open to his mind as a consequence of having the Holy Ghost, I am reminded of a statement that he made that you find in The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith about the Holy Ghost on pages 149 and 150, which I am gonna read an excerpt from:

"There are two comforters spoken of, one is the Holy Ghost, the same is given on the Day of Pentecost and that all saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism."

This first comforter, and by the way, Joseph Smith is saying this at a time when the authority for the laying on of hands had been restored, but his list is: faith and repentance and baptism, and that produces the same effect as on the Day of Pentecost. If you listen to the words of the ordinance that's performed in the church, the words of the ordinance are an admonition to you to receive the Holy Ghost. It's telling you to do something. Well:

"This first comforter, or Holy Ghost, has no other effect than pure intelligence. [It's] It is more powerful and expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge."

Did you get that list of things? The effect of the Holy Ghost is pure intelligence. I can watch Lawrence of Arabia, and when they've successfully knocked the train off the track, and the group he is leading has charged and overcome the enemy, and Lawrence is walking on the tops of the trains with the flowing robes, I can get goose bumps. It is moving; it is stirring. That's not the Holy Ghost. I can have that same effect with Les Miserables. I can have that same effect with some of the scenes in Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Moving and stirring things can delight your senses. That's not the Holy Ghost. Has no other effect than pure intelligence; expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, storing the intellect with present knowledge. I'm not here to entertain you. I am trying to inform you of doctrine that will save you. I don't care if any of you are stirred, or like one of our MSNBC folks, had a tremor run up his leg at the president's speaking. I don't care about that. I care about your salvation. I care about your souls and I care about you understanding the things that will save you. Joseph Smith gave the list: pure intelligence, expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, storing the intellect with present knowledge.

In the translation of the Book of Moses, which was Joseph correcting the Book of Genesis, he gives a list there of the Holy Ghost as well. Let me read you that list:

"...the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory;" [this is Moses chapter six, verse 61]

"...the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment." (Moses 6:61)

This is the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith returned from the first vision and didn't talk about the Holy Ghost because that incident, quite frankly, was not understood by Joseph Smith at the time it occurred. When he explained to his mother, he said: "Never mind, I'm well enough off. I've learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." And I think that is a candid description of what Joseph got out of it that day at that time. He had been converted and he knew now not to join the Presbyterians. What Joseph Smith learned from the angel Moroni, also did not confer upon him the Holy Ghost. Faith, repentance, baptism, and then he notes the Holy Ghost. And what are the effects that he reports, immediately? Number one. Prophecy; one of the hallmark signs. Paul lists it in Corinthians. Mormon and Moroni list it in Moroni's book. The list of what the gifts are, you can find it in D&C section 46 if I am remembering that correctly.

~~11 For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. 12 To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby.~~
~~13 To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.~~
~~14 To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.~~
~~15 And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men.~~
~~16 And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations, whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal.~~
~~17 And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom.~~
~~18 To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge.~~
~~19 And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed;~~
~~20 And to others it is given to have faith to heal.~~
~~21 And again, to some is given the working of miracles;~~
~~22 And to others it is given to prophesy;~~
~~23 And to others the discerning of spirits.~~
~~24 And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues;~~
~~25 And to another is given the interpretation of tongues.~~
~~26 And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. (D&C 46:11–28)~~

The list of the gifts; prophecy is always included as one of the hallmark signs of what it is that the Holy Ghost does. And then secondly, allowing Joseph to understand the real intent of what is in the scriptures. How much of a blank slate was Joseph at the time that the Holy Ghost allowed him the pure spirit of intelligence.

Well, I would suggest that if Joseph Smith can pass through the first vision and can pass through the incident of the visits of the angel Moroni and if he can even translate The Book of Mormon, which was then underway at the time this occurred, by the gift and power of God, but not attribute anything to the Holy Ghost until after he is baptized, that it is equally possible for you, good people, to go through everything you've gone through in your life, and yet not have experienced the thing that Joseph is talking about, which comes as a consequence of faith, repentance, and baptism.

Well the purpose of tonight, and I gotta clarify something. There is a reason why this is being held at Weber State University not at Utah State University and why this is somewhat disconnected from the Temple Conference going up there. That is the gathering of scholars at the secular university being presented during the daytime at the university itself. This is an evening event free to the public in which we are free to discuss religion and the things of God without worrying about the heavy handprint of the state. Utah State University is owned by the State of Utah and has to respect the requirement for certain distance between what we do here and what will happen there.

Which leads us then to the subject of the temple, which is the only thing I'm talking about tonight. Everything I have said so far bears only upon the temple, and that's the purpose of getting here; is to discuss about what the temple's purpose is, what it means, and what it's trying to convey to us. Is the temple an end or is the temple a means? If the temple is an end, then everyone who goes through the temple obtains everything that the temple has to offer by virtue of going in and participating in the ceremony. Even more so, those who have conspired to break their temple covenants and gone in and recorded the temple ceremonies, and then transcribed those ceremonies and put them on the internet, have made it possible for everyone who goes to the trouble of finding and reading the temple ceremony that's now available on the internet. If the temple ceremony is an end, then all of those people are the beneficiaries of it as well. But if the temple ceremony is instead a means, a means of trying to take you somewhere, then it doesn't matter who sees the ordinance, you can't steal the ends. You can't come in by some unauthorized way and attain the end, because that is a matter that exists between you and God. If it is a means, then what is it a means to? Because one possible meaning that you should come away with, is that it is a means to inform you that there is a veil and not a wall to permit you to talk through and to touch through and to feel your way through to the symbolic presence of God and then, that veil is not a wall, but something that can be, with merely the brush of the hand of our Lord, drawn aside so that you may enter into his presence. And the way you get there is by being prepared in all things, having been true and faithful in all things, coming to learn something from Him; not coming to tell Him something, not coming to impose upon Him, but coming to learn from Him. Our Savior was, and is, first and foremost, a teacher. By **his** knowledge,

Isaiah and Nephi wrote, he shall justify many. By His Knowledge. He possesses things, which we do not yet comprehend. He possesses things which He would like us to comprehend. How then are we to comprehend the things which only He can teach? By permitting Him to do so; by coming to Him.

In the ceremony, there is an account given of the man Adam, and I have a question for you... **Who**, in the ceremony, is Adam? Is this a history lesson about the first man that lived on the Earth or is this, instead, a symbolic rendering of the lives of every man, or is it instead **your** life. Are you being told that in the beginning, you came here in an innocent, even a paradisiacal state. And in that state, everything was possible to the innocent mind. I mean, we impose, as adults, upon the credulity of our children by teaching them about the Easter bunny, and then to pull off the fraud, we have to go to the trouble every Easter of acting the role of the Easter bunny, always out of sight; and we impose upon them Santa Clause, and they believe in these things. That faith and that trust that those children have, comes as a consequence of where every one of you began; in a state of innocence, in a state of purity, in a state in which it is possible for that mind to comprehend and to accept the things of God. But there comes a point when you become accountable. There comes a point when you grow out of that and you are expelled from that state of innocence and then in order to return there, you have to make certain sacrifices and you have to be willing to obey, and you have to be willing to pursue the gospel. And at length, because there is a difference between the age of eight when you begin to become accountable and puberty; at length, the range of temptation that will confront you will require you then to engage and obey the law of chastity. And then as you grow into adulthood, when you realize that this world really has very little to offer, you learn that the way to happiness does not consist in popularity or wealth or acclaim, it lies exclusively in consecrating yourself to the things of God. And when you have developed through that course and you've come to the recognition that consecrating yourself is the only thing of value.

In the ceremony, it only takes some two hours before you are called true and faithful in all things. Well, if that's an end and not a means, then in two and half hours in sitting and occasionally standing and agreeing to some things, you have become true and faithful in all things. I would suggest that the temple rite is an end, makes that notion preposterous because you're the same person walking out of the temple as you were walking into it two hours earlier. You are no more faithful in the temptations that you face on the street, you are no more lovely in the way that you deal with your family, you are no more honest in your business dealings with your fellow man than you were two hours earlier when you walked in, but the ceremony is saying you've been true and faithful in all things. I'd suggest that's a means and it's an admonition. And it's an invitation, even begging you to recognize that the challenge you face in your life requires you, invariably, to lay aside those things that pull you away and that you always turn and face the Lord. **That's what repentance means.** It means to turn and face the Lord. And you know when you face Him the first time, you're just not going to be that good or that different than you were the moment before, but if you'll face Him, He'll work with you. It does not matter how badly damaged you are. That's irrelevant. He fixed the apostle Paul. If you don't think the apostle Paul suffered from pride, than you don't understand

the malignancy of pride. He fixed Alma the younger and the sons of Mosiah, whose deliberate purpose was to overthrow the things of God. I don't care what you've done, the malignancies of those men are highlighted in scripture in order to assure you that you can all be reclaimed.

Turn and face Him and then walk with Him. He does all the guiding and most of the heavy lifting. Well, when it comes to the idea of being True and Faithful.... By the way, I don't care if you buy a quad, your scriptures aren't complete until you get the Lectures on Faith. They were voted in and sustained as scripture and then they were removed without a vote. In the Lectures on Faith, this is the Seventh lecture, this is the 16th verse, talking about the Savior:

"The [These] teachings of the Savior most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation; and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them -- That he proposed to make them like unto himself; and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings: And for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed: and on this hinge turns the door of salvation."

Jesus Christ **is** the prototype of all saved beings. **So what** was our Savior if he's the prototype? He was a blasphemer. He was a sinner. He worked on the Sabbath and he encouraged his disciples to do so. He associated with the tax collectors and with the publicans and sinners and the harlots, and he let harlots tooouuuuch hiiiiim. This is the prototype of the saved man. This is the One who was rejected by His people. This is the One who was called unclean. This is the One who was rejected, persecuted, and ultimately killed by those who held religious rank and authority in His day. This is the prototype of the saved man. This is the example of Joseph Smith. This is Isaiah and Jeremiah. **Was** Christ true and faithful in all things? If so, to what, to whom was He true and faithful? Was it the law? I mean, he never spoke ill against the law. The Sermon on the mount is simply taking the law and showing what it really meant. He took it to another level. If he took it to the level in which he took it, Caiaphas would not have been sitting there in the robes of the priesthood, which by that time, had been elevated to the status of wealth itself. If you had merely the attire that Caiaphas had on during the trial of Christ, just his attire, you would have been a wealthy man.

Well, The Lectures on Faith, this is lecture six, yeah, it's the sixth lecture:

"A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; [for] from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things."

It's through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. And then we get to this verse eight:

"It is [in] vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him."

What did the Prototype of the saved man offer in sacrifice? I mean, we jump to the end of the story and we point to Gethsemane and we point to the cross and we say, there it is, His life. But He was the living sacrifice for many more years than the week that was spent coming in, confronting them in the temple, celebrating and implementing the sacrament, going into Gethsemane and suffering, being tried and crucified, being laid in a grave, and three days and three nights later arising from the grave. He spent some 30 plus years prior to that as the prototype of the saved man.

In the ceremony, you come asking for further light and knowledge from the Lord, and when you enter into the Lord's presence in the ceremony, it hints at something which the scriptures themselves make plain. In John chapter 14 the Savior said, *I will not leave you* [this is John chapter 14, verse eighteen] *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.* And in verse 23 He says, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."* Well, that promise in the 23rd verse suggests something beyond the Lord simply coming and visiting with someone. The notion that the Father and the Son will take up their abode... I mean, we have that hymn, and that hymn creates a picture; Abide with me Tis Eventide, so abiding means you come and you spend the evening and there we've taken care of the abode. But the suggestion here is that there is a greater kind of familiarity that attaches to the relationship that is more enduring.

In Revelation chapter three, verses 20 and 21 there is a promise that John records, well, that 20 is where he stands at the door and knocks *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."* See, in this description, it's almost a flip. It's not you knocking to get in, it's the Lord knocking to come to you. It's the Lord who is the eager One. The One who would like to have this relationship take up. He is the One knocking. He is the One trying to get into your life. And so, in this account *"I stand at the door"* [the Lord's speaking] *"and knock. If any man hear my voice..."* [see, His sheep hear his voice. Do, do you hear His voice?] *"If any man hear my voice and open the door..."* because you're the one that shut it. You're the one that's saying, "yah, no thanks, I'll pass. I mean, I've got a skeptical mind now. I've been to college and received training to practice law. I'm an engineer and I understand formulas and equations. I'm a mathematician and I know some things add up and some things don't, and I also know that I've been leading a reasonably decent life and I've never had Jesus in **my** car."

Our minds are skeptical. We have to open the door, because almost invariably the door that we configure to keep Him out from our construct is something that has come about as a consequence of what happened in your life. From the time you left that state of innocence as a child in the Garden until today. Every painful experience you've been through, every humiliation you've suffered, everything that has gone on in your life that

has led where you now construct a door.... Some of oak, some of iron. Whatever it is that's happened to you, you use **that** to keep Him out. "Well, if He really cared, He would...."

You know, the notion that He doesn't care is the greatest lie of all. If you knew what he suffered, you would **never** say, "If He cared...." But if you'll open the door, He says "I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with me."

You know, the reason why in that parable in Ten Parables that I drew upon the tree and the fruit and the neighbors who were fighting with one another, sharing the food as one of the traditions in that community of sharing in one another's lives, is drawn from this very example the Savior used; because to share a meal with Him is to become one with Him. I might be able to find it in a hurry, I'll check, yeah, this is Exodus chapter 24, verse nine. This is a group going up onto the mount where they meet with the Lord.

9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:

10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

So on the mount, in Exodus chapter 24, you have the Lord supping with them. And in the account in Genesis of the visit with Abraham, there's a sacral meal. In the D&C, I am not gonna look it up, you look it up, where the Lord talks about when He returns. Ah, I think I know where that is. Hold on. This is a, I'll use it anyway, this is not without its controversy. You probably don't know the full history of this but... this is section 27, verse five of the D&C:

Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness ~~of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim;~~

And so on and He gives a list of all of those that He's going to have this meal with and verse five, He's going to sit down and He's going to drink of the fruit of the vine and He's going to have fellowship with. And here we have in Revelation chapter three, verse 20, the notion that He wants to come in and He wants to sup with you. Well, you think about how long it takes and what goes on at a meal? I mean if you're not, you know, confining that meal to the ceremony that we have in the sacrament, but you say this is actually sitting down to sup with someone, that is a setting in which it is convivial. In which there's an exchange of friendship and discussion and ideas and you have prophets in The Book of Mormon talking about how approachable the Lord is and about how He visits and speaks in plain humility as one man speaks to another.

We have this absolutely schizophrenic set of pictures in our head about the Lord. On the one hand, He is this limp-wristed, happy-go-lucky, permissive chap who sashays about blessing everyone with fairy dust. And on the other hand, we have this stern, unapproachable, distance galactic ruler who just can't be troubled by any of us and He says, This is His work and His glory, to save you. Not merely to save and preserve you, but to bring about your eternal life and your exaltation. **That's what He is about. Get rid of the junk in your heads and let the scriptures speak to you.** As Joseph said, Look, everything in them can be a mystery if what you have done is barred the information from getting through to you by the door that you have erected from the traditions that you have been handed. Many of you were handed traditions from very good and very well meaning and very honorable Latter Day Saint parents who ought to be commended and praised for the effort that they made with you.

However, I don't care if your parents were nigh unto God or the devil himself, the fact of the matter remains that we all have the freedom to choose to leave behind whatever it is that becomes the door against which the Savior has to knock, hoping that you'll hear His voice. We have to become as a little child, because it's only the little children who are willing to open themselves up and become vulnerable enough to believe and then hopeful enough to act on that belief so that they develop faith and then persistent enough to ask again, and again, and again... are we there yet, are we there yet?

In the parable that Joseph was given in the D&C about the unjust judge and the aggrieved woman, it was a **constant** petitioning. Little children not only don't know a lot of things, they know that they don't know and they ask persistently, incessantly, because they desire to know what they don't know. They're like sponges and we're like rocks. You can throw a rock into the water and pull it out again and it's still a rock. But you throw a sponge in and you pull it out and it is **greatly** increased. Children are like the sponge, they're porous, and we are not.

Well, D&C section 93, verse one, you probably all can recite that in your head, I hope, I'm not gonna read it. I am, I am looking in Mormon and I am trying to find a verse in Moses. Moses six, verse 57:

~~D&C 93:1 "Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am"~~

"Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time."

So, in order to come into the presence of the Lord, we have to be clean. Well, in the ceremony of the temple, the way in which you become ceremonially clean is by

borrowing things from the Lord through the ceremony. You are washed, though not quite as vigorously as you may have been in Nauvoo. You are anointed, though not perhaps as thoroughly as you might have been in Nauvoo. You know, that strong drinks, next time you have a Word of Wisdom lesson and they're talking about strong drinks and the washing of the body: they used cinnamon flavored or included mixed whiskey to anoint and wash you rather in the Kirtland and then again in Nauvoo. And, and, as it turns out, I mean for the washing of the body it's really a pretty good antiseptic. One of the things that Joseph talked about in Nauvoo era, was about how angels sometimes have a hard time visiting with men because they stink, and that we really ought to clean ourselves up because we'll offend the sensibilities of the angels. Here's a notion for you. One of the doors to barring entry is...anyway.

In the temple you borrow cleanliness through the ceremony itself, which washes you, which anoints you, which dresses you in new and clean clothes, and then progressively confers upon you symbols that suggest all of creation. Symbolically the entirety of creation comes through, and is redeemed as a consequence of your own redemption. Because if you are redeemed, you are infinite and eternal and creation itself goes on. But here, no unclean thing can dwell there or dwell in His presence, which then leads to the reason for the temple.

The purpose of the temple is not merely to inspire you with the conviction that it is possible to rend the veil, to pass through the veil, to see and meet with our Lord, who has promised us repeatedly that the stories in The Book of Mormon are stories designed to tell you over and over and over again about coming back into the presence of the Lord. Even wicked Lamanite converts many of them have what we, in our scholarly language would call, a throne theophany, and they did so upon conversion because their conversion was with real intent.

Therefore, The Book of Mormon is a text about The Second Comforter. But what is being talked about in this verse, in Moses chapter six, is about dwelling in His presence. And when it comes, in verse, again, this is Moses six, verse 57, it says when it comes to dwelling there, no one unclean thing can dwell there because He is the man of holiness. This presents the real message or the real meaning of what the temple is trying to convey to us in our day. And we're just about running out of time to accomplish that in our day.

And if we don't then, you know, He passes on and maybe starts this up with another people in another day, as he's so often done before.

To come to the veil and to meet with the Savior: He can clean you up. He, through His grace, can give you all that you lack. To dwell in the presence of God requires something more, something different. It requires that you grow from where you are now, to the place where the Lord intends to lead you. He intends to have you **be** true and faithful in all things. Because in the ceremony in the temple, once you go through the veil, you don't come back. You stay there and the purpose of going there in this day, in this setting, is to enable the return of Zion. We don't need a profoundly new and far

reaching economic system to make us have all things in common in order to bring again Zion, and we don't need possession of the real estate in Jackson County, Missouri to bring again Zion. We don't need any of the implements or locations or infrastructure to have Zion return. We need one thing and that's **you**. You to be clean. You to be holy. To leave behind you, not only the door, but the house in which you dwell that you established that door to bar Him through. You need to come and live with Him. It is possible. These are not cunningly devised fables, as the apostle Paul put it. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at the definition that the Lord gives of salvation in Ether chapter three. This is a definition that the Lord gives.

Ether 3:13 "...behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you."

This is the meaning of salvation. This is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is contained in The Book of Mormon, which has the fullness of Jesus Christ in it. The Lord showed Himself unto him and said, *"Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you."*

Look at, look at D&C section 76, in which a description is given of those who inherit the celestial kingdom or those who have celestial glory. And, and, I'm not gonna go through all of it and parse it, it's really interesting, it's worth doing; but included among the definition of those who are celestial, are descriptions of the present tense; Now, Here. I mean there's past tense in here and there's future tense in here, but this is the present tense. And I believe that this was wittingly done because this is a transcript from heaven. Joseph Smith would recite the words of the vision. Sidney Rigdon, when it was read back, would say, "that is correct." Therefore, the tenses of this language were given by heaven and not by the person dictating. So, in verse 54, D&C section 76:

*54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.
55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—
56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fullness, and of his glory;
57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.
58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—
59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (D&C 76:54-59)*

Now if that sounds a lot like the language that is contained in the oath in the covenant of the priesthood, it's because it mirrors the language that you find in the oath in the covenant of the priesthood; where once again, it talks about the priesthood being connected to God Himself; the Powers of Heaven, if you will.

Well, if the temple is designed to lead you to the presence of the Lord, the presence of the Lord is intended to bring you to the presence of the Father, and the purpose of bringing you to the presence of the Father, is to have you clean every whit. Because when there is a group of people with whom it is possible for the angels to dwell, there will no longer be any reason for angels to stay aloof. There will be no reason for the Lord to delay the bringing of Zion because the Lord is going to dwell there. One of the definitions of Zion, when you get past having all things in common, is the fact that the Lord will dwell there and we all know that to dwell in the presence of the Lord, if you are not prepared to do so, you would be more miserable to dwell with the holy and just God under a consciousness of your filthiness before Him than you would to dwell with the damned souls in hell; that's Mormon chapter nine, verse four. Really, you ought to read two through four, well, five too. See, five talks about your nakedness before God.

You know, the Lord suffered the things that He suffered so that He could redeem us by leading us back but there isn't any magic fairy dust to that process. It is by the things that He knows that He fixes us. There is no defect in any of you that the Lord did not experience and heal from. He knows the way back to the Father because He found His way back to the Father by the things that He suffered in the agony of Gethsemane. He learned what it was to be sinned. There is nothing you have, however malignant or deeply hidden, that He hasn't experienced and then healed from and found His way back to peace and justification and holiness before His Father. The way in which He works the atonement is to teach you if you will receive it, what you need in order to overcome what your flaws are.

On the 13th of February 2003, after a long search for the Lord, which I had almost forgotten about because I was so busy with other things in my life, the Lord made Himself known to me. And I thought I had received everything the Lord had to offer. By the time we got to the Christmas season of 2008, but just before Christmas of 2008, I had some serious medical issues compounded by the fact that I've had a hernia fixed some, I don't know, 18 years before and I had a problem that had grown into an infection of that site and it required surgery, which they were going to do laparoscopically, which meant nothing to me then and probably means little to you now, but that involves puncturing and sending in robotic arms to fix things but it didn't work out that way, and after they'd had a lot of fun exploring with robotic arms, they pulled all that out and they simply opened me up from the navel to the pelvic bone.

I, when they gone done, boy, I probably shouldn't say this..... Okay, I was on the high council at the time. This goes back to what I was telling you at the beginning about a wicked, even despicable, sense of humor. They removed, they removed, like eight inches. It's a circulatory loop, they have to take the entire loop and then pull it together. They removed the loop, they took approximately eight inches of the colon out, and when I got back, I was on the high council, I sent an email to the other members of the high council in the stake presidency saying "I'd been through surgery, they removed eight inches of my colon, I'm recovering, but on the bright side, I'm less of an asshole than I've ever been before."

Okay, so now you know little more about... In, in, any event, when they do surgery that radical, and when they remove and flush; because there was infection, they had to tease apart a lot of internal stuff. The repair doesn't get stitched up, they just put staples in you and I had staples, which required time to heal and it required me to take off and replace bandages and change the dressing two or three times a day. During that time period, I was still speaking in sacrament meetings and I was going into the office on occasion and I would wear a suit coat, but I had pajama bottoms on so I was sort of a curious looking fellow. But you couldn't put on, you really couldn't put on belt. Well, I bled and I bled, I kept track of it, but it was months later when I went back and looked at it. I bled for 40 days, and after the 40 days, I learned yet more from the Lord. And I can tell you that covenants traditionally involve cutting and covenants in the Old Testament involve the shedding of blood and covenants with our Lord, at some point in some context with some reaches, require that we suffer.

Now, I tell that as background because I recently had another experience in which I spent, as it turned out, once again, 40 days in pain. And while in a great agony, I could not take pity on myself. I couldn't. What I thought about was the suffering of our Lord in Gethsemane. And I found myself measuring my own physical misery against what I know our Lord went through there. And I lay in bed praying and thanking the Lord for what He had done on our behalf. Thanking the Father for sending His son and standing down to permit it to go forward. And while in prayer,

I saw a great mountain and upon the top thereof was the glory of the fathers. To reach the top, all were required to enter through a narrow pass. In the pass was a great beast, cruel and pitiless. The Lord brought people whom he had chosen to the mouth of the pass, and there He told them to wait for Him, and He went away. The people did not wait for Him, but began to move forward into the narrow pass. The beast killed some and injured others, and none were able to pass through.

After great losses, many deaths and terrible suffering, the people chosen by the Lord withdrew and departed from the mountain. After four and five generations, the Lord again brought some few back to the pass and again told them to stay at the mouth of the pass and wait on Him. But again, there were those who tired of waiting, for they could see in the distance the glory of the fathers, and they desired to be there. These, being overtaken by their zeal, did not wait, but moved into the pass where again the beast killed some or hurt them.

Among those who waited, however, was a man who knelt and prayed, and waited patiently for his Lord. After a great time, the Lord came to this man and took him by the hand, and led him into the pass where the great beast guarded the way. As the Lord led, however, the beast was ever occupied with attacking others, and therefore its back was turned to the Lord and the man. And so, they passed by unnoticed, safely to the top. The Lord sent the man to the fathers, who when they saw the man inquired of him, "How came you to be here and yet mortal; for the last who came here were brothers who had been slain, and you are yet alive?" And the man answered: "I waited on the Lord and He brought me here safely."

Well, for some reason, that was given in time to be read here this evening. And I can't say who the man is, maybe it's President Thomas Monson, maybe it's President Packer, maybe it's one of you, I just can't say. But the fact of the matter is, that it is the glory of the Fathers which Joseph was trying to explain in the last two talks he gave in Nauvoo.

The promise made by Elijah is about reconnecting us to the Fathers. Joseph called them the Fathers in heaven. These are not our kindred dead because our kindred dead are required to be redeemed by us. These are the Fathers in heaven. Among them would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and because of this dispensation being what it is, Peter, James, and John. The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to allow you to see things in their true light with the underlying intent behind them and to allow you to do that without distortion and without confusion. The temple is a ceremony designed to teach you about the path back to God; the very same thing that The Book of Mormon teaches repeatedly. The path back to God is so that you can meet with and be instructed by our Savior. The purpose of our Savior is to prepare us in all things so that we can, at last, become Zion. Because if your heart is right and my heart is right and if I'm looking to God and God only, and you're looking to God and God only, then the trivial things of having things in common are of so little import that they matter not.

Let me end because we've taken long enough, first of all by thanking the DeGraw family singers who gave the prelude music. They are a family that are dear to me. Donna, thank you, that was wonderful and it allowed me to stand in back and see how the microphone worked and Jim who will give the closing prayer let me thank him as well. He teaches me in a high priest group over the active resistance of the high priest group. I get a lot of rest in that group. It helps when you're recuperating from things to tend to your group meetings regularly.

Listen, if you're faithful to the Lord, you have no reason to pick a fight with anyone else. Our Lord was a peacemaker. We ought to be peacemakers as well. I have nothing but appreciation for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They publish the scriptures; oh yeah, they bought Bookcraft too; they publish the scriptures that make me wise to salvation. They build the temples in which we can go and learn about the mysteries of God. They delivered to me through the voice of some Utah boys; I mean they were about the same age as I was, but they were so young and naïve in my universe, that I considered them boys; a testimony about the restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith and I have a stronger testimony of the restoration today than I did the day I was baptized. I believe it more fervently and I know a great deal more about the mysteries of God than I ever thought possible. I don't think I'm special. If you really knew enough about me to realize that this preaching is not the full definition of who I am. You would probably agree that you're better people than I am. But I wanted to know Him. And I was willing to give away anything and everything and I am still willing to give away anything and everything. There is nothing that I value above the Lord. And I hope that everyone here understands that statement.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2013.06.07 Constitutional Apostasy

June 7, 2013

Highland, Utah

Sometimes the way that you accomplish an objective is indirectly. You accomplish it as a by-product. You don't stare into the sun. You take advantage of what the sun has to offer indirectly because it will damage you if you go staring at it. The clearest way to make this apparent is in our legal system. We have what's called an adversarial system. The adversarial system has as its objective *the byproduct* of finding the truth. That's not what you aim at. The adversarial system has an attorney who represents one side—and his objective is to tell you everything that is in favor of his side and then to point out all the weaknesses, all of the mistakes of the other side. And then the other side's attorney has the exact same goal. Neither one of them is trying to tell you the whole story. They are employed, they are trained, and they are prepared to give you everything that can be mustered in the evidence, in the proof, and in the testimony to support one side. Then a third party is the decision-maker. Whether that third party is a judge or a jury, the third-party decision maker listens to what both sides have to say, and they determine what is the truth. The truth is the by-product of this adversarial system. The alternative to that is an inquisitorial system. And we do not have an inquisitorial system. Because if you're going to take directly the objective of accomplishing "the truth," then under an inquisitorial system (as Torquemada demonstrated in the Iberian Peninsula during the Inquisition), get out the branding irons, get out the rack. I mean, if we could get to the truth by an inquisitorial system, then why not use torture in furtherance of the objective of trying to accomplish the truth? So truth is not the objective of the adversarial system that we use in the United States. Truth is the by-product of the system we use. Because you get far more truth through an adversarial system than you ever obtain through an inquisitorial system, because people will lie to avoid the problems imposed upon them as a part of the Inquisition.

Well, the objective of the Constitution is really simple. There are a whole lot of things that are a by-product of this one objective. But the one objective of the Constitution is to end tyranny. And so everything within the system is designed, in order to accomplish as its by-product, ending tyranny. Because if anyone knew what tyranny was, it was the colonialists who found it unbearable to live under a system of a foreign King, ruling them and imposing taxes upon them disproportionately so that they—the colonialists—were required to pay more taxes so that those back in the home country didn't have to pay taxes on some things or paid far less tax. Because though they were all subjects of the same monarchy, the monarch elected not to treat them equally and to tax them evenly, but to choose some to be benefited through the tax system and to choose others to punish under the tax system. And so they found that the system was intolerable. The reason why we wind up with those kinds of excesses is because of human frailty.

There is this interesting incident that happens, which we have preserved in the Doctrine and Covenants, in which Joseph Smith is in the Liberty Jail. He's been there for about five months, at the time of the writing of this letter—an excerpt of which is in D&C 121. And he is groaning under the oppression of the state government that has arrested him

using the state militia, accused him of treason against the state, and held him without trial in a Missouri dungeon for five months in conditions that were brutal. And in those circumstances he writes (and the writing is inspired):

We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion (D&C 121:39).

What's interesting about what we have in Doctrine and Covenants 121 is that Joseph Smith is confined and oppressed by a government authority. And in the extremity of being subjected to imprisonment without due process, by the government of Missouri, and Joseph complaining—because if you have the rest of the letter (which is in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*), if you read the rest of the letter, what he's complaining about, what he's asking God for is to avenge the governmental oppression of him. And, as the Lord often does, the purpose of putting Joseph through the oppression in a dungeon is to tell him something about priesthood. The Lord ignores—ignores, you know, lay waste to the government—instead He takes the occasion to say, Okay Joseph, now, now maybe you can understand something. Here's what I was hoping you would understand:

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are [so] set...upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or...gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to **exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness**, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man....[See] no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only [you don't have any authority by virtue of that; you have authority virtue of only]...persuasion [that's your tool—persuasion—and since that is not going to work, the second tool is]...long-suffering [because all you're armed with is persuasion, you can't say, "I'm the authority, you need to do this. I'm the authority; the thinking has been done." If all I've got is persuasion, then I'd better be willing to be long-suffering, because I'm not going to bring you on board with the truth anytime soon, and then]...gentleness [I don't care how frustrated you get] and meekness, and...love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul (D&C 121: 34-37, 41-42).

These are the tools. So Joseph is suffering from governmental oppression, complaining about the government, and the Lord says, "Good! Now maybe you can understand the way the Priesthood works, because this crap you're going through—if you think it's bad when someone has a militia, oh you just wait, Joseph! As it rolls forward and people

have possession of priestly office, you see what happens!" We've been through that; it's called Catholicism. The Lord's focus, as is often the case, is not on the thing that Joseph was asking about. But it was about what the Lord wanted us to understand.

And there are other reasons why the Constitution matters to Latter-day Saints. Doctrine and Covenants 101 tells us—and this is really interesting; 101:76,

And again I say unto you, those who have been scattered by their enemies, it is my will that they should continue to importune for redress, and redemption, by the hands of those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you—

See, the Lord didn't say, "Based upon the Missouri persecutions and the loutishness of Governor Boggs, dispatch Orrin Porter Rockwell, and take this guy out." He says, "...those who are placed as rulers and are in authority over you." You know, the solution doesn't lie in the end of a barrel. Petition Him, and do it (verse 77):

According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles.

That's what the Constitution was designed to accomplish. And when the Lord says that it was established for just and holy purposes, we ought to be approaching constitutional issues with the same sense of the sacred, as D&C 121 talks about respecting the rights of conscience and belief. So it's just, and it is holy—the Constitution.

That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day[s] of judgment. Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. (verses 78-80)

So I want you to note that what we are told in Doctrine and Covenants 101 in the revelation given to Joseph is that the Constitution was established by the Lord's hand, through men He raised up for that purpose, to establish just and holy principles that will protect the rights of all men. What it does not say is that having raised those just and holy men up, that you have a guarantee that forever thereafter you will have in a position of authority over you, running the government of the United States in perpetuity, "just and holy men" whom the Lord has raised up. He put it in place; He put it in operation; He turns it over to us. Then the question is, What are you going to do with it? What are you going to do with what you been entrusted with? That's the question. The Lord did His part; now it's up to us.

The Constitution gets mentioned again, not in a revelation. [Section]101 is a revelation. It gets mentioned in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, in section 109:54. And Joseph says in the prayer:

Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth; have mercy upon the rulers of our land; may those principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever. (verse 54)

Well, we have a declaration of belief on how governments ought to behave—that's section 134:

We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable...[and so on; oh, I like verse 2]. We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life. (verses 1-2)

It's interesting that we have in [section] 134 the reference to property. John Locke talked in terms of life, liberty, and property. In the Declaration, it was reworded to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." (You have to understand the Scottish Enlightenment and what happiness meant, because that was a very specific phrase. The word *happiness* doesn't mean, "I got an Xbox, and I got a noggin full of cocaine, and I'm happy now." That's not it. Happiness had a highly specific meaning. It meant that you were living your life in conformity with the will of God. They believed in natural law. Natural law meant that it was ordained by God and was given to all men. And when you brought your life into harmony with natural law, with the will of God, then you became happy. So "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" means life, liberty, and that you are living your life in conformity with the will of God, which would bring about happiness.) John Locke cut to the quick, which was property, which is where we would be, even with the 16th Amendment, if property were in there.

Well, First Nephi 13—there is a series of verses that's giving the prophetic foreshadowing, the foretelling of what was going to happen when the Gentiles became the inheritors of this land. Beginning in verse 12:

And I looked and [I] beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by...many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land.

There's your answer to the question of whether people got the Holy Ghost without the laying on of hands, at some point. I mean, Columbus was inspired.

It came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.

So it wasn't just Columbus; it was your own ancestors who were wrought upon by the Holy Ghost to come and occupy this land. Even though two of my ancestors were children in the Liverpool area who accepted a free afternoon boat ride from a captain who was loading the boat up with children, and then proceeded to sail from Liverpool to the United States—to the colonies—where he sold the children off as indentured servants. One of those was a boy and another was a girl who were sold to the same family as indentured servants. And when they worked their way through the indentured servitude and they were free, they married one another. And so I guess the Spirit works directly on some and through captains on others.

And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten. And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceedingly fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain.

Which tells you that what he's talking about is the ones who were the designated inheritors; [they] match a specific description and fit within a certain ethnicity called *Gentile*.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them. And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them. And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. And I...beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.

Well, you'd have to know a lot about our early history to know just how very true that is. Sometime, you ought to look into the battle of New York and how Washington managed to escape. And he was the last one to leave that morning. He wanted all of the troops withdrawn before he would leave and enter the boat himself. But for the intervening fog bank, the American Revolution would've ended that day. The hand of God was throughout that. In fact, Washington talked about the hand of Providence ruling throughout.

Then we have Jacob's teaching in Second Nephi 10. Jacob—the one that Nephi thought so much of as a teacher that he gave chapters of his own writing over to his younger brother—Jacob. Jacob, teaching in chapter 10 and beginning in verse 10, says:

But behold, this land, said God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land. And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words.

Well, we all know the story of the Book of Mormon—how there were kings and how there were kingmen and how there were those— I mean, it doesn't mean that there will not be, at least temporarily, those that manage, in this land, to establish temporary monarchies and oppress. It just means that the ultimate destiny of kingship on this land is failure, and therefore, there we are. So we now know what the background is. And we know that there is this effort to create systems to guard against tyranny that have as their by-product the freedom of the people.

And so we look at the Constitution and say, How exactly is it, then, that the Constitution managed to establish a framework inside of which it is possible to preserve freedom? Article 1 Section 1 of the Constitution says that:

All legislative Powers...granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Then Article 1 Section 3 tells us how the Senate operates:

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each state, (chosen by the Legislature thereof,) for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

So the Senate of the United States consists of this group—two Senators—and they are chosen by the legislature of the state. Now, you might say, Well, we fixed that. Yes, we kind of did. We don't have any problem with the idea that there are positions that are held within the United States which have extraordinary authority granted to them but who are not elected by the people. Every United States federal judge is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Every sitting member of the United States Supreme Court is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. We don't elect federal judges. We elect men (or women) who choose—We elect men who choose; we've yet to get a woman. The inevitability of that is, however, certain—We elect men; they choose, the Senate confirms, and none of us sit back and say, "Wait a minute! We didn't get to vote!" None of us question the authority, or the dignity, or the legitimacy of their power. And the Supreme Court becomes, of course, the court of last resort in the country. Somehow, however, when it comes to the legislature of the United States, when the United States Senate became a creature of the legislatures rather than being elected directly by the people, we found it so intolerable that we amended the Constitution in order to provide for the direct election of United States Senators.

Well, when they were putting together the United States Constitution and they had a skeptical public, they published a series of articles (Madison and a few of his cohorts, anonymously) in *The Federalist Papers*. And *Federalist Papers Nos. 62 and 63* explain the purpose behind the way in which the Senate was organized. This is just talking about the United States Senate in the mechanism that gets used to choose the United States Senate:

It is recommended by the double advantage of favoring a select appointment, and of giving to the State governments such an agency in the formation of the federal government as must secure the authority of the former ["secure the authority of the former"—the state government], and may form a convenient link between the two systems.

The United States Senate was designed to be a link between, on the one hand, the state and the state authority—that is, the state Legislature—and the federal government. Because the Senate was the creature that was selected by, appointed by, chosen by the state legislatures and, therefore, answerable to them.

The equality of representation in the Senate is another point which being, evidently, the result of compromise between the opposite pretensions of the large and small states:

...among independent and sovereign States, bound together by a simple league, the parties, however unequal in size, ought to have an EQUAL share in the common councils....

We're trying to protect the identity of the various states as independent and sovereign.

The equal vote allowed..each state is at once a constitutional recognition of the portion of sovereignty remaining in the individual States and an instrument for preserving that residuary sovereignty....to guard, by every possible expedient, against an improper consolidation of the States into one simple republic.

It was never the objective to have the United States of America become correlated so that they're all singing the same hymn, preaching the same lesson every week, in uniformity from sea to shining sea. That was never the intent. It was always the intent that there be independence and recognition of the sovereignty of each of the individual sovereign units—who were entitled to elect their own representation; and then have their representatives choose who the senator would be (at the beck and call of the legislature) to go back to Washington and to guard the rights of the state. So—simple system. Think about it. Dividing the power is

a salutary check on the government. It doubles the security to the people, by requiring the concurrence of two distinct bodies in schemes of usurpation... [whereby] the ambition or corruption of one would otherwise be sufficient. This is a precaution founded on such clear principles, and now so well understood in the United States, that it would be more than superfluous to enlarge on it. I will barely

remark, that as the improbability of sinister combinations will be in proportion to the dissimilarity in the genius of the two bodies, it must be politic to distinguish them from each other by every circumstance which will consist with a due harmony in all proper measures, and with the genuine principles of republican government.

You see, here's the way that works. The way in which you choose the Congress—the House of Representatives—is by direct election. And by direct election, you can be informed by all sorts of passions, prejudice, trends, stupidity, fads—all kinds of things can briefly inflame the passions of those people that are elected by the public directly. But the legislature—out of which the United States Senate grows—the legislature is a completely different kind of body. The legislature in the states only turns over so often. And the legislature is the ones that are holding the reins on the Senate. So when the senators go back there, the things they care about—the fashions of the day, the passions of the people—are quieted, are mollified, are subdued to some extent, because the Senate doesn't have that same problem with direct election as does the House of Representatives. And this is a wise purpose, because of the improbability of sinister combinations in proportion to the dissimilarity between the House and the Senate. Therefore, what you want is dissimilarity. What you want is for them to reckon from different gene pools altogether. What you want is the Senate to be something far different than the House of Representatives. You don't want them running around with, oh, campaign slogans and yard signs and well, in the early days, barrels of whiskey at the polling stations.

Now why are we trying to create such disparity between the two bodies? It's because at the time that the Constitution was being discussed...

...No small share of the present embarrassments of America is to be charged on the blunders of our governments; and that these have [been produced] from the heads rather than the hearts of most of the authors of them....A good government implies two things: first, fidelity to the object of government, which is the happiness of the people; secondly, a knowledge of the means by which that object can...best [be] attained....The internal effects of a mutable policy are still more calamitous. It poisons the blessing of liberty itself. It will be of little avail to the people, that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man, who knows what the law is to-day, can guess what it will be to-morrow. Law is defined to be a rule of action; but how can that be a rule, which is little known, and less fixed?...Great injury results from an unstable government. The want of confidence in the public councils damps every useful undertaking, the success and profit of which may depend on a continuance of the existing arrangements. What prudent merchant will hazard his fortunes in any new branch of commerce when he knows not but that his plans may be rendered unlawful before they be executed? What farmer or manufacturer will lay himself out for the encouragement given to any particular

cultivation or establishment, when he can have no assurance that his preparatory labors and advances will not render him a victim to an inconstant government?

The United States Senate was designed to be chosen by the legislature in order to prevent the incessant changing of the law and to provide a stability by which the government could become predictable; its laws known. Change would not be rapid. There could not be an agenda: "I'm running on a platform. Here's my platform. I got this here agenda. We are going to transform America. We are going to make us a new one. We are going to implement. And if we can't get implementation in any other way, then we're going to 'executive order' our way through."

Now, wait a minute...hold on. I thought it said that the legislative power, ALL legislative power herein granted should be vested in a Congress of the United States. So that's Article 1. We don't get to the executive until Article 2. If we had the Senate doing its job, you wouldn't be faced with those issues.

In the next circular of *The Federalist Papers*, *Federalist No. 63*, still talking about the United States says:

The people can never willfully betray their own interests; but they may possibly be betrayed by the representatives of the people; and the danger will be evidently greater where the whole legislative trust is lodged in the hands of one body of men, [rather] than when the concurrence of separate and dissimilar bodies is required in every public act.

The purpose was not merely to make them separately elected and to divide them into two terms: one for two and one for six years. It was to make them dissimilar. The creature that is called the United States Senate and the creature that is called the House of Representatives [were] designed on purpose to be dissimilar. And so anything you do to break down the dissimilarity and anything you do to create similarity between the two bodies is designed to undermine the very purpose that the system that was established was designed to guard against.

Well, they talk about how you can transform and corrupt our country. But in accomplishing that,

Before such a revolution can be effected, the Senate, it is to be observed, must in the first place corrupt itself; must next corrupt the State legislatures; must then corrupt the House of Representatives; and must finally corrupt the people at large. It is evident that the Senate must be first corrupted before it can attempt an establishment of tyranny. Without corrupting the State legislatures, it cannot prosecute the attempt, because the periodical change of members would otherwise regenerate the whole body. Without exerting the means of corruption with equal success on the House of Representatives, the opposition of that coequal branch of the government would inevitably defeat the attempt; and without corrupting the people themselves, a succession of new representatives

would speedily restore all things to their pristine order. Is there any man who can seriously persuade himself that the proposed Senate can, by any possible means within the compass of human address, arrive at the object of a lawless ambition, through all these obstructions?

Yes, if you remove one of them—if you get rid of the legislative control over them—because then you aggregate power at the federal level, and the legislatures of the various states become servants, not sovereigns. They become servants to a homogenized, single, federal unity.

...the federal Senate will never be able to transform itself, by gradual usurpations, into an independent and aristocratic body.

When I was growing up in Idaho, the reaction to that would be: My ass! [laughter]

You know, the United States Constitution was amended. In the 17th Amendment to the Constitution it provides:

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years.

If you want to do one thing to change the course of the United States, repeal the 17th Amendment. Overnight, the issue of whether or not the states have legislative authority and independent sovereignty would be re-established with one change. And it's never going to happen. Because the monied interests, at this point, are so far entrenched in this system; and the political parties are so behind this manner of accomplishing the taxing and the gathering and the paying—that Washington simply is off the leash. And the leash came through the United States Senate. And the 17th Amendment cut the leash, and therefore, what we have is exactly the problem that we face today.

Well, never question the wisdom of the folks that the Lord raised up—holy men who He raised up in order to establish a system. And just realize, anytime you tinker with the system—any system—that God put in place, you're going to yield— I was going to say "unexpected consequences." But that's just— You're going to apostatize from the purpose, and you deprive yourself of the intended blessing God hoped (when He entrusted the system to you) to bless you with. That's the first point.

There's one other point I want to talk about. When the United States of America was established, the United States had about 200 years of slavery that had been built into the core of the country (when the United States was a colony), and it had no right (as a colony) to resist the importation of a slave class. And so, when the United States of America gained independence from England, slavery was an existing economic fact that had been built into the society itself. It's interesting [to read] some of the debates that took place during the drafting of the Constitution. Because one of the theories—and it was a real theory that bright men considered—one of the theories was that it was

impossible to produce the required educated and idle class—and by "idle class," that means someone that doesn't have to go out and labor in the field with the strength of their body in order to provide the means to feed and clothe and house themselves—you could not produce the required idle class unless you had slavery, because there was no historical precedent for it. And they debated that. And the problem was that history suggested that that argument was an argument that could be made and could be considered. So when independence was achieved, independence was achieved against the existing reality of slavery.

Now Washington, who was the only man considered to be President of the United States—in fact the office of the President was written and designed for one occupant, and that was George Washington—he was the indispensable man in creating this country. Washington was the one who presided over the Constitutional Convention and contributed almost nothing to the debates, other than his presence. And when they reached an impasse, the way they solved the impasse was Washington indicating which side he favored. When they took it [the Constitution] out to sell it to the public, the salesmanship that was done was that "George Washington presided over this." Everyone trusted that man. Therefore, they adopted an office for that man, and he filled it for two terms. And then he resigned, and he walked away—something that everyone would respect by his mere example, until it was necessary, after FDR, to amend the Constitution again to prevent that from not being the example. Washington, when he died, freed his slaves. He didn't do it while he was alive, but he did it in death. If everyone followed the example of Washington, with time, there would have been no more slavery.

Here's the problem, however. Since the [slavery] institution had been imposed upon the United States as a colony, and since it represented wealth—it represented capital—however offensive to you it may be today—to say human beings are not capital—the economic reality was that slaves were capital, and they represented an investment. So the question becomes, how do you extract yourself from the institution of slavery when you have an economic system in which people have invested capital in human slaves? How do you bring that to a conclusion? Because quite frankly, if all you do is terminate the practice, you would bankrupt the South.

It is probable that the cotton gin alone made the end of slavery inevitable, because it became a problem with the coming Industrial Revolution, one of the first edges of which was the cotton gin. The coming Industrial Revolution made it no longer necessary to have human bondage in order to accomplish it. It wasn't just the ownership of African slaves in the South; it was indentured servitude in the North. Indentured servitude was a way of selling yourself, or someone else, into slavery for a period of time. And servitude was an economic means for producing goods and services. Well, how do you extract yourself?

Joseph Smith published, when he was running for the presidency of the United States, *General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1844, and this is an excerpt from his campaign:

Petition also ye goodly inhabitants of the slave states, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850 or now, and save the abolitionist from reproach and ruin infamy and shame. Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress. Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire them to labor like other human beings; for "an hour of virtuous liberty on earth, is worth a whole eternity of bondage!"

Joseph Smith's proposal in 1844 was: Here's how we end slavery—we buy them. We pay the purchase price; we purchase their freedom. Now think about that for a moment, as a matter of economic reality. If you are a slave owner, and someone offers the fair price to you for your entire group of slaves, and you sell them into freedom, you now have capital—the capital that you spent buying them. And with your capital, you can hire them. And the people who were formerly merely a commodity now become wage earners. But what happens if, instead of doing as Joseph Smith proposed, you simply destroy the capital of the South by saying no more slavery? Instantly, you bankrupt the South. Instantly, you doom the freed slave, to no longer having anyone who has the capital with which to employ them. Instantly, you leave the South in a position where, out of economic reality, what you do—since you own is land—is you start a sharecropping system, in which the risk of crop failure falls upon those who can least afford to bear the risk of crop failure—that is, the former slaves.

What Joseph Smith proposed would not have required reconstruction. What Joseph Smith proposed would not have caused the Civil War. What Joseph Smith's proposal would have accomplished was the end of slavery. And what Joseph Smith's proposal would have accomplished with the end of slavery was the economic means by which the former slave could rise out of poverty, through labor—because that's all anyone was doing at that time—through their own labor and accomplish, through their employment, the dignity of holding a job and earning an income. But what we accomplished instead was another revolution that has constitutional implications.

The deadliest enemy that the United States has ever faced is another American, and the Civil War proves it. There is no more effective and warlike people on earth than the Americans. And when the Americans faced the Americans, and blood was shed, we punished ourselves for slavery. And in the wake of the Civil War, the Civil War amendments—if you take a look at what happened with the Civil War amendments, once again it was a power shift. The way in which slavery was designed to end was gradually and in a way that made economic sense. The way in which it *did* end imposed another century of slavery upon the liberated slaves in the South, as a matter of economic reality. It just was. You would never have had sharecropping—I mean, the only thing they had was land, so what do you do? You let them farm the land. And then the crops that come off the land? You charge them, you take it, and you doom them the poverty.

Well, if you look at what happened in connection with the Civil War, in contrast to the wisdom of what Joseph Smith suggested as an exit strategy to terminate the practice of

slavery, you realize that the choice that we made between the two of them not only resulted in another century of problems following the Civil War and the freedom of the slaves and the bankruptcy of the Southern slave owners, it also resulted in oppression of the former slaves. Because they succeeded into freedom in an economic environment in which it was impossible for them to make value out of what they had to offer, that is, their labor.

The amendments were designed to curtail the rights of the states and to impose upon the individual states the same due process of law, through the 14th Amendment, that we have in the federal government. You see, Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion in the 1st Amendment. However, that didn't apply to the state legislatures, which is why Thomas Jefferson (as President of the United States) refused to acknowledge Thanksgiving as a national holiday—because it was religious. And when he became Governor of the state of Virginia, he not only celebrated Thanksgiving as a state holiday, but he also had a day of fasting—religious fasting—the day before. The United States could not have a state religion, but the states could and did. The 14th Amendment ended that. What that literally meant, at the beginning, is that independent sovereign and equal states could experiment. You could have the state of Utah with a state religion called Mormonism or Latter-day Saintism. And you could have, like they did to the citizens of Massachusetts, a tax that was imposed by the state, collected by the state, and paid over to a church. You could do like the LDS church used to do with employees of ZCMI—that is, they had a payroll deduction for tithing, and they deducted it (if you were employed at ZCMI), and they paid it directly to the Church. They could do that to all of you in the state of Utah if we still had what we had originally. And if you didn't like that, then you could go to Idaho, because in Idaho they worship the potato. I know, because I grew up there. And if you found it detestable to worship a potato, you could go to Wyoming and worship a cowboy. But every state was intended to be an experiment in sovereignty and in freedom, and the aberrations that would appear—the strange concoctions that the states would create of themselves—is just fine, because the citizens of Vermont could say, "I am sick of this government," and they could pack up, and they could move to Rhode Island. Or they could move to Virginia. Or they could go to Ohio. And sooner or later, some state—like Texas is doing now—could say, "Come here! We're not going to tax you out of existence. We're going to issue you a side arm when you come into the state, and we're going to let you shoot out of your car every road sign you see! And we will replace them, because we have oil money, and we can buy new road signs. Come to Texas!" It's that guy on *The Simpsons*. Yee-haw! With the two guns going off.

And so people from Massachusetts can look down their nose at the folks in Texas. And they could say, "You know, they're ne'er-do-wells; they're hicks." And the people in Texas can say, "Thank God we're in Texas and not in Massa-damn-chusetts." We should be so diverse, we should be so dissimilar, we should be so non-uniform that growing out of the United States there should be, at this moment, 50 different experiments underway, using the freedom that people have to choose, to design for themselves the way in which they would like to be governed. And those 50 different

ways will ultimately—some fail, some succeed, some turn into Nirvana. And the states are going to look around and say, "Hey that's good!" and they are going to inform their own experiment in democracy by what they see working, and they are going to inform their own experiment in democracy by seeing what's failing and by saying, "Well, that didn't work! I mean, look at that mess!"

Instead, what you have is a national uniformity in which—when we make a mistake in economic policy; when we make a mistake in the way in which we proceed in trying to regulate and tax and govern; when we make a mistake in taking those who are most productive and confiscate money from them in order to subsidize behavior that we would really like to see end—when we make a mistake, we make a mistake on a grandiose scale. We make a mistake that is so threatening that it is possible to defeat the sovereignty of 50 states and to defeat the sovereignty of the entire union itself, and that was never what the Constitution set out to accomplish. The Constitution set out to accomplish, as a by-product of a system, your freedom. Your rights. And the way in which they accomplished it has been tampered with.

Therefore, I don't care if you've got scriptures as a Latter-day Saint that you can thump on and say, "The Constitution was divinely inspired!" So what! Because every time you tinker with it, every time you change it, if you are not informed by the same degree of inspiration as was evident in the original creation, uninspired men—who DO have a tendency to become tyrannical; uninspired men who DO want to exercise control and compulsion and dominion—they can take any gift given by God to any of us, and they can pervert it into something in which savage uniformity oppresses the hearts and the souls of men and renders it incapable of securing, for the benefit of you and your posterity, the freedom which we find in Christ: the Original Revolutionary.

Constitutional Apostasy: Q&A Session

Well, I've talked long enough. I was told by email that I ought to allow some time for questions.

Question: So you alluded to this a little bit ago and said that things got established that should not be tampered with. Can you draw a comparison between the checks and balances that were set up for our political government and the original form of Church government that is established in Section 107?

Response: Yes, I could. [laughter] Oh man. OK, this is a more important story, but that's the answer to the question that you asked. Yes, I can. [laughter] There's a kid on the team—the kid on the team was literally, he was batting .004 for the season. OK? And he told my daughter that he wished that she would teach him how to hit. And that was the practice before last practice, and in the last practice, which was yesterday, I was watching him in the batter's box, and this is batting practice, and he didn't hit a single ball thrown to him. So I went over, and I asked the coaches, "Can I work with this kid a little?" They said, "It's the last game of the year; he's yours. You're welcome to him." So

I took him over, and I taught him one little technique where you stand next to the chain link fence, you put the bat against your belly button and against the fence. And you get yourself that close. Then, you have to swing the bat without hitting the fence. K? What that does, if you can swing the bat without hitting the fence, if you've got a Little Leaguer, that forces the arms into a 45 degree angle. You can't accomplish that swing without a 45 degree angle. You watch Major League baseball players, they're all swinging at a 45 degree angle. Well, if you're pirouetting, you've got your arms out, you go slower. And if you bring those arms in, you go faster. You rotate on the ball much faster—I mean, you can't hit a fast ball in the major league unless—this is called "casting;" it's what you do to catch fly fish. You cast. You keep it at a 45, and you bring it through fast, and you can hit the ball, and if you're doing it right, then you don't even have to watch the bat, you just take your hands, and wherever the ball is, your hands line up with that, and the barrel follows. So this kid, who was batting .004, this is the headline news, I'll leave his name out, he hit a single and got an RBI tonight. That's all that matters! [laughter and clapping]

Question: Assuming that's the extent of your answer to his question, forget about how it is NOW. How was it ORIGINALLY? What was the check and balance system that was originally designated by the Doctrine and Covenants?

Response: Joseph Smith never called a single member of the quorum of the Twelve into the First Presidency of the Church. The quorum of the Twelve is a traveling high council. Essentially, they were missionaries. The First Presidency of the Church was a different operation. All the congregations were locally controlled, locally elected, locally governed. General authorities came to moderate the election. It was a Congregationalist model. Common consent meant something. Instead of handing out appointments from higher-ups, the local people knew who the local people were, and they chose who they wanted. The general authority came to moderate the ballot. They would take nominations. They would usually get a slate, they would then vote; whoever got the most votes, they would ask, "Will you sustain him?" And if it wasn't unanimous, they would go to number two, and they would ask, "Will you sustain him?" No. They go to number three, "Will you sustain him?" And if he got the votes, and this was the guy who people had confidence in, then he became the stake president, he became the bishop, he became the whatever. Usually that guy would then ask for one of the other people who had gotten votes to be counselors. And usually, in an act of magnanimity, everyone would say, "Well, he's in charge, and if he wants them, I'm good with that." It was a local model.

At the time that Joseph Smith was killed, he was presiding over the high council in Nauvoo. The way that the Doctrine and Covenants reads, you can have the President of the Church be the president of the high council. Now William Marks was president on a number of occasions, but it was Joseph Smith, primarily, who presided over the high council in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith, presiding over the high council in Nauvoo, regulated and held the church courts that went on in Nauvoo. When he held a church court, he learned a lot of stuff about what was going on inside Nauvoo, because people brought in their issues. Joseph Smith gave a talk that can only be justified by what he was

hearing presiding over the high council in Nauvoo. His intimates were the Stake high council. His associates—the guys who knew him best during that time period—was the Stake high council. If a guy or gal didn't show up for their high council court, the court wasn't held. If someone said, "I need more time," they were given more time. If someone showed up and said, "I'm sick," the high council wasn't held. Almost any reason would do to get the high council hearing continued.

Joseph Smith was killed. The quorum of the Twelve came back. If you look at D&C 107, the First Presidency *"form a quorum, equal in authority..."* If you get down through all the "equal in authorities," you get to the high council. And the high council forms a quorum equal in authority with the First Presidency.

So that succession moment, the quorum of the Twelve pulled it off. They became the body triumphant. And then during the excommunication trial of Sidney Rigdon, over which Marks presided, it was rather a Kangaroo Court. Brigham Young was the one leading the charge, making the accusations. But he recognized he didn't have jurisdiction to get rid of Sidney Rigdon. So it had to be the high council that did that. And so in the Rigdon trial—in marked contrast to how the high councils had been conducted with Joseph Smith—Sidney Rigdon said he didn't feel well, and he didn't want the court held. And Brigham Young said, "We're holding the court anyway." The high council went along with that. Brigham said that if Rigdon was well enough to attend a meeting earlier that day, he was well enough to attend his excommunication trial, and so we ought to proceed. And so they proceeded, in the absence of Sidney Rigdon. And then after he succeeded in getting Sidney Rigdon excommunicated—because he was considered the number one rival—he said, Well, you know, we might as well hold court and excommunicate a whole list of people who were sympathizers with Rigdon, because we are going to have to get rid of them sooner or later anyway. So those guys didn't even get notice that there was going to be a high council court, and they got excommunicated, too, because they were guilty by association.

So things changed. And when the quorum of the Twelve became the presiding center of political authority—I mean, you look at what he did: In order to move the high priests out of the jurisdiction of the Stake high council and the Stake President (which was William Marks, who was also considered a rival to Brigham Young), he called every high priest on a mission. Because when you're in the mission field, they were under the jurisdiction of the Twelve. And so every high priest in Nauvoo was assigned a mission somewhere in the congressional district of the United States—now that didn't mean you had to leave Nauvoo, but they were called to that. What that did was to change the authority structure from the Stake President and the high council into the quorum of the Twelve running things. And we've read articles celebrating the reorganization (or the re-empowerment) of the Seventy by Brigham Young, which is also another political move made at the time.

The ripples from the succession crisis that occurred in 1844 is comparable in scope and magnitude to anything we've done in tinkering with the Constitution. And so today we don't have a congregational model anymore. And we are savagely uniform. From

Buenos Aires to Tokyo, you can feel comfortable no matter where you go that you're not gonna miss the same Relief Society, Sunday School, Elder's Quorum, and High Priest lesson. And when we have our monthly whatever-that-thing-is-where-we-select-some-talk, everyone's gonna talk about that same-some-talk wherein they're gonna ruminate about what someone recently said. But, you know, what's a little bit of uniformity among friends? But that wasn't what I came here to talk about. You derailed this Constitutional affair.

Question: Joseph Smith went to visit President Van Buren and was told, "Your cause is just, but there is nothing I can do for you because I would lose the vote in Missouri." Not only was he expressing his desire to remain president but he was also expressing the political reality at the time, because until the 14th Amendment, the state could violate the civil rights of the people. So the 14th Amendment corrected what Joseph found was a fundamental flaw in the Federal Constitution.

Response: Yes. At the expense of a whole lot of other things.

Question: How would you have done it differently?

Response: You can have cheese, but you only get cheese. And you get a whole lot of cheese. And you don't get any broccoli to go with it. I mean, in for a penny, in for a pound. What we are trying to guard against is tyranny. And what we have is either separate sovereign experiments, in which some things may go awry, and that'll inform forever in the future whether or not the state of Missouri ever again gets one penny of patronage or one bit of help from an entire community—that has been alienated. An entire growing body of politically-active and wealth-producing and successful Latter-day Saints, by their failure to behave reasonably. Or we can just homogenize everything and say, "Now the President can...."

There was this incident that happened during the Korean War, when President Truman sent the National Guard in to operate a steel mill during a strike by the steel workers. And a federal judge sent them home because he said the President doesn't have the authority to do that. Oh, the good old days.

Question: Why do you think many General Authorities in the past have expressed that they think that President Lincoln was inspired?

Response: I'm certain he was an inspired...there's no question about that.

Question: But whom was he inspired by?

Response: Well...therein lies the rub. Look, the problem is this: What, in the end, do you prize the most? Do you prize all of the risks, all of the responsibilities, all of the potential for failure, all of the individual accountability? I mean—I read you the scripture a moment ago—what was the purpose of the Constitution? It was to make you free so

that you can exercise moral agency, and you get the opportunity to succeed or fail. The purpose of the Constitution is to set you in a position in which it is possible for you to accomplish either one, so that you—YOU— become accountable—not someone back in Washington, not someone to whom you have surrendered your choice, not someone else to run your life, not someone else to tell you the comings and the goings, the when's and the where's and the why's. YOU the Constitution was designed to accomplish. YOU become morally accountable, because you are the agent that gets to choose.

And what the original structure did—and you can say, well, it was errant; it was excessive; there's just too much freedom there; it was licentious. I mean, for goodness' sake, look at what happened: slavery was doomed; period. Slavery was doomed. If the Federal government didn't do anything about it, it would come to an end, and the way in which it would have come to an end would have probably not involved the loss of so many lives and so much treasure. Nor would it have propelled the country into a circumstance in which, for the next century, the former slaves paid a very dear price for the way in which they exited from the institution of slavery.

You know, Lincoln was a Republican, and the Republicans wanted to end the twin relics of barbarism. I mean, when he got done with the Civil War, he probably would've sent Johnson's army out a lot earlier. Look, every one is a mixed blessing. Every leadership dilemma is an opportunity for wisdom and prudence or excess and failure. When you consider the leaders that we've had in this country, there's no question that George Washington fashioned a way of wielding power that was selfless and not self-centered. He was interested in being a servant to the people. When Jefferson became President—he's the guy who invented the embargo; he was looking for a peaceful way to obtain agreement using peacefully coercive means. The way in which the founding fathers proceeded was an extraordinary balance of prudence and wisdom, caution and daring. They proceeded through a landmine field without blowing themselves up.

Ask yourself this question: Let's assume that we had Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe—let's assume we have all those guys at the time of the Civil War, and we say, "Slavery's got to end, and it's got to end now." Do you really think the route that those men would've taken was the same one that Lincoln chose?

Look, Joseph Smith had a way out. It was part of his platform when he ran for the Presidency. I mean, if Joseph was inspired and a prophet, and he chose a means diametrically opposed to the one that Lincoln chose, and you say, well, one looks for a way to accomplish it by peaceful means by preserving life, by preserving property, and creating freedom. And the other one managed to accomplish it by brute force, by the deaths of three-quarters of a million Americans, and by the impoverishment of those whose capital was lost—because they had to pay just compensation if they wanted to take your property; and at the time, whether you like it or not, the definition WAS property—ummmm... yeah. I agree. Lincoln WAS inspired.

Question: I think that the Constitution has all but been destroyed. My question to you is: In the short term of one to three years, how do you see things playing out? And in a longer view, how do you see things playing out with most of the population, including our LDS brethren, apparently asleep?

Response: We have a really fortunate confluence of scandal right now back in Washington. We are blessed, and we are protected, not by the wisdom of our leaders, but by the foolishness and vanity of our leaders. And we have now, potentially—because of the seriousness of the groups that have been offended—we have a potentially three-year lame-duck president, which would be highly useful, because the aggregation of executive power is something that—

I mean, Nixon's the poster boy for the left to say, "Look at that—look at that excess!" when, in fact, Nixon doesn't even hold a candle to the administration we've got now. I'm hoping that this confluence of scandal will hamstring because even still—what we have is a balance between the egos of various political offices back there, and that was one of the purposes of the Constitution. It was to establish a way in which you could take politically ambitious people and put them back there and let them fight with one another so they'll leave us alone. So what I'm hoping is that we have enough scandal going, and enough egos back there right now, that they will brutalize one another and leave us alone. It's like Mark Twain said, "No one is safe in their life and property while the legislature is in session." They may be in session, but hopefully what they're fighting over is one another.

Question: When Supreme Court Judge Roberts made the decision on the "un"affordable healthcare, somebody said it was a wise decision, because it allows the states to stand up against it. But they are not doing that. What is your opinion?

Response: Here are the horns of the dilemma I have. I am a member of the bar of the United States Supreme Court, and I'm not supposed to say anything that would reflect dishonor or discredit on a member of the United States Supreme Court. So let me just say—not about Justice Roberts, the Honorable Chief Justice Roberts—but about the opinion. It makes no sense at all to me. Quite frankly, I believe it was motivated by the notion that if you turned it into a tax, you could write the majority opinion, and the tax would be so offensive that the upcoming election would be swung against Obama, and the act would be repealed. I think the opinion was an attempt to engage, from the bench, in determining the fortunes in the next election. And it didn't work. You can't go to the legislative history of the enactment of Obama-care and find anyone—you can't find anyone—that advocated it as a tax. That wasn't the purpose. In fact, it's a damnable lie to stand up in oral argument, as the solicitor general of the United States did, and advocate that it is an act that can be upheld because of the taxing power of the country, if the country never sought to invoke the taxing power as the basis upon which to adopt the act. And I think Robert's opinion is a lesson in the disadvantages of trying to be, from the bench, a politician. It's a bad opinion, in my view.

I understand this might go up on the web, and one of the things I like to do when things are going out there is to say things like *jihad*, and *we are going to avenge Waco. Muslim Brotherhood. And Homeland Security...you go screw yourself.* [applause]

I have a client who is in Europe right now, and we talk on occasion. And whenever I'm talking to him, I'll say, "Okay I gotta do something now because this is international, so I can help out our folks at Homeland Security," and I go through the list of taboo words.

Question: Do you know of anything that was compiled on Joseph Smith and his platform to end slavery?

Response: Actually if you google the *Joseph Smith Presidential platform*, you'll kick up a copy of the platform and an article in *Mormon Dialogue* magazine that deals with it. And it's not a bad article, and the platform is right there. Just google that, and you'll find the *Mormon Dialogue* article.

Question: You didn't answer the second part of the question, of "Where do you think we are going after three years or so?" I'm still waiting for that part.

Response: Well you know, "Ohmmmmm..." [Denver starts to hum as if in meditation]. When the Lord says, "My peace I give unto you," He coupled that with, "Not as the world gives, give I unto you." In this world, you get to enjoy all of the benefits of a Telesstial atmosphere. Right now, perhaps for one of the first times in history, you have a politicized economy. You have a politicized stock market. I've spent three weeks in trial against a bank; I was in a closing argument in the case earlier today. All I can say is—there was a Taylor Swift concert my daughter went to; that song about *trouble, trouble, trouble...* Sometimes it's like that song by Simon and Garfunkel said, "the words of the prophets are written on the subway wall." And sometimes they are written by country-western singers. We're in trouble. That's obvious, don't you think?

Question: So we are morally bankrupt, and we are about to be bucked off our horse...?

Response. Well, there's always the possibility that we repent [nervous laughter]. But the agenda suggested by the Book of Mormon is that that's unlikely.

Question: Your talk is entitled "Constitutional Apostasy." So, my question is: What's the consequence of our Constitutional Apostasy?

Response: You lose the blessings. What the Lord intended to confer upon you—and what you might have had—you lose. This isn't the responsibility of God. He's not doing this to you. He gave you, as a gift, an opportunity. What you do with the opportunity, then, is up to you. And when you walk away from, and you decide that you would disprefer to preserve, for any reason, what it was that God had intended to bless you with, you can't obtain the blessing without conforming to the law upon which the blessing is predicated, and that was established before the foundation of the world. And if you decide that you will not conform to the condition upon which the blessing is predicated,

then you get to enjoy the absence of the blessing. And you get to mill around in darkness, because blessings confer light. That's why they call it *enlightenment*. That's why the founding fathers were enlightened, because they were gathering, to themselves, light. And when you throw that away, then you get less of that—and darkness. But you'd be surprised how long you can run into the darkness, hyping up the flashlight and the penlight and the sparks from your tap shoes on the pavement, until *it* ends.

Question: Ezra Taft Benson said that the elders of Israel would save the Constitution. How do you see that happening?

Response: Ezra Taft Benson is making that statement in reliance upon Joseph Smith's comment about the elders of Israel. If the Constitution is to be saved, it will be the elders of Israel that did it. And the comment about the Constitution lasting on into the millennium—My view is that if the elders of Israel have a role in preserving the Constitution, that role is not by legislating. That role is by converting people to the truth, because the Constitution is designed to govern a moral people. It is entirely unfit to govern any other kind of people. Therefore, if you want to fix what's wrong at the Constitutional level, you need to go out, and you need to preach the Gospel and convert people and change their hearts. Because right now, the hearts of this nation—the hearts of this people—are harder, are more strident, are more resistant to— I mean, look, what's the tool? Gentleness, meekness, and persuasion—that's the tool. That's what you get to use. Why do you think the Savior took a beating and forgave them? I mean, he shows you the tool. He revolutionized the world, ultimately, simply because he was unwilling to return to brutality anything other than kindness and forgiveness that would break the hearts of anyone who hears the story of who this man was. The elders of Israel need to convert the people.

Voice: Glenn Beck's an Elder.

Response: Yes...just change the hearts of the people.

Question: We have a pretty big movement across the nation right now...the nullification movement. Could you tell us what they thought about nullification?

Response: The pragmatics of it are: you need enough people with the right sentiment. Right now you have a legitimate effort to split Colorado into two states because of political differences and rights issues. There's talk about the same thing in parts of California. Texas was a sovereign nation before it joined the United States, and it has the right to split into separate states. And if it were to do so, it would probably do so in order to increase the number of senators. Look, I don't think there is going to be anything dramatic succeed politically until you get enough people who are no longer interested in the Kardashians and who become interested in the erosion of their freedom. And that's a tall challenge.

I've gone longer than I ever thought I would. We need to wrap it up.

Question: You mentioned Joseph Smith's quote about how an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage. I was wondering what your comments are about that.

Response. We have this really unique opportunity in mortality. This is the only place where you could come where you can bleed, and you can die, and you can sacrifice for a cause. Cowardice is unbecoming anyone who would try to lay hold on the riches of heaven. Because down here, in this dark well, you have an opportunity to prove who you are. You have an opportunity to prove what you are. And you don't prove that you are anything worth preserving on into eternity if you don't live with nobility. And I don't care who it is that is pressuring you or what means they think they can employ. That statement, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country" is not the language of a slave. It's not even the language of a captive. There is a man who is free indeed, even though he's about to be killed. You know, we lack the fortitude—we lack the self-confidence—to hold on to our freedom. You surrender to fashion. You surrender to peer pressure. You surrender to those people that you think are respected members of society. You surrender, but you don't have to. Freedom is still possible in this day. Thank you.

2013.09.10 Lecture 1: Be of Good Cheer, Be of Good Courage

10 September 2013

Boise, Idaho

It was 40 years ago today, at about this moment, when I was baptized in the North Atlantic at a beach called Sea Point Beach in Kittery, Maine. The fellow who presided at the service was named Jim Mortensen. He had just moved into the ward. No one knew who Jim Mortensen was, and there he was on the beach. And he has become infamous for a statement that he made. We had another baptism eighteen days later, and he didn't like that there were people in the area somehow enjoying that awfully cold water. And the statement he made rather gruffly was: "Let's move it up the beach, Elders." He was an old Marine; he used to fly combat missions off of a flat top carrier in Vietnam, and he had all the demeanor of a flat top carrier pilot.

His wife was Monty. Her maiden name was Bunker. She was from the Nevada Bunkers. Bishop Bunker got in a whole lot of trouble because he did not buy the "Adam God" theory. And Bishop Bunker had a trial for excommunication because of heresy, and Bishop Bunker's bishop couldn't quite reach a conclusion on what to do. And as a consequence of that, it was tabled. Wilford Woodruff came down, they had another convening of the church court. Ultimately they decided to punt rather than to do anything. And the doctrinal exposition that Bishop Bunker made has since become the doctrine of the church, although at the time, it was dangerous heresy for the man to preach it.

Monty, she was at the time and is still today one of the loveliest women I have ever met. She texted me a little earlier today on my way here and said: "You beware of pride." Their son texted me today, too.

You know, shortly after that ceremony, I was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by George Hoger. George was the Elders Quorum President. Not knowing what one ought to do to be ordained, and George being the primary guy, I asked him to ordain me. So I have a priesthood line of authority that reckons through George.

George's wife was Judy. Judy was a nun who converted to Mormonism while she was living in a convent. She asked Mother Superior for permission to be baptized. And of course consent was given, but she was told, "You've got to have new premises, because you can't reside here." Judy grew up Catholic, devout, became a nun—she was, for goodness sake, "Christ's bride." And therefore, when George proposed to her, and they were going to actually have marital relations, she tells the most hilarious stories about her pre-marital schooling, when she asked about what was to be expected. I'll leave that aside.

Eighteen days after my baptism—I mentioned it already—I baptized a fellow. Eighteen days from now we will give the second of these talks, commemorating the gratitude that

I hold for the doctrines that I have been taught. You know, no one should be allowed in the Missionary Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who isn't a convert. Better still, an adult convert to the Church. Because no one joins because of some silly program. You join because of doctrine. And when you choke away the doctrine, there's no reason to stay.

And so, in gratitude for the principles which brought me aboard the Restoration, we're going to spend this next year looking at the doctrine that compels belief—that doctrine which doesn't abuse, control, compel; but invites and entices, that is delicious, that makes you hunger for more; the principles of the gospel that not only edify but enlighten and enliven. The kinds of things which, despite everything else that separates you, you find you can come together in love and appreciation. That's the gospel. That's the Restoration.

I know of no more cheerful a being in the universe than Christ. When He says, *Be of good cheer*, we ought to all accept that as the mantra. There is nothing that any of us will ever go through that He hasn't gone through, with a considerable greater degree of difficulty. He lived with a higher 'specific gravity' than any of us had to ever fight against. And He won for each of us a prize that is potentially eternal. It will be eternal, one way or the other. But if you take full measure of what He offers, it will be delightfully eternal.

Cowardice is largely predicated upon fear. Don't be cowardly. Don't be fearful. Fear is the opposite of faith. For goodness sake, you're already in the battle! You're already going to be overtaken. The fact of the matter is that no one gets out of here alive. Live this life nobly, fearlessly. When you take the wounds that come your way, you make sure that they come to your front! Don't let 'em shoot you in the back. Go about your life boldly, nobly, valiantly. Because it is only through valiance in the testimony of Jesus Christ that you can hope to secure anything—not valiance in your fidelity to anything other than Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is that faith must be based in Him, and Him alone. We'll get to that in Idaho Falls.

Tonight I want to introduce some ideas that are essential to salvation, coming through the prophet Joseph Smith, which we really need to become reacquainted with. First, a deviation. And I have to say, I'm deviating because I like the quote. I like the quote because of the substance of what is being said. I don't like the object of the adoration, so I'm not heaping praise on the fellow who is the object of this statement. But it's good wording, and I like it. Andrew of St. Victor made the statement in 1170. He was talking about St. Jerome, who is largely responsible for the compilation of the Latin Vulgate Bible, which the Book of Mormon has absolutely no good thing to say about. It leads you into darkness. It takes away the covenants. It's part of making you blind. It's a big problem. Despite that, let's take this praise, and let's assume this praise is applicable to someone who is worthy of it—in this case, Joseph:

That learned man knew...how obscure truth is, how deep it lies buried, how far from mortal sight it is plunged into the depths, how it will admit only a few, by how

much work it is reached, how practically no one ever succeeds, how it is dug out with difficulty, and then only bit by bit.

Joseph said: "Knowledge saves a man. And in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge." He also said in another talk:

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step-by-step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

Now, if you go back and reread that quote, and you comprehend that it is possible to pass through the veil before you leave here—"it will be a great while after you pass through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world"—you begin to say, Ah, I think I understand why, after 40 years of reflection, Nephi commented about how it was his constant meditation to think upon the things which he had seen and heard. The knowledge obtained from heaven is dynamic.

In another place Joseph said:

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.

We equate, in large measure, repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your genitals. Joseph equates redemption and repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your heart and with your mind. The problem that we have is our profound ignorance. And what the gospel offers defies ignorance, subdues it, challenges it, destroys it, leaves it in the dark. And so let's try and search into and obtain some illumination.

First, I want to read a passage from Job and misapply it, if you will. I want you to imagine that what I am reading is not merely a description of a mortal horse. What I am reading is a description of those horses which pull the chariot upon which Elijah ascended to heaven. This is the horse **you** need to ride in your quest for heaven. This is the way in which **you**, too, are to mount up:

*Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?
Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the
armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back
from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the*

shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. (Job 39:19-25; see also Job 12:14 RE)

As the battle engages, ride the horse, not away, but toward the sound.

1838 was a terrible year. It was one that followed a terrible year. Late 1837, the church in Kirtland was in turmoil. Several hundred saints questioned Joseph Smith's divine calling, withdrew from the church. In July of 1837, the Kirtland Safety Society was forced to close its doors. There were a number of people who tried to take over leadership of the Church, to get Joseph voted out. They wanted to force the First Presidency from office and then oust them from Kirtland entirely. Among the people that had dissented was Warren Parrish, the one-time scribe and secretary to Joseph Smith; three of the apostles—John F. Boynton, Luke and Lyman Johnson; Seventies—Hasten Aldridge, Leonard Ridge, Sylvester Smith, John Gould, John Grayson; even Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

In January 1838, Joseph Smith got a revelation that said (I'm reading from it), "...as soon as practical, and the door is open for them and move on to the west as fast as the way is made plain before their...hearts." They ought to depart. On the night of the day on which that revelation came, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland. Fled at night. They were chased by people for 200 miles trying to kill Joseph. This is in January of 1838; this is in the beginning of this year.

Now, if we back up (you can look it up, it's Doctrine and Covenants 47:1) in Doctrine and Covenants 47:1, we run into something that is of interest to our topic. Verse one:

Behold [and this is a revelation given on March 8, 1831, Behold], it is expedient in me that my servant John [that is, John Whitmer, brother of David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, John] should write and keep a regular history, and assist you, my servant Joseph, in transcribing all things which shall be given you, until he is called to further duties. (See also T&C 33:1)

And so, beginning on March the 8th of 1831 and going on thereafter, the history of the Church was maintained by John Whitmer—John Whitmer, the church historian. The Saints had been expelled from Jackson County in 1833. In 1834, then Zion's camp. In 1837, then the Kirtland Safety Society collapsed, the rebellion, the loss of Kirtland, the night-time flight, and the departure to Missouri.

Beginning early in 1838, there were rumors of immoral conduct that were levied against Joseph Smith. There was a Church court by April the 12th of 1838. The Far West High Council brought nine charges against Oliver Cowdery, the Assistant President to the Church. One of the charges was (and I'm reading a quote), "For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith, Jr., by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery, etc."

The court in that proceeding ultimately excommunicated Oliver Cowdery. David Whitmer left the church—was excommunicated. John Whitmer, the church historian, was excommunicated. Hiram Page, W.W. Phelps. Sidney Rigdon in June of 1838 delivered the "Salt Sermon," where he talked about how dissenters were worthy of being trodden, like salt that was contaminated, under the feet of the Saints. That ignited the anti-Mormons. It caused some of the disaffected people to go over, to encourage the further rebellion.

There were affidavits that year from Thomas Marsh, who was the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, testifying against Joseph and the Church. Orson Hyde also signed an affidavit implicating Joseph Smith. There was a Mormon War in 1838. The battle of Crooked River was fought on October 24th of 1838. The extermination order was issued on October 27th of 1838. Haun's Mill Massacre occurred on October 30th, and Joseph Smith surrendered at Far West while it was under siege. And on November the 1st, he was sentenced to death "at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning in a public square at Far West."

Well, this is the year in which Joseph Smith, because there was no history, set about to compose a replacement history. This is the year and these are the circumstances in which the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price got composed. Joseph Smith—against all of the odds, against all of the opposition, against all of the treachery, against all of the betrayal by his brethren who ought to know better, against all of those who should have known the man's heart instead turned on him—composed what is as an act of faith and kindness, a testimony that seeks to reclaim those who misapprehend the work of God.

Now, you can say that Joseph Smith wrote various versions of the First Vision, and what we have in the 1838 version is an innovation, an invention. The fact of the matter is that Nephi did not compose what he composed until about 40 years after the event—because it was time and distance and reflection that gave him the ability to put into words the truth of what it was he experienced. In the terrible circumstances of 1838, when Joseph Smith set about to compose his testimony of his history, this statement was itself an audacious, faith-filled act of revelation to defend what had gone on and to explain what had gone on.

We don't have Joseph Smith's 1838 history anymore. It's been lost; it's not been recovered. When you look at the history, the *Joseph Smith Papers*, what you find is that there is an 1839 copy that was prepared by Mulholland. And it is the Mulholland version that appears in the Joseph Smith History in the Pearl of Great Price. But we reckon it is a copy of what Joseph wrote in 1838 because of the internal dating of the document. He says that *...being now the eighth year since the organization of the said Church*. That's in verse 2 of the Joseph Smith History (see also JSH 1:1 RE). In brackets they've inserted the year 1838. That was the year in which Joseph wrote, and that's apparently Mulholland copying Joseph's writing the previous year.

So when you start out with the Joseph Smith History and you read the words, *Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints...* (Joseph Smith History 1:1; see also JSH 1:1 RE), recognize that what he's talking about are the statements that are made by people of his own faith about him. This is Joseph Smith describing the problems that are circulating, as a result of members of the Quorum of the Twelve aligned against him, members of the Seventy that are aligned against him. And as prophets often do, they have the way to put it back into context and into clarity with inspired words as we read here.

In this history [he says in verse 2], I shall present the various events in relation to this Church, in truth and righteousness, as they have transpired, or as they at present exist, being now the eighth year since the organization of the said Church.

Therefore, as he begins to defend the Church, he starts with what is essential about the Church: *I was born in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five, on the twenty-third day of December* (Joseph Smith History 1:3; see also JSH 1:2 RE), because if you want to know the truth about the Church, you must know the truth about its founding prophet. To the extent that there is anything desirable that exists within it, it exists within it as a consequence of the ministry of this prophet. Therefore, if you want to find the truth, you have to look at Joseph.

Born on the 23rd day of December—the day after the winter solstice; the day in which the sunlight won its triumph over the darkness; the first day in which the hours of light and the hours of darkness begin to switch, and light begins to prevail; a moment that is reckoned anciently as one of the four corners of the earth. Joseph's coming into the world at that moment was no accident.

Well, in verse 5 he starts talking about how there is *no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying "Lo, here!" and others, "Lo, there!" Some were contending for the Methodist, some for the Presbyterian, some for the Baptists* (see also JSH 1:11 RE). Religion divides in 1838, in 1820, in 2013, and it ought not.

Joseph, in verse 6, commends to us something. One of the litmus tests he's suggesting that ought to be applied—perhaps those who are in the state of rebellion, those who are in a state of rejection, those who are fighting against the Word of the Lord that comes through him, perhaps they will take a step back and look at what Joseph has to say. Because *it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions* (see also JSH 1:11 RE). You know, at the time Joseph inserts the clause, *if they ever had any*, you can't help but think that he was lamenting the potential false feelings that had been demonstrated by those of his own faith who had pretended to have affection for him.

Well, verse 8 once again: *so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong* (see also JSH 2:2 RE). See, that's the way it is.

In verse 10: There's always this war of ~~worlds~~... war of words. ("War of Worlds," that's what your kids play.) War of words and tumult of opinions. And so Joseph is confused. How do you resolve this?

Verse 11: *While I was laboring...* While I was laboring—
Folks, in general, have your skulls so junked up with the crap of the Internet that you don't even have the capacity to labor the way it needs to be labored, to solve the questions that need to be solved. It is labor; it is labor over the scriptures. It is labor. *Under the extreme difficulties caused by... these parties of religionists [he] was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him* (Joseph Smith History 1:11; see also JSH 2:3 RE).

Let him ask of God. God gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. I can ask God. God will give to me. God will give to me liberally. God will not tell me, There are lines here you mustn't cross; there are things about which you must not inquire; there are things your heart is not yet prepared to receive; you don't have standing! He gives liberally. He can let *you* know what you need to know from your study and inquiry into the truth. And no man can stop that! Because this is a matter between you and God. It has always been a matter between you and God. There is no friar with a brown frock that you need to bend the knee to in order to please God. If Joseph had known that (the friar with the frock) he would never have achieved the revolution that he achieved.

Well, when you're laboring, as verse 11 suggests, and when you hit the right verse, as verse 11 recites, then verse 12 confirms how you get answers to these kinds of inquires. *Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force* (see also JSH 2:3 RE).

Turn back to Doctrine and Covenants 76, and look at verse 18. This is the vision of the redemption of the dead that gave us the three degrees of glory. They're reading in John (and he gives you the verse in John that they were reading, in verses 16 and 17), and look at 18: *Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit* (see also T&C 69:4).

The Spirit cannot lean upon you and cannot focus your mind upon the revelation that you are entitled to receive unless you use the scriptures as they were intended to be used—as a Urim and Thummim; as the basis from which you draw out the truths of God. And the best version of that is, of course, the Book of Mormon.

You can look at D&C 138, and you'll find that Joseph F. Smith sat in his room pondering over the scriptures. He's near death—it's about eight weeks before the death of Joseph F. Smith. The Church had a lot of challenges going on at that time. Fortuitously for us, the man who sat at home—infirm and worried about death—happened to happily be the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And so when he got an answer (not to his inquiry about leading the Church), when he got an answer to an inquiry that had nothing to do with his position or budgets or anything else that manages an organization—it had to do with his own concern, about his own deepest apprehensions, his impending death, which would follow about eight weeks after this—the scriptures opened like a Urim and Thummim to his view, and we get a vision of the redemption of the dead, which we've now canonized.

It entered... [this is back—verse 12 of the Joseph Smith History], It entered [into his heart] with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again (JSH 2:3 RE). Now that's an interesting statement, because it doesn't appear that this "labor" was a one-off event, but it occurred over and over as he sought more understanding, searching deeper and deeper into trying to understand what it was he ought to do and how it is he ought to accomplish it.

... again and again knowing... if any person needed wisdom from God, I did (ibid). You should be asking God so that you can understand scripture. You shouldn't be trusting the expositions of anyone, myself included. These scriptures have a message for you. God has a message for you. God would like to talk to **you**, not through me or any other man. God would like to talk with **you**. You'll be saved by knowledge, and the things you need to know are uniquely situated; the things you have the right to get from God are uniquely situated.

I got an answer from God. That's why 40 years ago today, I went in, and I got baptized. Elder Brian Black baptized me. During the baptismal service, because it was approaching twilight, the sun was beginning to set, the moon had emerged, and the first stars began to shine. And Brian Black commented in the talk that was given by him before laying on hands that all the signs of heaven—the sun, the moon and the stars—had been visible during my baptismal ceremony. I have felt the presence of God with me from that moment through today. Just this morning I checked into my office before coming here, and when I arrived at my office, there was a dove on the lawn to meet me, and she stayed there as I went by. Now it's a small thing, but if you're acquainted with the scriptures, you understand what such a symbol can mean, and to me, did mean.

Your lives should be filled with wonder. Be not faithless, but be believing. And be of good cheer. He knows you better than you know yourself. I was belly-aching about an idiot friend, and as I am wont to do, it was prayerful.

The Stake President asked me a few weeks ago about whether I was praying at the time that I had one of the encounters he and I discussed, and I said: "It's not a fair question. I wake up in the morning, and I start to pray. Throughout the day, I will take care of a thousand things. And whenever I am free, my mind will revert back to the

prayer, and we'll continue the dialogue." And it goes on all day. There's not a moment in my life in which I am not being prayerful. And so the answer to the question is, I suppose, Yes, I was praying. Because there's hardly a moment when I'm idle when I am not praying.

Well, God intends to speak to each of us about us and about what matters to us and about what matters to you. He, unlike us, is not bounded by the linear existence that we have. All things past, present, and future are continually before the Lord.

In fact, it's really sort of an interesting study. If you take and you look at what the Lord does in 3 Nephi, He has this agenda that He's been assigned by the Lord (or by the Father), and Christ discharges the agenda. And He goes through, and as you read the chapters in 3 Nephi, it's really structured, and it's really orderly. And then He announces: "Now I have finished what the Father has told me to deliver to you", and He just begins to talk; and as He begins to talk, what unfolds is non-chronological. It's topical, but it's past, present, and future. His thoughts are not like our thoughts. They aren't. They're nonlinear. And sometimes that's not easy.

At length, he says in verse 13: *I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God.* And so it is for all of us. You wanna know the truth of a proposition? You ask God. And don't be fearful! If you ask, He'll answer. But you better be prepared for the answer. Because the battle that is already upon us is going to require valiance. Cowardly, effeminate, hen-like behavior can never, never obtain the promises of God. Christ asked: *What went you [forth] to see? A reed [shaking in] the wind?* (Matthew 11:7; see also Matthew 6:2 RE). That's what you want? I don't think John the Baptist cried on demand. And Zion isn't a bank.

So, [it is] in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally. After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed... finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. (Joseph Smith History 1:14-15; see also JSH 2:3-4 RE)

You know, we have Orson Hyde's account of this thick darkness, and I want to read it to you. This is Orson Hyde writing about the incident we just looked at:

He, therefore, retired to a secret place, in a grove, but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down and began to call upon the Lord. At first, he was

severely tempted by the powers of darkness, which endeavored to overcome him. The adversary benighted his mind with doubts, and brought to his soul all kinds of improper pictures and tried to hinder him in his efforts and the accomplishment of his goal. However, the overflowing mercy of God came to buoy him up.

You know, if salvation consists in obtaining knowledge, you can't afford to clutter your mind with the kinds of things which can readily summon up improper images, improper thoughts, improper ambitions. In fact, it doesn't matter what you **want**. There's only one thing that matters. And that is: What is the Lord's will for you, with you. And that will is always the same—to bring about your happiness; ultimately, to bring about your joy. He tells you that His burden is light, because however it may seem in the direful circumstances of 1838 in the life of Joseph Smith, **this** statement of faith, **this** testimony of truth was worth the price that Joseph was called upon to pay to obtain it.

The things of God are infinitely preferable to anything that can be offered to you here in this world. You may indeed be able to buy anything in this world for money, but don't let that ever be the case with your heart or your soul. Zion will not have an economy, because they have all things in common.

So Joseph, in verse 16, tells you that it is some marvelous power from the unseen world. Let me take you back to that statement: "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power." Well, apply that quote in the context of what Joseph is experiencing there and realize this is not merely something that will happen after you depart this world. It's something that, in fact, does happen here. I mean, being blinded here is part of being captured by the captivity of the adversary of your soul.

Awake and arise! Shake off the scales that blind you (scales which, like contact lenses, on the one hand; but scales like judging wrongly, on the other hand). You have to judge a matter aright. And if the judgment that you judge is not just, then the scales of your eyes are darkness indeed.

And so he called upon God to escape this being from the unseen world, and he saw *a pillar of light exactly over [his] head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages* (vs. 17). We'll get into this more in Idaho Falls. He saw two "Personages." Note the word. Joseph knows what he's talking about. He was in the presence of these Beings. He will later describe them—as a doctrinal exposition which the Church accepted as doctrine, and which was, for a season, in your scriptures. That's why you need to bring your *Articles of Faith* to Idaho Falls.

One of them spake unto me, calling me by name... I've mentioned this on a number of occasions, and I want to mention it again here. When God calls a person by name, it is

not your full legal name. "Joseph Smith, Jr." I mean, that's my Cecil B. DeMille version of *The Ten Commandments* voice of God—"Moses." The casual friendship... I don't know what Joseph was called at this point in his life. I don't know if it was "Joey." I don't know if it was "Junior." I don't know what the name was that he went by. Whoever his most intimate companion was, that was what the Lord called him. If it was "Joey," it was "Joey." God doesn't call you by whatever your Driver's License says. So, He called him by name.

Do you know how comforting it is to have God call you by a familiar name? Instead of recoiling in horror, He is drawing you in. Instead of stiff-arming you like, "I am the Great and Powerful," He wants you comfortable in His presence, so much so that when you enter into His presence, it is a matter of course that God invariably forgives your sins.

Isaiah, in the temple, saw God high and lifted up, and his first reaction is, *Woe is me! ... I am undone! ... I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell [among] a people of unclean lips* (Isaiah 6:5). And a Seraphim, one of the "fiery ones" (we ought to know more about that), improvises an ordinance where they take a coal with tongs off the altar and touch his lips to purify them. And the Lord says: *[Who] shall I send?* And Isaiah says: *Here am I; send me* (ibid, vs. 8; see also Isaiah 2:2 RE). The same man that is cowering, *Woe is me*, is now *Here am I; send me*. And what accounts for the difference? The compassion, the forgiveness, the integrity of the Lord. *I know thou art a God of truth, and [cannot] lie* (Ether 3:12; see also Ether 1:12 RE). When He testifies to you that your sins are forgiven, only a fool will thereafter charge you with sin. The world is stocked with fools, though.

Well, here now we have this peculiar scene, where a young lad—put at ease by the Almighty calling him by an intimate name, putting him in the position where he's been drawn into intimacy with Almighty Himself—is then given a pause. You see, They're not quick to speak. In that respect, They remind me a lot of Enoch: "slow of speech." You see, They'll wait. And They waited.

And so now you have the lad: *My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood before me* (Joseph Smith History 1:18; see also JSH 2:5 RE). We don't know how long this took. We don't know how long it takes a lad to get himself composed. To God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, it didn't matter. God is in no hurry. And He's in no hurry to fix you. He will wait on whatever it is you need to be allowed to dispose of to come along. And He will wait.

And so, when he finally recomposes himself and he poses the question: "Which should I join?"—verse 19, *I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."* This is a mixture of

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul all woven together—the words of scripture into a brief commentary, on the sweep from the Old to the New Testament, in language of prophets we all recognize, condemning the entirety of the Christian world.

Now, Joseph is composing this in 1838. He's putting into words of scripture the concepts that flowed into his mind from the Lord. Sometimes the Lord leaves it to you to put words to it, and sometimes the Lord gives you the words. Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants: the words were given. I don't know which verse 19 is, whether these are the exact words that were given Joseph or if this was, instead, the concept that Joseph was left with the challenge of putting into words. Either way, it is light; it is truth; and it is true because it reflects the intention of God in the communication given to Joseph Smith.

What do you suppose it means: *having a form of godliness... deny[ing] the power?* How do you deny the power of godliness? How do you obtain the power of godliness? What does it mean to have possession of the power of godliness?

Let's go back to that section 76 again; it's got some nice stuff in it. I want to go to the very end because we're going to run into this same notion in the First Vision and in section 76. And 76 is a transcript that is given to Joseph that was dictated, transcribed, read back, approved, then the dictation continued until we reach the end. But look, at beginning at verse 113:

*This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, **while in the flesh**, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (See also T&C 69:28-29, emphasis added)*

Is this related to not denying the power of godliness? I mean, to have the ability to *bear his presence in the world of glory*, as we get farther along in our discussion about the topic of Zion, it becomes critical that you become able to bear His presence. For those who are unable to bear His presence will be destroyed at His coming. Therefore, whatever this power of godliness is, I think we need to get some.

If you turn in Joseph Smith History to the next verse—verse 20—he says: *He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time* (see also JSH 2:5 RE). That is always the case. Those the Lord ministers to invariably know more than they say. There are reasons for that. There are laws that involve that. And section 76 suggested that man is not even capable of making

some things known. It's really hard to convey into this linear world things that don't relate well here.

Turn back to Mormon—in the Book of Mormon—Mormon chapter 9. I wanna begin in verse 2 of chapter 9. And this stuff really sounds ominous, so I'm gonna read it with an ominous voice, because I just want to make you feel. *Behold*. You know, this is Mormon; this is late in the gig. He's lived an NC-17 life. Between the rape, followed by the cannibalism of the women that had been raped, and the murder and the mayhem and the torture, I mean, this is the guy who abridged the Book of Mormon, okay? That's the life that he was subjected to. So look at these words:

Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God? Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your [own] guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and... the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Mormon 9:2-5; see also Mormon 4:6 RE)

Now, I want you to read those verses and ask yourself, "Exactly what is it that God is doing?" The only thing that God is doing is **being**. He simply exists. This is you. God **is**. And He's simply revealing Himself to you. And this is your reaction. And why is this your reaction? Because you don't have the power of godliness. And why don't you have that? Because you need to repent. And what is it that you must repent of? The absence of knowledge about God. You don't know enough yet to be saved.

The plan of salvation is the plan of education—the plan of knowledge about God and the principles of godliness and the basis upon which all of you can live together and be of one heart and one mind. And it doesn't matter that some of you have strange political beliefs. And it doesn't matter that some of you would like to see every gun in the universe recalled and melted down, so we could all, I don't know, attack one another with the remaining butts of the guns that weren't melted down, 'cause they're wood? I don't know; I mean... And others of you would like every child issued their own concealed-carry permit and to be armed in kindergarten. None of that stuff separates you from being able to love one another and be one. Because much of what you think matters, doesn't matter one whit to the Lord. And you know what? When you're anxiously engaged in the right cause, you'll be surprised how much of our deepest concerns are merely trivial. The things of the heart are what matters. The things upon

which we are capable of becoming one, in love toward one another, are infinitely greater.

That's why we really need to keep you distracted in this Telesial kingdom about all the crap that goes on down here. You're worried about the Kardashians—it doesn't matter. (I suppose at a certain level, it's possible that the Red Sox don't even matter. But we're eight and a half games ahead in the A. L. [American League] East right now; and I'm telling you, it's looking good.)

In any event, you mark that page—484 in your Book of Mormon—and you go back and re-read that, and you ask yourself: "What is God doing, other than merely being?" The only thing He does is "be," and then you react. Because you are running around hysterically, doing a "pee-pee dance," because you're all concerned that your presence is unacceptable; you're unclean; you're unworthy—that's what He came to fix. And when He fixes it, part of the fix consists of telling you: "Set it aside. Set it aside; be my child. Accept love." And then, in turn, you love. Because what "fixes" is love.

Joseph Smith said (and this goes hand-in-hand with that Mormon 9:2-5), "A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone." Inflict that upon yourself. The quickest way to achieve that is to act in this life like the coward who is unwilling to be valiant in the testimony of Christ. And to stand up when opposed by those who tell you it ought not to be so. Valiance is the only way by which you secure the blessings of God.

When Uriah was killed, he was killed with a message sent by King David, delivered by the hand of Uriah himself to Joab. In the integrity of his heart, King David knew Uriah could be trusted with the order condemning him to die. And Uriah, faithful to his King, carried the message to Joab. There are accounts—not the one we have in our Old Testament version—but there are accounts that suggest that when Joab opened the message and read it, that he read it to Uriah, and Uriah knew he was sent to his death. And in those accounts, the men who died with Uriah, died with him wittingly. It's one of the few places in scripture where the word "valiant" appears. Those men went where the valiant men were. And the unworthy King forfeited something in his cowardice.

Don't be cowards. Stand and be valiant no matter what it is. In the day of judgment you will find yourself wanting, and in this life you will find you lack the power of godliness, unless you obey the law upon which all blessings are predicated. You make sacrifices. You obey **Him**. And to obey Him is to find yourself oddly incongruent with everything about you. Not about **you**—**about** you, meaning the external world in which you find yourself moving about within.

Well, why are they **all corrupt**? You know there's a line— I happen to like Luke; try and quote him when he fits. I gave a talk one time: *On the Road to Emmaus*. It's drawn out of the book of Luke. I think Luke was the other character that was walking. He names Cleopas; he doesn't name himself. Well, Luke chapter 11, this is verse 52 (oh, I love

this! We ought to carve this on the Utah Bar Office exterior and lobby on the interior, require lawyers to put it on their business cards): *Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering... ye hindered* (see also Luke 8:17 RE). False teachers prevent others from obtaining salvation, period. And happily, they will be accountable for that. You've *taken away the key of knowledge: [you enter] not in yourselves ... them that were entering in ye hindered*.

Well, there is another verse in D&C 121 (this would be one written in the year following the Joseph Smith testimony). This one is written... Joseph was sentenced to die on November 1st of 1838. The general who was supposed to carry out the execution rebelled and wouldn't do that. Joseph ultimately wound up being kept in prison in Liberty Jail. While he was in Liberty Jail he writes a letter. We've taken out three excerpts from the letter, and we've canonized them, and section 121 is one of those three sections. I want you to look at verse 45; ask yourself whether this has something to do also with the *power of godliness*:

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

Oh, that I had the ability to declare it. This is in the middle of one of the three great principles by which God governs and shapes the universe itself—it is not through compulsory means. The only way in which God works is by inviting and enticing. You break yourself against the laws that have been ordained. You condemn yourself by the things that you bring upon yourself. God just **is**. And He **is** to give you opportunity. And He opens opportunity to allow you to enter in **if** you are willing to enter in. But whether you are willing to enter in or not is predicated upon your own conduct, your own desires. And the best way to determine what your desires are are based upon what it is you do.

We are so situated that we have the inability to do two things at once. No matter who you are, you are only doing one thing at a time. Your entire life you are either focusing on one thing or on something else. And whatever it is upon which you dwell, that's what you've chosen. Hence the saying: *Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God* (D&C 121:45). Is the power of godliness related to that? Is the power of godliness related to the presence of God? Well, the Book of Mormon continually declares that to be the case. And anyone that suggests otherwise is flatly contradicting the message of the Book of Mormon. It is all about the ascent back to the presence of God. Testimony after testimony, experience after experience, that's what the Book of Mormon stands for. That is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You encounter it almost immediately in the first chapter when Lehi rises up. And you encounter it in Nephi. And you encounter it in Jacob. And you

encounter it in Enos and in Alma and in Mosiah. You just continually get the same message.

Joseph Smith said: "I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness." Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 8. This is one of those interesting little notes. Oliver wanted to translate... This was in April of 1829; he had arrived to become the scribe to Joseph shortly before this, and he tried to translate. It didn't work out so well. He told him in verse 2: *I will tell you in your mind and your heart by the Holy Ghost* and so on (see also T&C 3:1 RE). He talks about a gift that he has, *the gift of Aaron*—that's the rod; he was able to use a divining rod. (We're kind of embarrassed about that now, and we don't really preserve that much anymore, because we think gifts like that are kind of wacky, and yet, here it is in scripture.)

And some of you probably have gifts that you find a little odd. And yet, you all have gifts. And not everyone has the same gift. And if it gives you access to information from a divine source, you ought to trust it. And it doesn't matter that the way in which you do it and the way in which someone else does it is differently situated. No one had ever thought about a seer stone until Joseph Smith encountered it and then found it ratified in the Book of Mormon in the Book of Mosiah.

Well, in any event, I'm interested in verses 10 and 11 in the revelation given to Joseph in April of 1829 where it says: *Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not* (see also T&C 3:2-3). So okay, you've got to be careful—don't you ask for something that you ought not be asking for! For goodness sake! *Das es prohibido!* Okay?—Followed immediately by this statement: *Ask that you may know the mysteries of God.* That's a commandment. And anyone that tells you, You ought not be searching deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, well, I think we just read about them in Luke, didn't we? "You don't enter in yourself, and you don't suffer those that *are* entering in to be permitted to go," because you do not understand the power of godliness! You deny the power of godliness!

I declare to you in the words of scripture: Ask that **you** may know the mysteries of God! That's a commandment, given to us by revelation, enshrined in the scriptures that you folks claim to believe in. Stop denying the power of godliness. And stop falling for the sophists and lawyers who would deceive you by suggesting that you should not inquire into the mysteries of God. **They** are anti-Christ. **They** are opposed to the doctrine of salvation. **They** deny the power of godliness. And I do not.

Well, we've now gotten 20 verses into the history of Joseph Smith, and we've learned a bunch of stuff. And he's told that there's some things he can't write. I want to know at this point: How do you know if Joseph is telling the truth? How do you know if what you are seeing here is a true testimony or not? How are you to fix that? How are you to know that? Doctrine and Covenants section 63—this is a reminder of the stakes involved in preaching falsely. This is Doctrine and Covenants section 63. Look at verses—beginning at verse 60 and going to verse 62: *Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even*

Jesus Christ. Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority (see also T&C 50:14).

And how do you know if someone speaks with authority? How do you know that Joseph is writing a testimony that is authoritative? How do we know if anyone opens their mouth and they speak, and God has approved the message that they are delivering? How are we to know that?

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 5. This is March of 1829. Oliver Cowdery wouldn't arrive until April 5th, the month following this. Oh, this is interesting; look at verse 3: *And I have caused you [this is a revelation to Joseph] that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you; and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you.* At this moment in 1829, Joseph Smith is perhaps the only man alive who had a covenant with the Lord. "You have entered into a covenant with me." Now, we are all the beneficiaries of covenants that existed from the beginning, but in terms of someone with whom the Lord has struck a bargain and made a covenant, at this moment in 1829... Our Lord is a Man of covenant making. Our Lord enters into covenants on a regular basis. To know Him is to covenant with Him. And Joseph, at this point... at this point has one.

And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this (D&C 5:4; see also JSH 12:2 RE). Okay now, I want you to mark that. I want you to notice that Joseph is being told by God: "Don't pretend to any other gift than this translation." Why?

Go back to that verse 20 of the Joseph Smith History, which happened in 1820, in which Joseph had been tutored, and he had been tutored by the Lord with *many other things did he say unto me at this time which I cannot write.* Joseph already knew—he had already seen, he had already been endowed with—a certain understanding that reckons from the other side of the veil, as a consequence of which, Joseph knew a great deal more than what he was saying. But he had an assignment. And the assignment consisted of the obligation to translate the Book of Mormon. And Joseph was authorized to accomplish that work. Therefore, if Joseph stepped outside of the bounds of the assignment entrusted to him at the moment that he was doing this work, Joseph would be entertaining a pretense, because the errand given to him at the moment was confined to the Book of Mormon. Did he know more? Absolutely. Did he have more at his disposal that he could've entertained people with? Without any question. But he was asked to do a work. And in the fidelity of his heart, he confined himself to that work until it was first accomplished. And to do more than that would've been a pretense.

So, then we get to the answer to the question about how you know whether Joseph is telling us the truth:

Verily I say unto you [verse 5], ...woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words. [This is Christ owning the words. It's not Joseph.] For hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show all these things which I have committed unto you. (D&C 5:5-7; see also JSH 12:3 RE)

God owns the words. You wouldn't believe the rest of it if you won't believe what's authorized to be spoken. Joseph confined himself to delivering what Christ wanted delivered, and it was up to those who heard to choose. And if they recognize the Master's voice, then they've received a message from Him.

Behold, verily I say unto you... Oh, wait—I left out 8:

Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation—mine anger is kindled against them. Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; But this generation shall have my word through you. Well, in another place—

Heck, we may as well get that out. This is also the letter from Liberty Jail, section 122 verse 2: *The pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand (T&C 139:7).* This is the Lord's word to Joseph Smith about those who are wise, those who are noble, those who are virtuous—those are the ones who are going to seek counsel and authority and blessings under the hand of Joseph. And that is as true at this moment as it was then.

How then do we today receive blessings *under the hand of Joseph*? Well, if you look at the use of the word "hand," almost invariably, it is associated with the words we find in scriptures. The Book of Abraham: under the hand of Abraham. The Book of Mormon: under the hand of Mormon. The hand of Joseph is still the hand we ought to be looking at if we want to know what God's word was for our generation. You have no clue. **You have no clue** how thoroughly we have supplanted the words given at the hand of Joseph Smith and what it is you entertain yourselves with each Sabbath day.

Well, verse 14: *And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, ... fair as the sun, ... terrible as an army with banners (D&C 5:14; see also JSH 12:4 RE).* Clear as the moon.

WOMAN: What chapter... I mean, what section are you...?

DENVER: Oh, I'm still in section 5 of the Doctrine and Covenants. I'm now at verse 14. This description will show up another time in the dedicatory prayer to the Kirtland Temple (in section 109). It is a description of the Lord's Church. The Lord's Church is

clear as the moon, fair as the sun. "Clear as the moon" means that those who rise up and attain to the status of being acknowledged by Him as His church, they meet the description that is given in Doctrine and Covenants section 76 describing those who have the glory of the moon as their inheritance. "Fair as the sun" is described in Doctrine and Covenants section 76, describing those who will inherit the celestial glory. That's His Church. And they will be the only ones who are able to stand at his coming.

The minister for those in the terrestrial glory is the Son, meaning the Son of God—who intends to make many sons of God. And in the celestial glory, the fullness of the Father dwells. And so the Church—which He owns, which He calls "mine," that He intends to bring out of the wilderness of darkness and confusion and into the light by which they can understand things of God—is necessarily composed of those who have sufficient knowledge to be *clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners*, because—when we get to Grand Junction and we're talking about the condition of Zion, we're going to be looking at how very, very perilous it is to encounter this kind of glory when you are unprepared to be there.

Well, Luke chapter 9, let's go there. This is my man. Luke 9:25-26: *What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come [to] his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels* (see also Luke 7:4). You see, if Joseph is speaking the words of the Son, and if you are ashamed to own the words that come to us by the hand of Joseph, your shame is not toward Joseph. Your shame is towards Him who taught Joseph the words to speak. *Of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed.*

Well, Joseph's credential was his possession of Christ's words. Did he come with authority? Did he speak Christ's words? Had Christ entrusted him with a ministry and a message? If the answer to that is, Yes, then he came with authority. If the answer to that is, Well, no, but he had some quotable moments, you know? I liked him... a lot. You know? Just kinda "groovin up slowly, got the mojo filter." I mean, it's all vain; it's all vanity; it's all nonsense if he doesn't have a message from God. And if he does, then his credential is that: His message. And how do you know that?

Oh, didn't we stumble across that just a few minutes ago, James 1:5? Everything that is going on in the restoration comes back to James 1:5. Why don't you *ask God who giveth to all men liberally?* (see also Epistle of Jacob 1:2 RE). And he would like you to know a great deal more than you presently do. He doesn't upbraid; He doesn't scold you; He doesn't say the mysteries are off-limits. He says instead come and learn of me. He says, I command you to ask and inquire into the mysteries of God. He says, Salvation itself is dependent upon knowledge. *And this is life eternal that [you may] know...Christ* (John 17:3; see also John 9:19 RE, emphasis added). How can you serve the Master you don't know?

Well, let's skip ahead to verse—this is Joseph Smith History verse 26. Well, I don't know... I gotta look at 25, too.

So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, ...they did in reality speak to me; ...though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, ...speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? (See also JSH 2:9 RE)

That will always be the case if you know Christ. It will always be the case, because those who know him not disbelieve that **you** know Him. There are laws ordained before the foundation of the world; they must serve their father. And you must serve yours. There is no other choice. There are only two teams; there are only two churches; there are only two ways. And it doesn't matter if the particular whore you choose to follow is comely, tidy, well-mannered, and wearing a white wedding dress. There are only two churches. And one is Christ's.

So verse 26: *I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned—that it was not my duty to join with any of them, but to continue as I was until further directed.* Now, isn't that interesting? Here you've got Joseph; he has now been given instruction, and he's simply assuming that he goes his way until he get some further direction. And this will go on for years, mind you—**years**.

In the Joseph Smith translation of Matthew chapter 3 (we won't look at that), he talks about the difference between what happened in the incident at the temple when Christ was 12 years old and then what happens when He begins His ministry. And it talks about *many years* pass while he labored as a carpenter—the *hour of His ministry drew nigh* (Matthew 3:26; see also Matthew 1:14 RE).

Well, so Joseph is waiting until he finds out what else he ought to do. Verse 27—oh, look at that: *twenty-first of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three* (Joseph Smith History 1:27)—this is another one of the corners of the earth. This is the autumnal equinox, when everything is in balance—the light and the dark; the moment that will soon be upon us, this being September 10th.

And he reflects in verse 28. He says (about halfway down, there's this dash about the middle):

I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness[es] of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem

very strange to anyone who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament. (See also JSH 2:10-11 RE)

(As an aside, Christ has a cheery temperament. Joseph has a cheery temperament. Be of good cheer.)

You see, reading this testimony of Joseph Smith given in 1838, following the trial in April of 1838, at which the allegations of adultery were leveled against him by Oliver Cowdery. And the minutes of the High Council talking about—said they dealt with "the girl business" (the allegations about the girl business)—and Joseph was exonerated.

You know, we entertain a lot of false notions about Joseph Smith and the practice of plural marriage. Hales has been doing—and completed and is now out with a three volume set—in there he gathers together every single one of the existing source materials involving Fanny Alger. In the account dealing with Fanny Alger and the incident in the barn (that some people have blown up into Emma Smith catching Joseph Smith in the very act of intercourse in the barn with Fanny Alger), when you track it down and you read the account, what you find out is that Emma Smith witnessed "the transaction." The "transaction" consists of Levi Hancock performing a wedding ceremony in the barn; Joseph Smith telling Levi the words to use; Levi performing the ceremony; Emma at the door listening in—and this is the "transaction" which has become subsequently embellished into all sorts of libido-driven license for those who would like a less virtuous prophet than the one we have.

No one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. It wasn't in Joseph's nature. And those who claim otherwise are looking for a license that Joseph didn't think himself entitled.

Well, so *on the above mentioned night of 21 September* [this is verse 29 on the next page] *I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies.* So he had waited, but he had waited until he got to the point in which he had some apprehension about his standing before God, because it had been a long time. But notice that it's Joseph who is driving the events that will occur now on the autumnal equinox, when he makes an inquiry involving his sins. And he's asking—he's supplicating—for forgiveness of his sins. And he also wants to know of his state and standing before Him, saying at the end of verse 29: *I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one* (see also JSH 3:1 RE).

If Joseph Smith can go get a divine manifestation respecting his standing before God, so can you. If Joseph Smith can go out and inquire to know of God what Church to join, so can you. Moroni 10:4-5, particularly 10:5, tells you that *by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things* (see also Moroni 10:2 RE). The truth of **all** things. There is nothing off limits. There's nothing about which you are going to be upbraided and told: "Don't ask. Don't inquire. I won't tell." Now, you may ask for something that you are unprepared to hear the answer for because there is some

preparation yet left. But if you ask, you set in motion—on the other side—permission to fix what's wrong with you.

Have you read the Tenth Parable? If you've read the Tenth Parable, you know there is a time lag in which a missing virtue gets supplied as a consequence of real world experience. The answer gets set in motion as a consequence of the laws of God, upon which all blessings are predicated—which mandate (as we're seeing here in this verse) that you must **ask!** And by the way, the answer to the question that you ask from God will always be "Yes." However, if you're not ready for the "yes," then you're going to go through a period of renovation and repair. How long you need to be renovated and repaired depends upon just how much of the toxic nonsense you've drunk in and how much of it you continue to drink in that opposes the ability of God to speak to you. So soon as you will lay down that nonsense and in faith be believing, so soon will God be able to plug the leaks, repair the hinge, fix the broken window. He really does have a house of order—or better put, a temple that is holy, which temple ye are. It's not built by human hands. It was built by God in the womb of your mother. And you were endowed with it when you took your first breath. **That**—you're wearing it now—is His temple. The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple. But it must not be defiled. Clean yourselves up. If you want to know what your state and standing is, 'cause you're uncertain...

We're reading in the Joseph Smith Testimony [History], look at the next verse: *While I was thus in the act of calling upon God...* **In the act** of calling upon God! If you are in the right way, with the right faith, looking for the right answers, you don't even get to finish the sentence. God knows what ye have need of even before you ask. It's in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ tells you that. That horrible aching, that longing, that hollowness, that emptiness within you is what Christ was designed to fill. That's His purpose in coming to His temple.

So while he was in the act of calling upon God, [he] discovered a light appearing in [his] room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the [ground] (Joseph Smith History 1:30; see also JSH 3:2 RE). As an interesting aside, I want to ask the question: Why? Why did Moroni stand in the air with his feet not touching the ground? It's an interesting topic we're not going to talk about here. It's off subject; it won't get us Zion anyway, but there's "stuff" here.

Oh, and look at this:

He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, ...his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, it was open, so that I could see into his bosom. (Joseph Smith History 1:31; see also JSH 3:2 RE)

Notice this. This is not ceremonial garb, as a consequence of which I can tell you that it's okay to be buried without temple regalia, because you're not going to be wearing that stuff in the resurrection anyway (if you inherit what the angels of God, including Moroni—who is certainly exalted—wear).

You can read about the description of what Christ wears in the scriptures, as well. Ceremonial garb is just that—it is ceremonial garb. It is designed to teach you about the creation, to endow you with certain knowledge about the process of being exalted. But it is not the attire that you'll see on the streets of heaven. I actually think... I think they look Egyptian. I think their attire looks Egyptian, but that's neither here nor there.

This is a guy who was wearing only a robe. It's not ceremonial. He doesn't have shoes on his feet. He doesn't have a bonnet on. He doesn't have a variety of things that we would associate with ceremonial dress. You can read a description of Christ's attire in 3 Nephi 11:8, and the description there is very much like the description that we have here—Christ and Moroni wearing the same kind of thing. And then, hey, just for the fun of it, let's go back to Exodus 28.

Exodus 28. I want to revert back to my Cecil B. DeMille-esque stuff:

And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen... (Exodus 28:4-5; see also Exodus 15:1 RE)

...and yellow and green and purple and orange and mauve and... I'm sorry. You can read it; it's in here. Ooh, the *ouches of gold* and the *chains of pure gold* (vs. 13-14). I mean, he dresses you in funny attire, okay? God goes through the ceremonial attire, and he dresses you up, and the purpose of the dress is ceremonial to communicate to you, **through symbolism**, knowledge about certain things. But they are not an end; they are a symbol. Six days of creation: six articles of clothing, each one of which can be associated with one of the days of creation. Therefore, as you enter through the veil, it is as if the entirety of all creation is redeemed in your person. You represent salvation for the entirety of creation, because in you, should you be able to be rescued, creation itself continues. These are symbols. They communicate to the mind ideas—ideas that are eternal. They are not ends in themselves.

Well, keep that in mind, because you're here to be trained. You're here to learn something. You're here to learn about the power of godliness. And by "here," I don't mean this room tonight, although I think that is certainly true. I'm talking about this lifetime in which you find yourself—this place, this terrible fallen world, this glorious opportunity in which sacrifice is actually possible. You don't avoid it, and you don't necessarily seek it out. But when it comes upon you, you face it down bravely. And you stand where God places you. And you don't let any **man** move you from where it is that

God would have you be, because therein lies salvation. You're obeying a law ordained before the foundation of the world. You can't lay hold upon such blessings, unless you obey the law upon which it is predicated. There will always be, in absolute numbers, only a few who will find that straight and narrow path. There will be an overflowing abundance of those who will fight against it. Because **they** serve **their** master. You don't have time to worry about them. You serve yours. And that Master needs to be Christ.

Well, we're now just about getting to (oh, shoot) tonight's topic. Once again, Joseph is called by name. This is verse 33. He was afraid. The fear soon left him. The reason he was afraid was because he was seeking forgiveness of his sins. A perfectly white, bright, lit individual appeared, who represents the cleanliness of heaven itself. Joseph, in contrast to that, he's inquiring to know about his sins. Now a visibly cleansed being stands before him; he's afraid. And why is he afraid? Because, once again, you see the remarkable contrast. I know what lies in my heart. I know what failings I have had, and I know this being can see through me. Therefore, I need something that will remove from me my fear. *He called me by name.* It's the same thing. Moroni dispels it by letting him know, We have a brotherhood; we have a relationship. *Fear soon left me* (vs. 32). *He called me by name* (vs. 33).

Well, this is what we want to talk about. He tells him about the stuff, the accoutrements that he's gonna be handed in verse 34 and 35. But then he gets, in verse 36, and this is where— ooh, this is where we've got something now. This is Moroni delivering a message. But his message is not like what we find in the King James version of the Bible. He says:

Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, ...all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they [they] that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (vs. 37)

Root... branch. Genealogical words. *They that come.* Who are they?

Again, he quoted the fifth verse: "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." He quoted the next verse differently, [he said]: "... he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming." (vs. 38-39; see also JSH 3:4 RE)

Oh, we'll probably get this parsed about Spanish Fork in the coming year. Everything about this is telling you something that is remarkably different from where we find ourselves:

- *The day is coming that will burn them.* When?
- *They that come.* Who?
- *Neither root nor branch.* This is genealogical. Elijah and the priesthood—we'll talk about that in another day.

- *Children get planted in their hearts.*
- *Promises made to the fathers.*
- *Children's hearts turned to their fathers.*

There is so much in that that we need to pick apart. We need to understand. And we're going to go there, because understanding this is understanding the foundation of Zion.

The foundation of Zion consists largely in reconnecting the children—as a consequence of the promises that were made to the fathers—back to the fathers, so that there might be a welding link that connects the children who are on the earth with the fathers who are in heaven—not your kindred dead that are in the Spirit world; they are in desperate need of your ministrations to save them. Connecting yourself to them is to connect yourself with the, essentially, the damned, the dead, the disembodied. The fathers who are in heaven are the ones to whom you need to form the link. And I've written that paper on it which I assume some of you have read. And if you haven't, just send a note to the blog, and I'll email it to you. It's *The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered*. But see, the whole purpose behind this is to fix this problem. Because if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted—utterly wasted at His coming.

Then he says:

He quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. (vs. 40)

Okay, let's go back to that 11th chapter of Isaiah, because man, have we made a mess of that. Okay, this is "about to be fulfilled."

There shall come forth... [this is chapter 11 of Isaiah]. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse* (Isaiah 11:1; see also Isaiah 5:4 RE). The Rod is a servant who is a descendent of Jesse—who is a Levite—and Ephraim, unto whom is rightly belonging the priesthood. Keep your finger there on that chapter 11 of Isaiah, and turn back to Doctrine and Covenants section 113, and you'll see where these words are explained.

Who is the Stem...spoken of... Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ... [Verse 3:] What is the rod spoken of in the fifth verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse? Behold...saith the Lord: It is a servant [a servant!] in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power. (D&C 113:1-4; see also T&C 129:2)

Well, look. Until you succeed, you've failed. I don't care who comes along, claiming whatever they want to claim. Until the work is done, you can't take credit for it—period. There's all kinds of nonsense that circulates about who has the keys. "Button, button who's got the button?" Look, someone's going to do a work. When the work is done, you will know. Until the work is done, no one can be identified with the role—period. It is arrogance; it is pretentiousness; it is foolishness for anyone to step forward and say: "I,

I, I am that man!" Do the work. Finish the course. Fulfill the covenant. You do that, you can take the name. Until you do the work, it's just noise.

So there's gonna come forth:

...a rod out of the stem of Jesse...a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ...the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD [Oh, thank God! Someone will finally fear the Lord more than they fear man! I look forward to that moment]; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: ...he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth [in this context it is the word of God], and with the breath of his lips [he shall] slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, ...faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf...shall dwell with the lamb, ...the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [These things are shortly to come to pass.] And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. [You see, it's knowledge, full of knowledge of the Lord. That's what you have to lay hold on.] And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left. (Isaiah 11:1-11; see also Isaiah 5:4-5 RE)

Well, this shall shortly come to pass. Not then, not that day, but by and by.

You know, when a branch is spoken of, if you look at John 15:1-6 (I'm not going to do that because our time is far spent), but Christ gives a sermon about Him being the "true vine," about how you cannot bear fruit unless you are connected to the true vine. Once again, that is a genealogical term. That is a "family of God" term. That is a "son of God" term. And He intends to make many sons of God.

Joseph is receiving, in this first interview with the angel Moroni, an announcement about the first indications of the restoration of God's intent to restore a holy family. God is telling us what **He** wants. He—God—wants to have upon the earth again His family. But we must respond—**we**. This is your dispensation; this is your time. You came down here with the intent of living and finding the things that will bring you back. This is your opportunity. Don't let some other group claim that it doesn't belong to you. These scriptures are only going to be fulfilled when enough people awake and arise to realize that it is devolving upon you the obligation to find, to heed, to seek, to search, to pray, to

obey, and to form what is necessary in order to fulfill the promises and the covenants that were made to the fathers.

Throughout the coming year, we're going to try and lay that out. 2 Nephi chapter 3—Oh, boy—now, we could spend a day talking about this chapter 3. We don't have that time. And tonight's time is far spent. But what I want to do is to just look at some specific words for a moment. Because I'm telling you, the muddle that has been made of the Book of Mormon by the nonsense that we believe about its words is worse than a Gordian knot. And how you sort that out at this point... It's a challenge that you ought to rise to by making it the subject of prayer and getting revelation. Because there's a story being told here; there's a covenant being described here. And there are things in play here that, until you awake and arise and realize what the duties are that are devolving upon you, you don't have any chance of figuring out exactly what a mess we've made of the restoration of the Gospel.

Alright, verse 23. We're just going to do a couple of verses: *Wherefore, because of this covenant...* [the covenant being described here is a covenant that was made by God with Joseph of Egypt. That guy, Joseph of Egypt]. *Because of this covenant thou...* [Joseph, the son of Lehi] *thou art blessed; for thy seed...* [Joseph, Lehi's son] *thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book* [that is, the descendants of Joseph, Lehi's son]. *And there shall rise up one mighty among them* (2 Nephi 3:23-24).

Ask yourself if "among" is genealogical or merely associational. It doesn't say one "from" them, which would be genealogical. It says "among" them. Someone's going to arise who's going to do *much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God, with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass [of] much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren... blessed art thou Joseph* (vs. 24-25; see also 2 Nephi 2:7 RE).

In all that goes on in chapter 3 of 2 Nephi, dealing with the covenant about the Joseph of Egypt individual, the next chapter, which (thanks be to E. B. Grandin and then Orson because of the division of this into chapters—this was all one narrative at one point; don't let the punctuation and chapter divisions fool you)... Continuation of the statement. Verse 2: *For behold, he...* [that is, not just Lehi, but Joseph of Egypt]. *He...prophesied concerning all his* [Joseph of Egypt's] *seed* (2 Nephi 4:2; see also 2 Nephi 3:1 RE), which includes some of you.

Look, our time is spent. Our agenda is not. There was another prophecy that's made by Moroni that's repeated in Acts that has this, just, real complicated structure, because the past, present, future time and how it all fits together. We'll pick it up there in Idaho Falls on the 28th.

About this time 40 years ago today, I was at a post-baptismal party at the Mortenson's house—it would be breaking up probably another 10 minutes from now—in which Jim

asked me to give the opening prayer. Jim, being the man of the house, don't ya know, and Monty being the faithful wife and the descendent of the Bunkers, deferred to her husband in making that call. And I was rather giddy from, you know—I had never been baptized before. My mom wished me to be a Baptist, and she was worried that I was going to hell because I never joined any church. Then I got baptized a Mormon and removed all doubt, for her anyway.

And I was a little too jocular in my native, cheery temperament, being what it is. So Jim asked someone else who is a little more Mormon and reverent to give the damn prayer. And so someone else gave the prayer. And I felt a little chided, and I thought, "Man these Mormons are uptight."

Anyway, as the evening ensued, there was a little more of my jocularly and a little less of the reverent. And some folks took offense. There was some jarring, there was some contention, and literally the Spirit fled from the meeting that we were having. And all these wonderful people, and all the stuff that they had put themselves to because I had been baptized... It was turning out to be a rather tragic evening.

And so I interrupted, and I insisted on the floor, and I made people listen. And I went around, person by person, and I talked to them. And I talked to them by the power of the Spirit, with the gift of prophecy. And I touched the hearts of everyone who was in that room. And I didn't understand it at all that night. But when we get a little farther into the testimony of Joseph Smith, you find that on the occasion when Joseph and Oliver were baptized, they immediately were given the gift of prophecy. I could no more have given you the name for what happened. All that evening I understood was that I, by the influence outside and greater than me, was able to calm the disunity and reunite the hearts of the people that were with me. I can tell you now that I recognize what that was. But I was a few-hours-old-initiate into this restoration process.

It's been 40 years. This is going to be a year in which I put on display my gratitude for the opportunity afforded to me to be baptized for the remission of my sins, and to testify about those things which I know to be true, and about the work remaining undone that is devolving upon *you* to accomplish. This restoration merely got its toe in the door in the day of Joseph Smith—and hardly even that. The prophecies and the promises and the time and the opportunity are upon us. The question is: Is this generation gonna be just as careless, just as indifferent as the one when last a real prophet's voice was heard among us? When Joseph Smith could tell you, "I know He lives, because I've seen Him." When Joseph Smith could say, "God commanded me that I should bear record of Him, because I have seen Him." It has been too long—too long—between that moment and today. And it's time now that we stop running away from the conflict. It's time for us to be valiant once again. Do not be fearful. Cowardice and fear are the opposite of faith.

If Joseph Smith, in the ruins of 1838, can write the testimony that we find in the history of Joseph Smith as an act of audacious courage and faith and confidence in the work of God that he was pursuing, despite the ruin that he saw the church existed in at that moment, if Joseph could do that, why can't you?

I don't care what a tattered ruin is that you see around you today. Zion can come. We're still a few sessions away from encountering parts of that religion Joseph was attempting to restore that are really most interesting. But I'm telling you that if you'll stay with this over the course of the next year, you're going to realize just how much of the restoration is left undone.

There is nothing more delightful, there is nothing more delicious, there is nothing more exciting than the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We deliberately started this without an opening prayer. We're not going to have an opening prayer on any of these talks until Sundays, and there'll be a few of these on Sunday. One of these is going to be on Sunday in Logan. Another one's going to be on Sunday in Centerville. It will be on October 6th. I haven't announced that yet, but on October 6th, we're going to have another one of these. For those that are on Sunday, we will have an opening and a closing prayer. For those that are not on a Sabbath, I'm simply going to talk.

But I'll tell you that I know what I'm talking about. If you will ask of God and listen to the Spirit, you'll be able to determine whether or not I speak His words. I don't think it matters if I could reveal to you all things. If you won't believe the things I *can* tell you, you certainly wouldn't believe things I'm not telling you.

But I wouldn't blame you if you don't believe me. I really wouldn't. It is so hard to be believing. This world is so acidic. This environment is so toxic. It's very hard to believe. I think that's one of the reasons why Christ's account said it is a greater righteousness to believe when you hear than it is to know and to say. But I know what I talk about. And I bear testimony to you that Jesus Christ lives. He matters. I don't. He can save you. I can't. I can report on the glory of this Lord of ours, but only He can dispense it.

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

2013.09.28 Lecture 2: Faith

28 September, 2013

Idaho Falls

It was 40 years ago today, at almost this exact moment, when I went back out into the Atlantic Ocean off the Sea Point Beach in Kittery, Maine, and I baptized a fellow named Ronald Allan Mahle. Ron had taken the missionary discussions at the same time I had, and he was more retiring than I was, and it required my baptism before he considered being baptized himself. And between the time of being baptized (18 days earlier) and this date, the 28th, George Hoger had ordained me to the Aaronic Priesthood. And so, when Ron asked if I could perform the baptism, I was able to do that. And we're here, in part, because this represents the 40th anniversary of my own baptism and conversion to Mormonism, and therefore, I'm going to take note of events along the way each time we get together.

Ron Mahle has since left the church. He's a good friend; he's remained a good friend. In fact, I spoke with him a couple of days ago. He was calling to make sure I was okay with all that's going on. He's involved in some interesting circles, and they know that he's a friend of mine, so they were keeping him up to speed on some things, and he was calling me and expressing.

There is this one thing about the process of converting, and that is that you do, in fact, make lifelong friends in the process. And it doesn't matter what comes and what goes, those friendships are enduring. Ron and I learned together that when the missionaries invite *you* to dinner that you probably ought to turn them down. The missionaries had something that they had called perpetual chili, and they were determined to at last get rid of the dregs of the perpetual chili. I swear there were some waffles in it on the occasion. But we went over, and we ate, and true enough, we all — It was rather like the stories you hear of the missionaries in Mexico when they are getting down there and acclimating to the food.

In that first ward— I was going through my head the members that were in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire ward at the time, and I remembered that there was this couple who had a house they were building. It was constantly under construction, getting adjustments made here and there. And a bank had closed down, and the bank had sold all of the doors. They were going to tear the building, and they went and they bought these enormous, solid wood doors, hardwood doors, to install. This was Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who is a woman now — She was teaching Sunday school classes back when I converted. She is on the faculty at Harvard. She's been down to BYU and presented down there, and she is the author of the book *Well Behaved Women Don't Make History*, which is something that got turned into coffee mugs and t-shirts from an article that she wrote about funerals in the Puritan era and the behavior of women. There were some interesting people in that first ward.

I wanted to talk about the purpose behind all of this material. It's to try and discuss not **what** great things the Lord has done but **how** great things the Lord has done, which is the terminology that you find in the Book of Mormon. Because **what** doesn't matter anything near as much as **how**. **What** is an exercise in voyeurism, essentially. **How** is an exercise in what you need to do and how you come about to linking into, and participating in, what ultimately is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And so we're going to be covering **how** great things are done.

One of the things that I was reminded about this week by a friend (I coined it, but he suggested the idea) is that it's important that you not get the misimpression that before you wind up in the presence of the Lord, **you** have the responsibility of making yourself absolutely spick-and-span. In terms of connecting with the Lord, it is essentially a come-as-you-are party because you are never going to be able to do the heavy lifting required to be clean in His presence. He does that; you don't. He extends the invitation; you accept it. It's a come-as-you-are party.

There are two parables that the Lord told that I want to put together to help illustrate the point. One of them is in Matthew chapter 22. It's a parable about a wedding feast. And the Lord, in that parable, talks about how the folks that were invited wouldn't show up. And because the folks that were invited would not show up, an invitation was extended to, essentially, whoever was out on the streets. And the folks who were out on the streets were brought in. Begin at verse 8 of chapter 22: *Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy* (Matthew 22:8; see also Matthew 10:18 RE).

You know, he's telling a story, largely about a condition that persists whenever you find a religious organization functioning, because institutions have a way of having their own cares. Joseph Smith was a disastrous businessman. He created financial debacle after financial debacle. The most notorious one was the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Group—**Anti**, because they couldn't get the bank charter. But if you file for bankruptcy in the state of Utah, one of the things that they do at the discharge hearing, in order to help people feel better about themselves, is they remind people that at the time of his death, Joseph Smith had a pending petition in bankruptcy. And that is supposed to salve the conscience of those who find themselves in that extremity.

The fact is that Joseph was not a particularly good businessman because he didn't care for business. He wound up giving away his inventory to the needy folks, rather than trying to profit off the needs of the Saints. There was some exasperation about that. Well, we fixed that. We have, managing the church and attending to the financial interests of the kingdom (as we call it now), those that are more than qualified financially. I suspect a profligate like Joseph Smith would be unsuitable for management today. But in any event, the parable starts with the Lord, who's trying to get people to come to the wedding, telling the servants the wedding's ready but those that I've asked are not worthy:

Go...into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid [them] to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways [always the servants, always angels do this work; they do the gathering], and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And...the king came in to see the guests, he saw there [was] a man which had not...a wedding garment...saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou...hither not having a wedding garment?...he was speechless...the king [said], Bind him hand and foot...take him away...cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping [and wailing] and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 22:9-13; see also Matthew 10:18-19 RE)

So, I want to put that on the table, because in this part of this parable you have anyone who will come being invited, because the people that were targeted for attendance simply aren't worthy to come. So anyone gets to come. And now you have among them someone who doesn't have on a wedding garment. And for that I want to refer you to Luke chapter 15, because in Luke chapter 15 we run into the Lord talking about a robe being supplied. This is the son who found himself, having been in a far-off land, filling *his belly with the husks that the swine did eat...no man gave unto him. [He comes] to himself, [says:] How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* So when he goes back to see his father, look at what happens in verse 22 of Luke chapter 15: *But the father said to his servants [again, it's the angels that do this], Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him...put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet (Luke 15:16,17,22; see also Luke 9:13-14 RE).*

You see, this, I think, has to be kept in mind whenever you're looking at someone who has arrived at the feast, bidden from the highway, who arrives and doesn't have on the robe. The Master is the one that wants you to wear it. The Master is the one that will furnish it. Don't think that the purpose of the Lord is to judge. The purpose of the Lord is to redeem, and for that purpose He is infinitely patient and willing, if you will respond, with forgiveness of your sins, as He does consistently throughout the Book of Mormon.

In Boise we had gotten to verse 40 of the Joseph Smith History, and we had gone through the 11th chapter of Isaiah that Moroni referred to. But according to the Joseph Smith History, Moroni *quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that prophet was Christ; but the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people," but soon would come (Joseph Smith History 1:40; see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE).*

If you go back to that provision in Acts chapter 3, what it says there is *For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me*—which I find really interesting, because what Moses is saying in his prophecy is that Christ is going to come, and Christ is going to be like unto Moses. It's an interesting statement for Moses to have made, trying, I suppose, in his day and his context, to make people look forward to the coming of the Lord. In our day, in our context, I would have a very difficult time, no matter what I had been given, with saying

the Lord is going to be like unto me. I would rather say, And I'm hoping to be somewhat akin unto Him.

Nevertheless, Moses said: *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people* (Acts 3:22; see also Act 2:3 RE).

Now, you have Moses talking about the coming of Christ. You have Peter talking about Christ immediately after Him having come. Then you have Moroni talking about what Moses had said, quoting Peter, about something that was involving the Lord. And therefore, a lot of people have concluded from that, that that means the Lord is yet to come. It doesn't mean that at all. Go back and read Moroni. What Moroni says: *But the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people"* (Joseph Smith History 1:40; see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE).

That doesn't mean that Christ is coming again. What it does mean is that Christ's voice will be heard again, and in that final voicing by Christ, those who do not have the ears to hear it, they will be cut off. That cutting off is future. That voice of the Lord, both during the time He spoke in mortality, as well as the time when He spoke through the Prophet Joseph Smith, as well as the time when He speaks again to give a final warning — If His voice is not heard and is not heeded, that cutting off, and only that cutting off, remains yet in the future. And therefore, the comment here by Moroni has reference to the future cutting off by those who would not hear the voice of the Lord, which is in that day soon to come, in our day, almost upon us.

Then in verse 41, Moroni *also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fulness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here* (Joseph Smith History 1:41; see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE).

So let's go back to Joel, in the second chapter, and begin at the 28th verse and look at that. This is what has not yet been fulfilled but is soon to come:

And it shall come to pass afterward [beginning at verse 28 of chapter 2 of Joel], that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit...I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness...the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD...And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:28-32; see also Joel 1:12 RE)

Now one of the things that we perhaps take for granted, but we have to give credit to Joseph Smith for doing, is distinguishing between all of these references to Jerusalem and these references to Zion. Until Joseph spoke, it was assumed that that was the same thing. It's not; and we know that there will be Zion, on the one hand, and we know that there will be Jerusalem, a gathering there, on the other hand. And we know that this prophecy concerning your sons, your daughters, prophecy, dreams, visions, all of this being poured out—this is something that is yet to happen. But it is soon to come to pass. We have a great deal to look forward to that the angel Moroni, instructing Joseph Smith, covered with him on that night when he first appeared to him, promising that these things were going to come to pass. And they still have not yet come in.

Going back to Joseph Smith History 1, verse 41, when he referred to Joel, he says that the *fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in*. The "fullness of the Gentiles" is something different than the "times of the Gentiles." The times of the Gentiles have been with us. The fullness of the Gentiles is when we turn a leaf, and their opportunity comes to an end. Notice that in addition, in verse 41, that there were many other passages of scripture and many other explanations (that he doesn't mention here) that the angel offered. How often, when an angel comes to instruct, does the angel simply open the scriptures? When you look at what happened with the Lord on the day of His resurrection—before He appeared to the twelve—and He walked the afternoon on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and (I believe) Luke, He spent the afternoon opening to them the scriptures.

Angels instruct using the scriptures. The Lord, on the day of His resurrection, spent the afternoon talking about the scriptures. Joseph Smith, when he was trying to figure out which church he should join, labored over the scriptures. And yet, we think we needn't perform that same labor or become familiar with that same canon of scripture. And I'm telling you that the more you have inside you in familiarity with the words of scripture, the more able you are to comprehend the doings of God in your own life, and in the lives of all those around you, and in the time in which you live. So don't let it be lost on you that what the angel Moroni spent the night doing with Joseph was discussing scripture. And don't let it be lost on you that he returned again, to deliver another time, a message involving expounding the scriptures.

Prophecy is essentially focused... All of prophecy is essentially focused on two events. You can always find an exception to this because there are all kinds of intermediate events that get covered, but essentially, the burden of prophecy focuses upon two, and only two, events. The first one is the looking forward to the coming of the Lord in the flesh in His mortal ministry, and the second one is looking forward to the coming of the Lord in glory to judge the world. Those are the two primary events that are the burden of prophecy—the burden of scripture—and you are living on the cusp of the fulfillment of the second of those two events. And therefore, you would be well served to learn as much as you can about those two events.

I want to turn back to Jeremiah chapter 31, because in Jeremiah, he's talking about the second of those events, the one that's about to be upon us. Beginning in Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 31 (should be easy to remember—31-31—it's like a 30-30 for you hunters, except it's got yet another caliber), so:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:31-32; see also Jeremiah 12:9 RE)

As a reminder, you know, He's telling about something that He did, and then how they broke it, and how He was faithful to it as a husband unto them. Just as a reminder, as we get ready to talk about the coming covenant... Because if you break the next one when it's restored, if you break that one, you cannot stand in the day that He comes. Because in the day that He comes to judge the world, there will be a judgment which is either passed or failed. And if failed, then they who come will burn them up by the brightness of their glory. So, He's not giving you just this gratuitous, interlineation thought in the middle of the prophecy by Jeremiah. He's trying to cue you in to the fact that this stuff is taken very seriously by Him, and therefore, ought be taken very seriously by us. So: *But this shall be the covenant [verse 33]—*

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me. (Jeremiah 31:33-34; see also Jeremiah 12:9 RE)

This is not they shall all know *about* Me. This is they shall *know* Me. And it will no longer be necessary for anyone to say know the Lord, because you shall *know* Him. It's not knowledge concerning Him; it's Him. And those that know Him shall be *from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more* (Jeremiah 31:34; see also Jeremiah 12:9 RE). That's who He is. That's what He does. He doesn't want to remember your sin. He would rather prefer it if **you** don't remember your sin. Because if you don't remember your sin and you go on in a positive way, having laid down the burden that He so willingly will accept from you, and remove from you that burden of guilt, then you can go on and become healthy again. You needn't be troubled about all of those things that have bogged you down. He wants to remove that. He wants to carry them.

I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the

seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever. (Jeremiah 31:34-36; see also Jeremiah 12:9-10 RE)

If you look up in the morning sky, right now you can see Orion on the Eastern horizon. And that's been true, twice a year, since the beginning. It's been true that all of the ordinances ordained by God in the heavens above have remained true from the day that He set them there until today. They are so well established, they are so regular, they are so permanent, and they are so far beyond the ability of man to touch, alter, or destroy, that the only way to have an apostasy from those ordinances—from our perspective—is for you to forget what knowledge there is that are written in the heavens. But the Lord wrote it there; it remains there. And it's still yet part of what is to be restored.

Well, the definition of salvation or life eternal, given in John 17, verse 3: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3; see also John 9:19 RE). This is the knowledge of the Lord that he's talking about here. This is the day that Jeremiah prophesies. No one needs to say, *Know the Lord—for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest* (Jeremiah 12:9 RE). This is what the Gospel was intended to restore, offer, promise, suggest to each one of us.

The ordinances that are referred to here in the heavens... If you go to Genesis chapter 1, verse 14 (and for those that aren't familiar with their scriptures, Genesis is like page one): *And God said [this is verse 14]: And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and [for] years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so* (Genesis 1:14-15; see also Genesis 2:6 RE). And so, He sets this up, and He sets this up in order to communicate things.

If you go back to the book of Abraham chapter 4 (and this is the other end of the four standard works), go to Abraham chapter 4, beginning at verse 14:

And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years; And organized them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day...the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also; And the Gods set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth...to rule over the day and over the night...to cause to divide the light from the darkness. And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning [and] it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening [and] it was day; and it was the fourth time. (Abraham 4:19; see also Abraham 7:5 RE)

This is not a bunch of gratuitous language. This is describing something that took place with absolutely deliberate intent. Everything that is written in scripture and all of the ordinances that were ordained upon the earth—in the heavens—were reckoned from the position of the earth. It's not that the ancients were ignorant of what's going on in the heavens. It's that they viewed the heavens as being a testimony given to us on the earth. It is a geocentric; that it is from the surface of the earth that that testimony is written. From the surface of the earth, the sun occupies a space... Even though the sun is over 100 times larger than the earth, the space that the sun occupies in the firmament of the earth is exactly the same as the space in the firmament that is occupied by the moon—although the moon is 1/6 the size of the earth. From the surface of the earth they are identical in size. So much so, that when you put them on the ecliptic, as they are located, one can block out the other entirely in an eclipse. Because all of these things were ordained by God to testify in the heavens about Him and about His work. And those things **are** bearing testimony, and they are telling you something. And who knows if we will ever get to that. But they are designed to be.

Well, I'm going to go ahead. We won't get to this for weeks. Well—weeks—we won't get to this for some time. Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121. Beginning at verse 26 (these are the neglected verses because we don't pay attention to this stuff anymore):

God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy [Spirit], that has not been revealed since the world was until now [not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has been revealed. It's the knowledge that is coming that has not yet been revealed]. Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing [should] be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they [should] be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, [should] be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. [As] also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, [should] be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before [the] world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest. (D&C 121:26-32; see also T&C 138:21)

There is an agenda. That agenda is to be completed. It's to be completed before the coming of the Lord. And it includes a restoration of things that we have hardly yet thought about.

Well, Jeremiah knew what he was talking about when he referred to the ordinances. We've long since forgotten the only way you apostatize from that stuff is through forgetfulness, because the testimony remains. And it's in front of your eyes nightly and

daily. Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith, and you progress. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348 says, "When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel."

The principles of the gospel are not supposed to be comprehended in one bite. You progress. And the ladder that he's talking about climbing is, in fact, the ladder that is ordered and that Jacob referred to. Jacob's ladder is something that we refer to, and it's an ordered process. But whenever you begin that climb, you begin it at the bottom. And so, you find yourselves here. Notwithstanding finding yourselves here, there are absolutely, invariably (and we'll get to this eventually) seven rungs on Jacob's ladder. And we find ourselves, at present, at the bottom of it.

Belief leads to faith. Faith has to surrender, ultimately, to knowledge. And it was the purpose of the Prophet Joseph Smith to try and expound upon the principle of faith in a set of scriptures that he put forth. **That** got canonized. **That** we're going to spend our time on this evening. I was reading the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. You can find that in the *Joseph Smith Papers*. They have a photostatic copy of the actual 1835 edition, and you can read it in the type. And, I mean, it's an exact reproduction. It's a photograph of that edition.

I loathe to waste time. And I'm captured each Sunday for a three-hour block, and so I spent a lot of time reading scriptures during church each Sunday. And I made sacrament meetings with the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants for a period of weeks in order to get through that. I was absolutely thunderstruck. Because if you've never read the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, it is as audacious a scriptural document as anyone has ever seen. It is like a thunderbolt out of the blue. It is an amazing text. And it begins... The first 70 some pages are the Lectures on Faith. Then the revelations are organized, not in the way in which they're presently organized in our Doctrine and Covenants; they are organized topically and thematically.

And when you pick up the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and you look at that document, to me it was abundantly clear that there is something new taking place on the earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith was what he said he was. In fact, if anything, he understated who and what he was. The Prophet Joseph Smith was an agent, sent by God, to restore lost knowledge for whoever is willing to receive it. And the form that it takes in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants is a religious classic. It is a greater document than the New Testament. It is an amazing piece of work.

Before its publication, Joseph Smith; Assistant President of the Church, Oliver Cowdery; First Counselor in the First Presidency, Sidney Rigdon; and Second Counselor in the First Presidency, Frederick G. Williams jointly signed a preface written by Joseph Smith. In his journals, leading up to the publication of the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith recorded that he spent **days** editing the Lectures that had been given before their publication as scripture.

There's a debate: since they've been removed from the scriptures, there are a lot of people who are trying to vindicate the decision that was made to remove them from scripture. And one of the arguments that's made in furtherance of removing them from the scripture was that it was primarily a product of Sidney Rigdon's pen. And it was primarily a product of Sidney Rigdon's pen because they've done word typing and computer analysis, and they've come up with probability of authorship. It doesn't matter if Sidney Rigdon had a hand in the document, because Joseph Smith edited it. And Joseph Smith corrected it. And Joseph Smith vouched for it. And in the preface to the Lectures on Faith in the 1835 edition—which you can read in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, Volume 2 of the "Revelations and Translations"— Volume 2, and it's, I don't know, some 400-500 pages into that document, you can read the preface. And I'm reading you this over Joseph Smith's name:

We deem it to be unnecessary to entertain you with a lengthy preface to the following volume, but merely to say that it contains, in short, the leading items of the religion which we have professed to believe. The first part of the book will be found to contain a series of lectures as delivered before a theological class in this place, and in consequence of their embracing the important doctrines of salvation, we have arranged them into the following work. We do not present this little volume with any other expectation than that we are to be called to answer to every principle advanced. (see also T&C 110)

Joseph Smith's saying, This is a document that I intend to vouch for. His official history, January of 1835, he says: "During the month of January," in his records, "I was engaged in the school of the elders and in preparing the Lectures on Theology for publication in the book of Doctrine and Covenants." You find that in the *History of the Church* Volume 2, beginning at page 180.

He defended every principle that was advanced. It was brought before a Council of the Church. And I'm reading from the *Joseph Smith Papers*. This is on page 307 of Volume 2 of the "Revelations and Translations": "[On 17 August 1835, a general assembly of the] Church...[met] for the purpose of Examining a book of commandments and covenants...[that had] been compiled and written by the...[publications] committee." Joseph Smith headed the publications committee. "This Committee having finished said Book according to the instructions given them"—the minutes read—"it was deemed necessary to call the general assembly of the Church to see whether the book be approved or not by the Authoroties [sic] of the Church, that it may, if approved, become a law. unto the church, and a rule of faith and practice [of] the same."

Though the assembly was convened by the Presidency of the Church, several of them were absent at the time that the vote took. The responsibility of presenting the book to the conference fell to Oliver Cowdery, a member of both the Presidency and the four man Publication Committee; and Assistant President of the Church at the moment that this took place. Sidney Rigdon, the other Presidency member and Committee member present, stood and explained the matter by which they intended to obtain the voice of the assembly, for or against said book. Voting on the book proceeded by quorums and

groups, with the leader of each group bearing witness of the truth of the volume before his group voted to accept the book of Doctrine and Covenants for their faith. And then they proceeded to vote. And they voted by quorum. And they voted by quorum from the least to the greatest. And then after all the quorums of the church had accepted the Doctrine and Covenants—the first 70-some pages of which were the Lectures on Faith—then the General Assembly voted, including everyone who was present. Children, women, everyone voted. And they all sustained *this* as the Doctrine of the Church.

In 1921, the Lectures on Faith were dropped from the scriptures by a committee that was comprised of George F. Richards, Anthony W. Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, and Joseph Fielding Smith. That committee dropped the Lectures on Faith from the scriptures because, they said: "Certain lessons, entitled Lectures on Faith, which [was] bound with Doctrine and Covenants in some of its former issues, are not included in this edition. Those lessons were prepared for use in the School of Elders...but they were never presented nor accepted by the Church as other than theological lessons or lectures" (D&C, Introductory Explanation, 1921 Edition).

That's a lie. And the *Joseph Smith Papers*, if you will read them today, tell you that that's not at all the truth. And part of what I hope to get to tonight, and if not tonight then in Logan, is the reasons why it is. Joseph Smith called this "doctrine—important doctrine." "Leading items of the religion." And that "he would answer to every principle that's advanced in the document." Now to his credit, Joseph Fielding Smith, who was on that, said (this was in 1966)—He said, "I suppose that the rising generation knows little about the Lectures... In my own judgment these Lectures are of great value and should be studied... I consider them to be of extreme value in the study of the gospel of Jesus Christ" ("The School of the Prophets," BYU Leadership Week, June 18, 1956).

And in a talk given by Elder Bruce R. McConkie at Brigham Young University (the son-in-law to the one of the committee members, whose words I just read), in January the 4th of 1972 (that would have been before I was there), Elder McConkie said—

Every time I read Bruce R. McConkie [impersonating Bruce R. McConkie's voice] 'I am tempted to read it in the voice of Elder McConkie, which echoes still in my skull.' I won't do that. And I'm reading him now:

In my judgment, it is the most comprehensive, intelligent, inspired utterance that now exists in the English language—that exists in one place defining, interpreting, expounding, announcing, and testifying what kind of being God is. It was written by the power of the Holy Ghost, by the Spirit of inspiration...it is, in effect, eternal scripture, [it is] true. (BYU Speeches, 4 January 1972)

And yet... And yet, it's not in our scriptures. The School of the Prophets was organized based upon a commandment. Doctrine and Covenants section 88— verse 127 of section 88: *And again, the order of the house prepared for the presidency of the school of the prophets, established for their instruction in all things that are expedient for them, even for all the officers of the church, or in other words, those who are called to the*

ministry in the church, beginning at the high priests, even down to the deacons (D&C 88:127; see also T&C 87:1).

This is referring to the School of the Prophets. This was the forum established by revelation, in which the Lectures on Faith were developed. Then after having been delivered there, edited by Joseph, prepared for publication... And it became scripture. It was approved in a subsequent revelation. If you turn a few pages to D&C 97, in verse 3 to 6:

Behold, I say unto you, concerning the school in Zion, I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion, and also with my servant Parley P. Pratt, for he abideth in me. And inasmuch as he continueth to abide in me he shall continue to preside over the school in the land of Zion until I shall give unto him other commandments...I will bless him with a multiplicity of blessings, in expounding all scriptures and mysteries to the edification of the school, and of the church in Zion. (D&C 97:3-6; see also T&C 96:2)

The school, the school, the school! They wanted one established then. The purpose of that was to bring the Lectures in. The purpose of the Lectures was to teach people so that you would understand what the doctrines are, because the doctrine was the Lectures on Faith. The covenants were the balance of the book. And by the way, if you get out the 1835 edition, you will find that the typeface for the Lectures on Faith are actually larger type than the subsequent commandments which are in the revelations that we have left over in the Doctrine and Covenants. They came in first. They were vouched for by Joseph. They were the "leading items." He considered them so important that they came first in the doctrine, the first 74 pages of the 1835 edition.

So having now explained why, I want to turn attention to them. And hoping that you brought your own copy of the Lectures on Faith, I want to turn to the Lectures on Faith. The edition that you will find in the *Joseph Smith Papers* is not plagued with a bunch of footnotes, interlineating. If you buy a copy today from Deseret Book, you're going to find footnotes that explain a bunch of stuff—and in essence contradict the content of the Lectures on Faith—and then explain why they know more than Joseph did, and they're fixing his doctrinal errors.

The First Lecture on Faith is essentially asserting the primacy of faith as an operative principle of power, that exists with God and with all of us. Okay, you've left home, and you've come here. While you're here, your home exists only as a matter of faith to you. You believe it exists. You intend to drive back there; and your family that's there, and your dog that's there, and that infernal parrot that now can mimic the low battery signal on the fire alarm—she's there too. And so, it's a matter of faith, that despite the fact that I am here and out of her presence, my bird is waiting for me when I get home. You act as if these things that you no longer see... See, in the development of a child, what you find in really young children is that they don't have the capacity to entertain the fact that it still exists. When it's gone, it's gone forever. And the child... It takes a while before the child has confidence that what gets removed from their sight continues to exist outside

of the presence of their actual observation. It's one of those childhood development things.

Well, God's beyond that. Everything that exists—*faith, and faith only*— And I'm using a compilation that was published—I don't know, it's from the Brigham Young University archive. I just printed it out. In mine it's verse 11, excuse me, it's verse 10 of Lecture 1:

It is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them [that is in all men, but is also the principle by which everything is moved into action. Verse 12:] Faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Saviour has said, that truly, that He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Through faith— [In Verse 14:] Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. ...all things in heaven [in Verse 15:] [or] earth, or under...earth, exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him [Him being God. 17:] Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers and the lesson which they have been endeavouring to teach to man.

You are acting... Everything that you are doing—the education that you got, the employment that you have, the plans that you undertake, the things that you design to do—are all a product of your faith. You are a being filled with, animated by, and continually upholding everything in your life by your faith! And yet you don't have the faith to see it. You are a creature of faith. All of you are. And you always have been, and you always will be. Do not be doubtful, but be believing. You are here by reason of God's faith. And you have faith to do the things that you do, continually. Every movement you undertake, every plan you make, is based upon the faith that you have.

Well, we don't have time to pause on the first one because I'm hoping to get far enough along in this process. But I'd like you to value the Lectures on Faith. I'd like you to study the Lectures on Faith. I'd like you to take a lot more time with them than we're going to have the time to take tonight. Let's skip to the Second Lecture. This is the second verse:

We here observe that God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent,...omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell;...that he is the Father of lights; in him the principle of faith dwells independently,...he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation.

Did you get that?! It's not me; it's not your bishop; it's not Hugh Nibley; it's not your stake president; it's not the Catholic priest down the street, the Pope in Rome, or the President of the Church in Salt Lake. It's no man! The principle of faith must be grounded **in God**, the Supreme Governor. Because if your faith is grounded in anyone

or anything else, you cannot have the faith necessary to attain to salvation. All of these Lectures are concerned with your salvation.

Look at verse 12. And it's been a discussion of what went on at the beginning: man in the Garden of Eden, God talking to him. Verse 12:

From the foregoing we learn man's situation at his first creation, the knowledge [of] which he was endowed, and the high and exalted station in which he was placed—lord or governor of all things on [the] earth, and at the same time enjoying communion and intercourse with his Maker, without a veil to separate between.

That's where man began. And that's why knowledge of God existed in the first place. Because in the beginning, God talked to man. And if you think, Well, yeah that was then, what about now? We will get to now. Verse 18, about halfway down:

God conversed with him face to face. In his presence he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his voice, walked before him...gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding, and enabled him to give names to the vast assemblage of his Maker's works.

This was man's original condition—a condition, to which, the gospel is designed to return man. And in fact, at the Second Coming, all who remain will be in that condition once again. The earth is going to be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory, and it's going to do so because God will come and dwell here again. And man will be able to converse Him. Look at verse 19: *Though man did transgress, his transgression did not deprive him of the previous knowledge with which he was endowed.* This is really interesting, because in verse 21 Joseph Smith says: *We next proceed to present the account of the direct revelation which man received after he was cast out of Eden, and further copy from the new translation:...*

The Lectures on Faith, throughout, use only what we call the Inspired Version of Scriptures. The only Bible references that they permit into the Lectures on Faith: the Inspired Version of the Bible. Even though the Inspired Version of the Bible was never made public during Joseph Smith's lifetime, he still uses it in order to get the Lectures on Faith right. Which tells you something about the priority. He did not give that for general release, general consumption, but it was so important that the Lectures on Faith be done correctly that they are what get quoted in here. In fact, in the Second Lecture, this verse, verse 23, is so important that it's been incorporated into the temple endowment itself:

And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?...Adam said...I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And..the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth...thou

shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son...thou shalt repent...call upon God, in the name of the Son for evermore.

So important that it appears in the temple. So important it appears in the Lectures on Faith. So important that it was put into the Lectures on Faith even though the Inspired Version was not made generally available. **And**—the Lectures on Faith are so important that they have been deleted from your scriptures, because in 1921 a committee said, Nah, don't worry about that. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

Verse 25: Though our first parents were driven out of the garden of Eden, and were even separated from the presence of God by a veil, they still retained a knowledge of his existence. And then it goes through what happened with Cain, and Cain's gross transgression. But look at verse 30: God continued, after man's transgression, to manifest himself to him and to his posterity; and, notwithstanding they were separated from his immediate presence that they could not see his face, they continued to hear his voice. And look at verse 32: God condescended to talk with Cain after his great transgression in slaying his brother.

And you don't think God will talk to **you**?! And you think God is so quiet that He's not speaking to you?! At one point God says, My works never cease and my words never cease (see Moses 1:4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE). The silence that is caused to reign in the heavens are the angels—but not God. The angels withdraw; God does not. And if God would talk to Cain after his transgression in slaying his brother, He'll talk with you.

You ought to ask yourself why the chronology in the Second Lecture is given, because the chronology that's given there, and we don't have time to go through it, but the chronology matters, and the life spans matter. And maybe by the time we get to Provo—I guess the Spanish Fork area—we'll revisit that.

Okay, verse 55 of Second Lecture: *The extent of their knowledge respecting his character and glory will depend upon their diligence and faithfulness in seeking after him.*

Every person's knowledge is dependent upon the diligence and the faithfulness of the individual, and if your diligence and faithfulness in seeking after Him... And by the way, we have one brave soul who's just tired. I hate these chairs. You know, they designed these chairs to stack, and the human being has to simply conform to the stackability. I mean, it's like the engineer that says, What's your list of priorities? Well, it's not humanity. I mean we want these damn things to be **stackable**. Okay, what if it's rather like sitting on a jackhammer, and having your ass "slain" after the first 45 minutes? And the engineer responds, You don't get it; **they stack. They will stack.** I can take a whole room and I can put them in a corner, and it's like—Chairs? Seating. Seating? Chairs. And it's a wonder of engineering. Therefore, since this brave soul got up and cushioned his tush with a coat, I would commend anyone anytime to stand up, to stretch your legs, and give everyone behind you a good look at your backside.

And so, the extent of any man's knowledge concerning the character and glory of God depends upon the diligence and the faithfulness of the individual:

Until, like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God, and power with him to behold him face to face. We have now clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings; and also, upon what foundation the testimony was based which excited the inquiry and diligent search of the ancient saints to seek after and obtain a knowledge of the glory of God; and we have seen that it was human testimony, and human testimony only, that excited this inquiry, in the first instance, in their minds. It was the credence they gave to the testimony of their fathers, this testimony having aroused their minds to inquire after the knowledge of God; the inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty. (Lectures on Faith 2:55-56)

And what is "the most glorious discovery?" It is the person of God. And what is the "eternal certainty" that you want? It is your own salvation. Because no man can give that to you, but God can. But it is testimony, and it is testimony alone, upon which that faith can be grounded. Therefore, let me testify to you that when I became a Mormon, I assumed you people were like Joseph Smith. I assumed that you people went out and prayed in groves and God visited with you. I assumed you were awakened during the course of the night and that Moroni, or Peter, or James, or whomever—whoever was vagrant in the halls of heaven would be sent down to occupy the night in teaching you Mormons, because this was a regular event.

And so it was my expectation that that was possible. And I thought it possible because Joseph did it, and because there were missionaries saying, "I know" this stuff is true. I didn't have a lexicon of Mormonese before me that allowed me to say, "I know" equals "I really, really, really, believe this stuff." In fact, it was confusing to me when I got a testimony, and I said, Yeah, God actually answered my prayer, and damn it, I'm going to get baptized. Because I did not think I'd be a particularly **good** Mormon. And maybe I ought to explain why I wouldn't be a very good Mormon.

Ron Mahle and I were on one of our regular... (I've elicited a groan from my wife.) We were on one of our regular enlisted-in-the-Air-Force weekend events when he, in his Ford Gran Torino, was caught on the radar gun doing 120 miles an hour in Portsmouth city limits, and we were pulled over. And back in those days, DUI did not mean that you were immediately ushered off to jail, but it meant you had the potential for that someday. So Ron, who had blown the breathalyzer problem, was removed from the driver's seat, and I was put into it. He didn't ask me for my breathing test, and so I drove him back to the base. And with time the day of reckoning came, and the arrest warrant was issued, and Ron was carted off to jail. And on the day that I got the call that I needed to go down to jail and bail him out, we had new Elders transferred into the area, and they needed a ride. And Ron being locked up and me having access to his Torino, I went and I picked up the Elders. And, you know, they were going to ultimately missionary me into

the baptismal font, but I had another golden contact I wanted them to meet. And so they went with me to where Ron was locked up, and they met at the release at the jail.

In any event, back in those days I thought all you people had these things. And then there was the patriarchal blessing that I got which said (and this is a quote) that, "you will again be in the presence of your Father in Heaven while in the Second Estate." That's in my patriarchal blessing. And I thought, well, of course; it belongs there. That's what we do, isn't it? We're Mormons. I mean, we're on God's team; God likes us. He's paying really close attention to us. And when we do stuff wrong, we can look up and feel guilty. Actually, we can look... I'm disoriented here. I could point you to the spot if I were back home, but I'm not sure where those coordinates are at this spot.

In any event, I thought we were related to God in an intimate way because, well, the heavens were open. And therefore, it was not to me **shocking** when I encountered an angel. And I have encountered many of them, and all of them leave a vivid and permanent impression. I can tell you that it's been nearly 40 years since the first time I met with an angel, and I can still close my eyes and see the scene this minute. **This stuff happens.** My experiences matter **only** because I can testify that it happens. The content is nothing but voyeurism for you. **You** need to have a connection with heaven. The scriptures are the authorized accounts given to us that testify to these things. The Lectures on Faith are trying to set it forth in a comprehensive way, so that we can all get it. But the Gospel is supposed to be a living, breathing, miraculous thing in **your** life. Whether I'm saved or not doesn't matter. What matters is whether **you** are saved or not. And the way in which you become saved is by coming to know "eternal certainty," the last words in verse 56. And eternal certainty is about your salvation, so that you're not dependent upon someone else for your knowledge of God, but so that you can say in your own right, "I know."

Well, which brings us then to the Third Lecture on Faith. Now we're starting really to get into some important stuff. So I hope your chair is painful enough to keep you awake. Personally, I'd rather stand up here than sit in one of those things. That's it, you could get this over with a lot quicker if you put me in one of those chairs and said, Talk until you're sick of that.

Verse 2 of Lecture 3: *Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God— [Faith in God] unto life and salvation (Lectures on Faith 3:2). Faith in **God**, not in man, not in men, not in an institution, not in some magic talisman—faith in God. To the extent that anyone is trying to displace your faith in God and attract attention to themselves, **myself included**, that is a perversion. It will not save you. It is a distraction. It is evil. It is wrong. It is damnable. Anyone that tries to attract your worship, myself included, ought to be sent to hell. It's why I continually remind you, talking about me is a waste of time. Talking about the things that I'm saying, talking about the content of these scriptures, talking about the doctrines that will save you, that's very important. But you can leave me out of that. You don't ever need to mention my name again in your life. But pay attention to the **doctrine** that we're talking about. Pay attention to the message that comes to us through*

scripture. You will never be saved because you relied upon some guy to elevate you. The only way in which that will happen is when you connect with God. You have to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

There are three things:

- *First, the idea that he actually exists.* You can get that from someone else.
- *Secondly, a **correct** idea of His character, perfections and attributes.* Any error in that prevents you from having faith. Therefore, in order to get that right, it's going to require something of you in the way of study and effort. Because if you're making —look at the word, they italicized it—a *correct* idea of His character, perfections, and attributes, that's what you need to study to show what it is you're going to have faith in.
- *Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will* (Lectures on Faith 3:3-5).

You must know this. And you cannot cover the gap by lying to yourself. You can't lie to yourself, pretending that you are on God's course, and then have **actual** knowledge that the course of life you're pursuing is according to His will. Nor can you depend entirely upon what other people are telling you. You're supposed to be asking and getting answers from God. And the answers from God are going to tell you what you need to do. And the sacrifices that He will require of you are unique to you, because the contribution that you can make for the salvation of yourself and others is unique to you. There are things that you and only you can do. And if you will sign up with God, He will have you do them. You may find yourself doing things you would rather prefer not doing. It doesn't matter. If you have faith in Him and you do what He asks, you'll **know** that the course you are pursuing is according to His will. And doing things He asks of you, according to **His** will, invariably produce faith. And they produce faith unto salvation. Because it always grows. Light grows or dims; it never stays static. Therefore, when you set on this course, you never turn back. If you turn back, you lose everything that you've gained up to that point. Look at verse 5 (this is third):

*An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but **with** this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Lectures on Faith 3:5, emphasis added)

Therefore, these three things you need to know. God exists. You need to study until you have a correct understanding of His character, perfections, and attributes. And then you have to live your life so that you actually know that the course you're leading in your life conforms to what He would have. Turn to verse 23:

But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respecter of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him; because if he were a respecter

of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all, but all must be confusion; but no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point, that he is no respecter of persons, than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respecter of persons, and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege. (Lectures on Faith 3:23)

That's you, **that's you**. God has done nothing for Joseph Smith He will not do for you. I understand all of the doctrinal arguments. I can make them all. I **have** made them all. And I've made them to the Lord. I've argued with Him on every point of doctrine that any of you... I've quoted to Him every scripture that any of you have advanced, and many more besides. And the Lord has always borne testimony back, consistently. This stuff is true. You're hedging up the way of your own salvation and of the salvation of others when you say, No one has the privilege in our day, yet, to lay hold on salvation. You're hedging up the way, you are damning yourself, and you are damning those who will listen to you when you say people in our time are not yet authorized to exercise faith in God unto salvation, because you **are** authorized.

I have done so. I have spoken with Him as a man speaks to another. He speaks in plain humility, reasoning as one man does with another. He will reason with you. The first night I got a testimony, I was in the middle of an argument with God—I thought with myself—until when I got down to the final question in my mind, which was, "How do I even know there is a God?" To which the response came, "Who do you think you've been talking to the last two hours?" I didn't realize that that still small voice, which will talk with any and all of you, was God. When you exercise the required faith to permit Him to step out from behind the veil, like the brother of Jared, He'll do that, too. He's no respecter of persons. You should not question what your privileges are, nor how far you are authorized to exercise faith in Him, or whether you're authorized to do it at all. Don't have doubts about your privileges.

And then verse 24, twice: *He is love...he is love*. He *is* love. Now in my copy, beginning on page 40, "The following excerpt is not part of the Lectures on Faith." Therefore, we pass over that without comment. And I'll try and not have a sneer.

Now we get to the Fifth Lecture, which is what I was hoping to get to. Yes, we have time. This is where we run into some problems. This is when, by 1921... You see, we have a problem with the nature of God advanced by the Christian world. At one time in the temple endowment, there was a player whose role was to be the Christian minister who would, in his effort to convert Adam and Eve, say, "Do you believe in a God who sits on the top of a topless throne? Whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere? Do you believe in this great being, who is surrounded by a myriad of beings who have been saved, not for any act of theirs, but by his good pleasure?" And Adam responds, "I do not. I cannot comprehend such a being." And the minister says, "Oh, that is the beauty of it!" And then he goes on to describe the devil. But I attended the temple so often before they made the changes in 1990 that I have the

temple ceremony memorized, and I still recite all the missing parts. Actually, I guess in my condition, they're all missing at this point. Well, you can take away everything, except what's inside.

In any event, the Christian naysayers point at Mormons and say, Ahh, you believe in an anthropomorphic God. We have anthropomorphized God. Instead of deipomorphizing man—which is, We are made in His image—they're trying to say that we've turned God into our image. It's one of those doctrinal points. Well, not content merely with the Personages given to us by Joseph Smith in the First Vision and elaborated upon in the Fifth Lecture, our enthusiasm has anthropomorphized—has created a being out of—the Holy Spirit. And we're going to deconstruct that. And we're going to look at the scriptures that are the basis upon which the committee in 1921 got high-centered on this. Because we are now at the point where—

Okay, remember in Lecture 3 paragraph 4, in order for you to exercise faith you must have a correct idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes. You've got to have that. And if you don't have that, then you are missing something that prevents you from having the right kind of faith. Okay, so Lecture Fifth, verse 1:

We shall, in this lecture, speak of the Godhead—we mean the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible, whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space. They are the Father and the Son—the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man...

And then, you go down to the bottom of that verse:

He being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... having overcome, received a fullness of...glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one; or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things; by whom all things were created and made that were created and made, and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one; the Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fullness—filling all in all; the Son being filled with the fullness of the mind, glory, and power; or, in other words, the spirit, glory, and power, of the Father, possessing all [the] knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom, sitting [on] the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father...

And it goes on to say: *...the Spirit of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe [in] his name...keep his commandments...all those who keep his*

commandments shall grow...from grace to grace...[possess] the same mind...(Lectures on Faith 5:1-2) and so on.

Well, the committee in 1921 concluded that this Lecture was wrong about God the Father because it says He is a personage of spirit, glory, and power. And the Son was a personage of tabernacle. And they believe that the Father is a personage of tabernacle as well. That was the first mistake that Joseph Smith—who vouched for the doctrine in these Lectures, who stood in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ—made, in the estimation of the committee, who had not stood in God's presence. Because "Joseph erred in doctrine," you see. They concluded that Joseph Smith was wrong about his description of the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is one of the Godhead, and that the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Father.

Therefore, either Joseph Smith had an incorrect idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes, or alternatively, George F. Richards, Anthony Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, and Joseph Fielding Smith had an incorrect idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes, because they disagree on this Lecture—the one saying it is so vile and so error ridden that it must be taken out of the scriptures; and the other saying this is a true statement of our doctrine, and therefore, needs to be in our scriptures.

Consequently and correspondingly, either Joseph Smith did not, indeed could not, have faith, or George F. Richards, Anthony Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, Joseph Fielding Smith did not, indeed could not, have faith. One or the other is true because they disagree on the definition of God. **And** you must have a correct idea of His character, perfections, and attributes in order to exercise faith in Him.

And so now, we find ourselves having to choose. And that's a healthy thing. You ought to have to choose. You ought to have to choose, and you ought to have your salvation at peril on how you choose. You ought to have to decide between whether you believe a man who stood in the presence of God—and bore testimony of what he saw, and what he felt, and what he heard—and others who constitute a committee that disagree with him. You should have to choose. And your eternal peril should hang in the balance as you make that choice. That is a perfect conundrum, in my view. Grow up! Accept the burden! Find out! Learn about God! Or be damned by your carelessness, by your indifference, by your refusal to go forward. It ought to be so. And it ought to be put to you plainly. And you ought to have to choose. And you ought to have to choose every time you hear someone get up and offer something to you and conclude in the name of Jesus Christ. Because they're either offering you something from Him that will save you, or they're offering something that they hope will damn you, because they're signing you up on the wrong team. It ought to be so. Everlastingly, it ought to be so.

Notice that in the definition of the Father and the Son—both, according to Joseph Smith—**both** are *personages*. But the Father is a personage who is described as consisting of spirit, glory, and power. The Son, on the other hand, is described as a personage of tabernacle. What is the difference between a personage of spirit, glory, and power, and

a personage of tabernacle? What's the difference between the two? What is a tabernacle? I mean, if you're looking at the Tabernacle in the days of Moses, it is something that got set up temporarily and got taken down. And Christ is a personage of tabernacle, came as you have come, to temporarily occupy **this** [spoken as Denver touched his own body]. And when Christ was resurrected, **this** could enter the upper level of a locked room without tearing a hole in the ceiling in order to access the room in which the apostles were meeting. He could come, and He could go, inside a locked upper room, where cowering disciples feared for their own safety in the aftermath of the martyrdom of their Lord. He may have been a personage who could say, "Handle me and see," and they may have been able to actually make contact with. But that tabernacle was no longer confined here. Read the description of what He did when He appeared to the Nephites. And it's not like **your** tabernacle. You hope to inherit a better one.

Well, let's take a few scriptures because we ought to pay attention to them on this point as well. Doctrine and Covenants section 131. Doctrine and Covenants section 131, verse 7: *There is no such thing as immaterial matter. **All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes** [therefore, if the Father, according to verse 2 of Lecture 5, is a personage of spirit, that does not mean that He is not also made of material matter. Spirit is matter, more fine, pure, can only be discerned by purer eyes]. *We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter* (D&C 131:7-8).*

The Father is made—as a personage of spirit, glory, and power—of something that is more refined and pure but is absolutely comprised of something which is matter. Though in the equation of things—energy and matter, glory and power—these are things about which, when you get far enough down the road, you find out that there's some equivalencies in all of that. The Son, on the other hand, was made to be *tabernacled* here. The biggest problem, if you turn back to 130, the biggest problem becomes this, verse 22 of section 130: *The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us* (D&C 130:22).

What exactly is it that dwells inside of you and is a personage of spirit? What exactly is it that you hope to become, if not another member of the Godhead? What exactly is it that Joseph Smith is saying in this Lecture on Faith about the mind of God? And understand, he had in front of him, because he was in the process of actually doing it during this time frame, the Inspired Version of the Scriptures.

Get out Moses chapter 6, and if I'm not mistaken it's going to be verse 61. Yes, Moses chapter 6, verse 61. This is the definition of the Holy Ghost. And by the way, this definition of the Holy Ghost will read exactly like what we are encountering in the Lectures on Faith. Moses 6:61: *Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter* [that's another name for the Holy Ghost. He gets to dwell in you, the record of heaven]— *The Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth*

of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things.

Joseph Smith said in one of his talks in Nauvoo: "I... know more than all the world...[or] The Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and... I will associate myself with Him." I'm not going to look that quote up, I'll probably put it into this in a reference, when I edit the transcript [paper] (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 350).

Joseph Smith is talking about this, the record of heaven, the peaceable things: *...that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment* (Moses 6:61; see also Genesis 4:9 RE).

The fact of the matter is that when Joseph vouched for this Lecture as being true, he knew what he was talking about. And I don't care what is said by those who argue otherwise. You'll never prove, off of a page, something that is superior to the knowledge that was obtained by Joseph Smith standing in the presence of God. It's impossible to convey. It is impossible to convey adequately all of the information, which is obtained in the presence of God, using the vocabulary and the methodologies that we have here. We stumble upon so many things because we simply haven't adequate information with which to make it be known.

Joseph Smith, in the Fifth Lecture on Faith—Joseph Smith, in the translation of Genesis and Moses 6:61... Joseph Smith understood what he was talking about. And the Father is, in fact, a personage of spirit, glory, and power. And the Son became the Son as a result of descending into the tabernacle that He occupied. And the Father and the Son are one. So also, you can be one with Them if you obtain the same mind with Him. Because that is the intent that They have, to share that mind with you.

You need to have a correct idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes. Therefore, since these Lectures were designed to try and give you an acquaintance with what those were, I would commend them to you. Go to Mosiah chapter 3, verse 5. Mosiah chapter 3, verse 5:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from...eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. (Mosiah 3:5; see also Mosiah 1:14 RE)

Did you notice the description there, like the Lectures on Faith, refers to the Lord Omnipotent coming down to occupy a tabernacle? And the tabernacle is made, as it is made, of clay. Look at Alma chapter 7, verse 8:

Behold, I do not say...he will come among us [among us] at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle; for behold, the Spirit hath not said unto me that this should be the case. Now as to this thing I do not know; but this much I do know, that the Lord God hath power to do all things which are according to his word. (Alma 7:8; see also Alma 5:3 RE)

Again, he's talking about coming and dwelling in a mortal tabernacle. That is what the Lectures on Faith are talking about as well. Look at Doctrine and Covenants section 93. This is verse 4 of Doctrine and Covenants section 93: *The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.* Christ came into the world to take upon Himself a mortal tabernacle made of clay. And that's what that Lecture is referring to. Look in that same section at verse 35: *The elements are the tabernacle of God; yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples; and whatsoever temple is defiled, God shall destroy that temple.* That's a coming day (see also T&C 93:1,10).

Well, in order to get out of here, the tabernacle is going to be destroyed. So we're all going to lose this tabernacle we temporarily occupy. But the tabernacle that is referred to in this description, in the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith understood what he was talking about. Joseph Smith understood the correct doctrine. And he's trying to give you the character, the nature, the attributes of God, because until you get that correct, you're not going to have the power to exercise faith in Him. Which is why you're going to encounter some amount of resistance between what it is that you need to believe in and what it is that everyone else in your generation may believe in. It doesn't matter. The responsibility is placed upon *you* to understand what is truth and what is not. And you have to choose. And you have to sort it out. And you have to come to the correct conclusion. Because it is only by exercising faith in the correct conclusion that you manage to align yourself with that narrow window through which the heavens are opened, and up which Jacob's ladder is found to be scaled.

Well, now we get to the Sixth Lecture, which is where I think we will probably... I want to remind you that in that prior one, Lecture 5, that second paragraph or second verse says that all of us can possess the same mind, and in the third paragraph or verse it says that we all can become one. It is impossible for me to become one with you and you to become one with me, unless you obtain the mind of God and I obtain the mind of God. And then we find that all the differences that separate us melt away into insignificance. Because we're one—not with each other—we're one with God. And that intelligence, that light which animates us, that which is inside of us, leads us to the position in which we become of one mind.

The Sixth Lecture, verse 1: *Having treated...the preceding lecture...of...ideas, of the character, perfections, and attributes of God, we next proceed to treat...the knowledge which persons must have, that the course of life which they pursue is according to the will of God, in order that they may be enabled to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation (Lectures on Faith 6:1).*

You see, the course in life that you pursue, you have to know is according to the will of God. I remember shortly after being baptized, and news of that getting back to my

parents... My father was very broad-minded, but my mom was a Baptist with all that that implied. And, you know, she was sincerely convinced that this was a horrible mistake. But my father joined with her in letting me know of their disapproval of my becoming a Latter-day Saint, telling me, among other things, that he would not want 10% of everything he'd worked for in life to go to the Mormon Church, as a consequence of which I could expect to receive nothing as an inheritance from him. I had a lot of friends that I grew up with; and although Mormons are in Idaho, and there was, in fact, an infestation in Mountain Home where I grew up... The Mormons in Mountain Home were so tentative about their position that they didn't even have a baptismal font in the Mountain Home chapel. Now, they've since expanded it into a Stake Center, and I'm told that there is now an actual font in the Mountain Home Stake Center. But when I was a kid there wasn't one, and for good reason, because conversions were just unheard of.

My future father-in-law, my wife's dad, was a missionary in Mountain Home, Idaho, while I was a kid growing up. And he undoubtedly was one of the many guys that tracked into our house and got verbally abused by my mom and sent off the porch, 'cause they only lived around the other side of the block. That's where the missionary house was back then. But as I counted the cost of becoming a Mormon, in effect, I was giving up all I ever knew, all the friends I ever had, my own family. I counted the cost, and I became a Latter-day Saint, in any event.

What is really strange about the Lord's way of reckoning these things is that I've recently had to count the cost again. And then, all of those friends that I had now are plagued with yet another dilemma. And yet the Lord always accounts those trades for His purposes because He's trying to save the individual. He's trying to save each one of us as individuals. And I don't care what the cost is that you count up. Knowledge of God is worth whatever price you pay, no matter when, no matter what, no matter how often. If He takes away your family and He gives you a new family, and then He takes that family away again, it is a small price to pay. God will ask of you whatever He will ask of you. The only thing I can say is no price you pay, while tabernacled here, is so great that you should withhold it from the altar. Give what He asks. Because it's only by giving what He asks of you that you can have faith in Him unto life and salvation.

You have to know—this is verse 2 of Lecture 6—you have to have *An actual knowledge...that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life* (Lectures on Faith 6:2).

You simply can't do it. Because the place in which you find God will always be, as to this world, lonely. You are necessarily going to become a stranger and a sojourner *here*. But you take up residency somewhere else, and you're not left without comfort. It's just that that comfort consists in something that is more refined and more pure. And you're left here, muddling through with people who will not understand you and who will think you are eccentric. They'll misjudge your motives. They'll misjudge your heart. They'll misjudge your ambition. They'll misjudge everything there is about you. And Christ said,

Rejoice and be exceedingly happy, for so persecuted they the prophets before you (see Matthew 5:12; see also Matthew 3:14 RE).

If you're hoping to be understood in this world... It really helps if you are a trial attorney because everything I say in court is opposed. Everything I write has an opposition. Every proposition that I advance, someone else is saying, "No, no, no! He's wrong, he's wrong, he's wrong!" And so I live in that world, and I frankly don't care what people want to offer as an argument against anything I advance. The only thing that is necessary for me to do is to declare in plainness the things that I believe and the things that I know to be true. And then the burden shifts to you. You judge the matter. You decide it. And if you decide it right, and it doesn't... Forget about me. Decide **the matter** right. You will be saved. And if you decide the matter wrong, you will be damned. It's **the matter** and not me. So, you have to arise. In verse 3 it talks about:

Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take, not only the spoiling of their goods, and the wasting of their substance, joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (Lectures on Faith 6:3)

That's why Joseph could say, as he did, that he left with a conscience void of offense against God or any man—going as a sheep to the slaughter (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 379). But he was okay with it. He was okay with it: *Such was, and always will be, the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds, and faint (Lectures on Faith 6:4).*

That's the problem with many of us. We grow weary in our minds and faint because we don't know that the course we're pursuing is according to God. Don't grow weary. Stay on that course. I have the absolute conviction that much of the stuff that we plague ourselves with, and think is such a heavy burden of sin, is because our minds are occupied with the wrong stuff. Study the things of God and fill yourself with light—and how quickly it is that all the rest of that stuff will simply dissolve away and evaporate. President Boyd Packer said you can fix behavior a lot more quickly by studying doctrine than you can by studying behavior (see 'Little Children,' *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).

You know, I have this... It's that, it's really that first parable where the busy young man who was on his way winds up braiding rope and doing that for years on end; braiding rope, occupying his hands. And then tying the net with the Master. And during the course of that apprenticeship, he came to know who the Master was. So that when, finally, the Master asks him if he knows who He is—and he did—and the Master asks him, "What would you want of Me?" The response comes, "Well, there was a time when I would've asked a lot. But now, I'm just content." Because it's enough. Well, it's enough and to spare (see *Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.). Having an actual knowledge

that the course that you are pursuing is according to the will of God *is* enough and to spare.

[Paragraph] 4 (towards the bottom of that):

...nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven, and of their having embraced [the] order of things which God has established for the redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him, necessary for them to overcome the world, and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God. (Lectures on Faith 6:4)

Because we ought to fear God more than we fear man. We ought to fear God more than we fear the loss of **anything** that is down here. We ought to fear God more than we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism. We ought to love God and fear Him because it's our relationship to Him, and Him alone, that matters. This requires more than mere belief or supposition that he's doing the will of God, but actual knowledge. Realizing that when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God. It does require more than mere belief or supposition. But it's obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price, paid by each of us in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets it on any other condition.

Your life may be uniquely situated. You may be inside an environment, a group of friends, a family, a neighborhood, an association that is completely unique to you, and has nothing in common with anyone else in this room. Inside of that, whatever the sacrifices are that are required, it will be exactly the same as it was for Moses—who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same as for Abraham—who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same. And you'll be called upon to make a sacrifice, because knowing God requires obedience to Him and sacrifice to Him—and not to some man; certainly not to me, but not to a pope, not to a president, not to a priest—to Him. You're not trying to get to know me. Or if you are, you're a damn fool. You're supposed to be getting to know the Lord. You're not supposed to be getting to know some local presiding authority. Although, I've really gotten to know local presiding authorities pretty well. I present copies of these to my Stake President. So: "Hey, President Hunt, you got mentioned tonight!" He's going to listen to this. And I think it's interest; I don't think it's assignment. I mean, what assignment can he have at this point? So, paragraph 6:

*For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of [the] glory when he should be done with the things of this life. But when he has this knowledge, and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he **will** be a partaker of the glory of God. Let us here observe, that a religion [not an institution, not an organization, not a club, not a fraternity—a religion] that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary*

*unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of **all** earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men **do** actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. [But I'll tell you what is vain:] It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him. (Lectures on Faith 6:6-8)*

The authenticity of God's message is not proven by the means of delivery. Even if an angel comes, an angel can come and mislead you. The only way to distinguish between what is and what is not of God is through the medium of sacrifice, because when you do this, the vessel is clean. And when the vessel is clean before God, then even an angel of light cannot mislead you. Because what they offer is darkness, and you can tell it, because they have not the power to mislead. Everyone can be misled unless the course in life that they pursue is according to God's will. All gifts can be compromised. Look at Mormon chapter 9. I want to go to verse 27 of Mormon chapter 9:

O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye...stand in need [of]. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him. Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God. (Mormon 9:27-28; see also Mormon 4:10 RE)

You don't acquire favor with God in order to consume what He gives to you on your lusts—to satisfy your ambition, to become someone great in the eyes of everyone else. It doesn't happen that way. And if you try to turn it in that way, you'll meet the same kind of unfortunate end that we see happening time and time again by the ambitious, and the unscrupulous, the knavish, and the foolish. Be wise in the days of your probation. Strip yourselves of all uncleanness. Check your thoughts. Focus them on something that is light and true and pure. Because in the end, none of us have anything to be proud of. In the end, the only thing that matters is if God will vouch for us in the day of judgment. And if He will, and if He does, then it's a gift.

I honestly believe, and I'm not saying this for rhetorical purposes, I honestly believe... I have lived my life; I know the mistakes I've made. In the book *The Second Comforter*, the little vignettes in there that are taken out of my life illustrate how to make a mistake, how to do something wrong, how to fail. And then what follows in the chapter is a description of how to do it right. I have learned all that I've learned as a consequence of my own failing, as a consequence of my own errors.

I genuinely believe that almost every person in this room—I say almost because I know there's a Marine here—almost every person in this room has lived a life that has been better, more pure, more decent, more honorable, more noble than my own. I am unworthy of anything other than your pity. But I can bear testimony of Someone who **is** pure, who **is** true, who **can** save you. My belief is that every one of you, with a couple of exceptions, every one of you have lived lives so much more worthy of the Lord's recognition than my own. That for the life of me, I can't understand why you don't have the faith and confidence to realize that He loves **you**. And **you** are more lovable than am I. He probably finds it a lot easier to love you than me. I feel like I'm the idiot that's writing graffiti on the walls of heaven, and they really wish the guy would leave, and wonder what **he's** doing here. I mean, I get that you're into forgiving the sinner, but you've got to be kidding me. I think if **you** were to arrive there, there would be a lot more propriety to that. Have faith. Be believing. Trust in Him.

Oh, I want to do this one, too. Go to Moses chapter 1. Moses chapter 1, look at verse 8: *It came to pass that Moses looked, and [he] beheld the world upon which he was created* (Moses 1:8; see also Genesis 1:2 RE). Moses beheld the world. Boy, this is to me... This is very interesting because he's describing a view that is very often in scripture referred to as "being caught up to an exceedingly high mountain." This is a view up, and looking down.

In any event, move to verse 18: *And again Moses said...* Now he's talking, because Satan has come during this interlude, appearing as an angel of light, tempting him. Verse 18: *Moses said: I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan* (Moses 1:18; see also Genesis 1:3 RE).

The defect that Moses perceived in what Lucifer was saying, tempting him, did not consist merely in the presence or the... I mean this is an angel. If you go to Section 76 and read the description, an angel in a position of authority in the presence of God was cast down (see D&C 76:25; see also T&C 69:6). That is not a being who, to look upon, would appear to be a vile creature. That would be someone, who to look upon, would appear to be a being of light, a being of glory, an angel of light. The reason Moses could discern between them had nothing to do with the appearance. It had to do with the content. It had to do with the Spirit. It had to do with what he radiated. And what Moses was able to discern was that this was not the source of something which he, Moses, chose to take in—as a consequence of which, he could judge between him and say, You—you I disprefer.

When you look at the Joseph Smith History, the thick darkness—I talked about this the last time—the Orson Hyde account of that talks about the thick darkness that gathered around him. It consisted of the adversary benighting his mind with doubts; brought to his soul all sorts of improper pictures. The reason why it is possible to do that, and more easily so with many of us, is because we have ingested into ourselves all kinds of improper images which can then be summoned back up. Look at 2 Nephi 9. This is one of the early sermons given by Jacob. Chapter 9 of 2 Nephi, and we're going to look at verse 9:

And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out [of] the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness. (2 Nephi 9:9; see also 2 Nephi 6:3 RE)

It's not the physical appearance, nor the transformation that takes place. It is the content. Which is why you need to know that the course that you are pursuing is in accordance with the will of God. Because once you have made the required sacrifice, you acquire the required knowledge. Look at Alma chapter 30. This is an explanation given at the bad end of Korihor, as judgments were upon him, and he was writing his final confession before his death. Verse 53 of Alma chapter 30:

But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea...he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me. (Alma 30:53; see also Alma 16:12 RE)

You see, he was convinced by the devil, who appeared unto him in the form of an angel. It's not... It's not always that the adversary comes to you with murderous intent. Sometimes he comes to appeal to your vanity, to your pride, to your... Well, pride is such a sinkhole he can get most people there. Oh, you can have acclaim; you can have wealth. No, you acquire what you need to acquire as a consequence of sacrificing for God. And in that process you will endure criticism, rejection, opposition, the world's hatred... You may even be cast out. But you obtain what you obtain from God *by sacrifice*. In 12—verse 12 or paragraph 12—of this Lecture Sixth:

But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are, there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are

under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not, their faith is weak; and where faith is weak, the [person] will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with [Jesus Christ]; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them. (Lectures on Faith 6:12)

Well, he'll darken the minds, and after having darkened the minds, leave them in a position in which they are simply unable to have faith—at least in the right things, in order to understand the things of God. Verse 10:

Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God; and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Lectures on Faith 6:10)

"Them that love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ" is talking about not just the Second Coming, that is talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—whenever He should come, to whomever He should choose to come to, when He chooses to do that. And it is supposed to be an ongoing event.

I understand that we got off on rather a ragged foot at the beginning of the restoration of the Gospel. How fully we got off on that ragged foot is really not well enough appreciated by Latter-day Saints, who choose to see a sort of uniform continuity of progression from that moment until today, in a rather uninterrupted course of forward momentum. When in fact, Joseph Smith had to fight against terrible opposition inside of the Church to get the doctrine that he was trying to establish, established. Ezekiel chapter 14 was a topic that he raised early. And he raised it again at the time of the Relief Society organization in Nauvoo. Go read Ezekiel chapter 14 (see also Ezekiel 5:8-11 RE). Go look at what Joseph Smith was concerned about. And he's talking to people who accepted him as a prophet. And yet, they were more interested in getting from him what *they* wanted, instead of receiving from him what the Lord wanted to give.

Well, look in verse 9 of this Sixth Lecture. About halfway through, there's a sentence that begins: *And in the last days, before the Lord comes* [so this is before the Second Coming of the Lord, but it's in the last days], *he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice* (Lectures on Faith 6:9).

Not a covenant **to** sacrifice. You can go make a covenant **to** sacrifice every day the temple's open. Making a covenant **to** sacrifice is not at all the same thing as making a covenant **by** sacrifice. It's only through actually sacrificing that it is possible for the Lord to make a covenant with you.

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens

from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
(Lectures on Faith 6:9)

That gathering will be made—not by man or men or institutions. That gathering will be made by the angels of heaven who hold the keys of responsibility for that, that you can read in D&C 77:11 (see also T&C 74:11). I'll probably insert it in the transcript [paper] here; I'm not going to read it—'cause you folks look like you've been sitting on metal chairs for two and a half hours, and I'm moved with compassion. I say that tongue in cheek.

Well, let me read one more thing and comment. This is the last half of that paragraph 10:

But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith: therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority [to do so], and without this guarantee, faith could not exist.
(Lectures on Faith 6:10)

It is a cause and effect. These things are inextricably linked together. If you make the sacrifice, you can enjoy the faith. But all of us, every one of us, were and are dependent upon making the sacrifice. If we don't do that, we are simply unable to lay hold upon eternal life. And the revelations of God don't guarantee you eternal life on any other condition.

The good news is that we have the Lectures on Faith, and they make these things clear. The good thing is that every one of you, I suppose, has been baptized. The good thing is, I suppose, that every one of you believe in the Prophet Joseph Smith, the restoration of the Gospel, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants; therefore, you have an enormous leg up. The only question is will you allow it to become a living, breathing faith? Will you allow it to lay hold upon **you**? Will you allow it to become alive, animated, a fire, again burning, upon the earth today? The closest thing there is to life itself (that isn't life) is a fire.

On the cover of the book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, there is a candle that's shown, and it's smoldering. If you can read Hebrew, and you pay attention to the smoke coming off of that, you'll find something hidden there. There's a lot of things hidden in the covers of my books, except for the ones that are just plain. And those were done to make them as cheap as possible. But the smoldering candle... How many of you have ever had a candle that was still smoldering with a spark, and you wanted it to reignite, but you didn't have a match. And what did you do? You blew on it. You blew the breath of life upon it. To reignite the flame, all it takes is the breath of the Spirit speaking to you. That's all it takes. And the breath of the Spirit is contingent in what it says **to you**, depending upon the faith that you have in God to hear what it is He is saying. But He is, surely, saying things to you. He doesn't just talk to me.

Ron and I were talking. He had a fellow who's head of some former-Mormon, ex-Mormon, we-got-a-chip-on-our-shoulder group of Mormons. And apparently, in one of the many newspaper articles, there was something about me saying, "Jesus spoke to me!" Man, if that doesn't sound weird enough in a newspaper—yeah. So Ron wanted to clarify. And rather than answer him with some—and Ron's probably going to read this—with some elaborate explanation, I said, "Ron! Dude! Why'd you become Mormon? Why does anyone become Mormon? Because God speaks to you!" The only reason anyone becomes a Mormon is because God speaks to them. The missionaries come out; they say a bunch of stuff; they put on their sales hat; they do their schmoo thing. They interrupt you as you bring your groceries out of the parking lot of the store. And they harass you endlessly. They pamphleteer you. In my day it was... It was the flannel board story stuff, you know, homely, kind of.

When they finally convince you to pray and ask God, no one becomes a Mormon unless they get an answer from God. That's why Ron converted and asked me to baptize him 40 years ago today. That's why Ron subsequently went on a mission for the LDS Church. That's why Ron subsequently got married in the temple, even though he is now a disaffected Latter-day Saint. And that's why Ron and I, even today, share a brotherhood, share a friendship, share a conviction that God once spoke to both of us. He still talks with me on occasion. No matter how much I may prefer to be somewhere else, doing something else, I oftentimes find myself doing what I've been asked to do.

I don't know if it's important that anyone from Idaho Falls comes here. I don't know if it's important if anybody from Idaho Falls ever hears one word. But I do know that a testimony needs to be spoken on this ground, in this place. And I know that everyone will be accountable for that, not just those who happen to stumble upon this. I know that the Lord knows a great deal more than do I, and that very often I only figure out later what He has had in mind all along. And God is moving systematically. He is taking the measure of the Latter-day Saints. And His hand is about to move again in the affairs of men. We have a window. This is **your** dispensation. **You** are accountable.

Those prophecies spoken to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni in his room aren't going to fulfill themselves. There has to be **someone** who has faith. There has to be someone who rises up. And when he sets His hand and He invites you to join in, and He wants **you** to know **Him**... When He sets that in motion, then you need to respond. Not to me, not to any man. You need to respond to Him. This is His work. He and only He will organize it. He and only He will roll it forth. But as one of the verses we read tonight recited, there has to be a people prepared. And that requires that faith return to the earth again. And if what has happened with the Lectures on Faith in 1921 prevented people from acquiring faith, because they misapprehend the character, nature, and attributes of God from that day until today, then it's time for you to shake that off. Rise up, lay hold upon, and obtain faith again.

Joseph saw the Father and the Son, and he testified about them, and he described them. I've seen the Father, and I've seen the Son, and they've both spoken with me.

The only reason I mention that is to give you confidence that it can happen. It should happen to **you**. You should be talking with Them. They can tell you what you need to know. And don't be at all surprised if the subject, about which you need to converse with the Lord, consists almost entirely of a discussion about the scriptures. Don't be surprised if an angel comes to minister to you, if the topic about which the angel would like to converse involves the scriptures. And don't be surprised if the Lord authorizes someone to deliver a message, and the message consists in expounding the scriptures. Because on the road to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, what Christ did was open up to them how all things testified of Him.

Well, all things testify of what is currently getting, at last, underway. And make no mistake about it, it is getting underway. And I don't care where you look; I don't care what society you look at; I don't care what economy you observe, what culture you observe—the earth and all of the people on her are waxing old like a garment. And do you know what they do with garments that are old? They are burned. The way to preserve yourself consists in having faith in God. And the conditions upon which faith in God is obtained are exactly the same for you as they were for Moses, and Abraham, and all of those who have ever had faith; Joseph Smith being the latest, great example of that.

Well, it would be incomplete, and I would be remiss if I didn't close in the name of Jesus Christ because I intend always to be accountable to Christ for the words that I deliver. I don't set the agenda. I don't choose the topic. I do what I'm **asked** to do. I say what I've been told to say. I hope you understand how **little** I matter and how **much** your relationship to Christ and the Father **do** matter. I hope you understand that **His** words should be clear and distinct when you hear them spoken. And you should be able to judge, and you should be able to judge the matter correctly.

I testify of Him because I've seen Him. I have faith in Him because I know that every word He has spoken has been vindicated in His Gospel. And the only reason why we are unable to lay hold upon those blessings is because we simply do not have the faith required to do so. Hence, at the beginning of this process this year, it's necessary to spend a night in Idaho Falls on the subject of faith, using the Lectures on Faith, which I regard as binding scripture vouched for by the Prophet Joseph Smith—every bit as, if not more, important than the revelations that follow in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

We can't spend all the time necessary, and you can't endure those chairs another five minutes, but pick up the Lectures on Faith. They don't take long to read. Forget all those footnotes that have been interlineated by folks after 1921. Forget all the articles that have been put in there in order to prop up a different definition of what the Holy Ghost is. Forget about all the drivel. In fact, go photocopy the edition that you find in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, "Revelations and Translations" Volume 2, in 1835, and read it there. It is an astonishingly wonderful, light-filled document. As Bruce R. McConkie said, "It is scripture; it is true. "

Thank you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2013.10.29 Lecture 3: Repentance

29 September 2013

Logan, Utah

Apparently, in order to get a recording of this tonight, we need to have some approximate two-minute interruption at some point, and they'll flag me—I assume with jumping jacks—so that we have that pause.

It was about 40 years ago today that—you're waving for what purpose? You can't hear me? You...if...if I get real close, can you hear me now? This is good? Okay.

It was about 40 years ago—yesterday would have been a Friday, which was the day on which my friend, Ron Mahle, asked me to baptize him. The following day was a Saturday, 40 years ago. Today it's a Sunday. I was, at the time, in the Air Force, and I had been in one squadron, and then I got reassigned to a different squadron. While I was in the first one, I had a number of buddies that I had associated with—friends, compadres, one of whom was a fellow named Jimmy Givens. Now Wycliffe was from Oakland; I think Jimmy was from Chicago. Anyway, he was a black airman, and I was a white airman. (As it turns out, I still am [audience laughter].) We had hung out together a great deal, but then I lost contact with him for a period of months. He and I would go over to the base bowling alley, and we'd always—because they only sold beer in pitchers—we'd always buy a pitcher of beer to share, and then we'd buy a pizza to share, and that was our thing when we were hungry.

I hadn't seen him for a number of months and then ran into him, and he said, "Hey, let's go to the bowling alley." And I thought, "Okay, yeah, sure." And when we got there, I hadn't been thinking about the fact that the normal ritual was a pitcher of beer and a pizza. And so, as it came time to order, we ordered the pizza that we always got. And then, to my surprise, Jimmy ordered a Pepsi, and I said, "Well, that's good; so that relieves me of the responsibility." So I ordered a Pepsi, also. And Jimmy says, "I don't drink alcohol anymore." And I said, "Well, damn, that's funny; I don't either anymore." I said, "For me, it's a religious thing." He said, "No kidding! For me, it's a religious thing." And I said, "Well, that's great! What's the religion?" He said, "I'm a Muslim." And I said, "Holy crap, I'm a Mormon!" He said, "You are a blue-eyed devil!" And I said, "No kidding! You were not valiant in the pre-existence, and you can't hold priesthood!" And so here we were, buddies still, in spite of now the gulf of religion that separated us, and it just didn't matter. (I don't think he's "Jimmy" anymore. He's probably Aziz Mohammed something or other.) But Jimmy and I remain buds despite the enormous religion gulf that separated us at that point.

When I became a Latter-day Saint, one of the things that typified, in those days, the Latter-day Saint was the libraries that everyone had. In Exeter (which was another town in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire ward), there was Sister Long, and she ran (what was back then—we don't have them anymore), but it was the Seventies Bookstore—Seventies being responsible, I suppose, for establishing a chain of bookstores where you could purchase LDS material—Sister Long was the proprietor. And the bookstore consisted of her covered back porch—in which all the LDS books were on display (and

Sister Long read the inventory; so whenever you bought from her, you were actually buying a book that she already read and handled and, fortunately, had not marked up). But it was my understanding that if you were going to be a Latter-day Saint, you need to acquaint yourself with all kinds of information. So, as a consequence of that, I began by reading everything I could get my hands on.

In those days, LeGrand Richards was still alive. The missionary discussions were largely based upon *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*. He had been the Presiding Bishop of the Church; he had been called into the Quorum of the Twelve, and his book, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, was one of the first things I read to acquaint myself with the doctrine that the missionaries had been teaching. But all of those early biographies about Wilford Woodruff, about Heber C. Kimball, about John Taylor, the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, which I bought from Sister Long (and used up—I recently had to buy a new one because it just fell apart; now, I still have it, but if you aren't careful when you open it, it just falls to pieces in your hands)—because Mormons were, by definition in those days, studious, careful, well-read, well-considered, doctrinally-prepared folks who would defend the faith; and therefore, if you were gonna run with them, you needed to have an education of your own. And as a consequence of that, I began, at that early stage, to acquire a library, because you were not legitimately a Latter-day Saint without one back then.

Remember, Marion G. Romney was in the First Presidency; Bruce R. McConkie was in the Twelve; Mark E. Peterson was the doctrinal go-to guy in those days—he was in the Twelve. LeGrand Richards was a member of the Twelve in those days. I mean, what you got when you had those folks—

[Speaking to someone else] Hold my calls, will you?—

What you got in those days was doctrine and an exposition of doctrine. Now, as we all know, Bruce R. McConkie has taken a number of broadsides of late by the church distancing—

And when that "Modern Mormonism" (*David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*) came out and the backdrop of criticism that was leveled (the approximate 1700 errors found in the first edition of *Mormon Doctrine* that needed to be corrected)—when all of that came out of late, Bruce R. McConkie's reputation has suffered somewhat. But in those days, he was a doctrinal authority. And he and his father-in-law wanted to try and stabilize the doctrine of the church, and they made an effort to do that. That was, I mean—

It was the five volumes, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, (bought, read that). It was the three volumes of *Doctrines of Salvation*. There was the *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (that was not a Joseph Fielding Smith product edited by Bruce R. McConkie; that was Bruce R. McConkie writing that), *Mormon Doctrine*, and he had begun his *Mortal Messiah* series. Those days, doctrine really counted.

Well, last night in Idaho Falls, we talked about faith. Tonight we're going to talk about repentance. But I want to follow up on something that I did not do last night when we were looking at the Lectures on Faith. I can give you the citations if you want to look it up. It is in the second volume of the *Revelations and Translations*. You can read it, beginning on page 565 of that volume. It is a reproduction of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The reason I cite to the 1835 edition is because it was that edition which got canonized by the vote of the church. It is that edition that, in the preface, Joseph Smith vouched for all of the items of doctrine that were contained within the Lectures on Faith. The 1844 edition that would be published later—they would not go through the exercise of re-sustaining the Lectures on Faith because they had previously been canonized. They simply added to—and elaborated on—the revelations that had been received between then and now.

[Speaking to someone else] Could you go get the bottle of water? I forgot....

Beginning on page 565 and running through page 567, there is a recounting of how the Lectures on Faith were canonized on the 17th of August of 1835 when the volume was approved. And it begins with President Cowdery, who was Co-President of the Church at that point. He "introduced the 'Book of doctrine and covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints,' in behalf of the committee..." which was headed by Joseph Smith.

W.W. Phelps bore record that the book presented to the assembly, was true. President John Whitmer, also arose, and testified that it was true. Elder John Smith, taking the lead of the high council in Kirtland, bore record that the revelations in the said book were true... Elder Levi Jackman, taking the lead of the high council of the church in Missouri bore testimony that the revelations in...said book were true, and the said high council of Missouri accepted and acknowledged them as the doctrine and covenants of their faith, by a unanimous vote. President W.W. Phelps then read the written testimony of the Twelve as follows. "The testimony of the witnesses to the book of the Lord's commandments, which he gave to his church through Joseph Smith, jr. [sic] who was appointed by the voice of the church for this purpose: we therefore feel willing to bear testimony to the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of the earth, and upon the islands of the sea, that the Lord has borne record to our souls, through the Holy Ghost, shed forth upon us, that these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men, and are verily true... Elder Leonard Rich bore record of the truth of the book, and the Council of the Seventy accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrines and covenants of their faith, by unanimous vote. Bishop Newell K. Whitney bore record of the truth of the book, and with his counselors, accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith, by unanimous vote. Acting Bishop, John Corrill bore record of the truth of the book ... Acting President, John Gould, gave his testimony in favor of the book, and the travelling Elders, accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith, by a unanimous vote. Ira Ames, acting as President of the Priests, gave his testimony in favor of the book, and with the Priests, accepted and acknowledged

it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith, by a unanimous vote. Erastus Babbitt, acting President of the Teachers [did the same thing]. Wm. Burgess, acting President of the Deacons [did the same thing]. The venerable President, Thomas Gates, then bore record of the truth of the book, and with his five silver-headed assistants, and the whole congregation, accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith by a unanimous vote. The several authorities, and the general assembly, by a unanimous vote, accepted the labors of the committee." (*The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations, Volume 2, Published Revelations*, pp.565-567)

So, I point that out. And if you get a copy of the 1835 edition, you'll read all of that because that is appended in the printed edition in the back as the very final thing—the testimony of these people.

When the Lectures on Faith were removed from the scriptures in 1921 (by the committee headed by George Richards that included Anthony Ivins, Melvin J. Ballard, James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe and Joseph Fielding Smith), in addition to not having a vote to remove it from our scriptures (therefore leaving it in the position, in my view, of still being scripture and canonized), they are, in essence, rejecting not merely the vote that was taken in August of 1835 accepting it as canonized scripture for our instruction, but they're rejecting the testimony of all those who were present and bore testimony, whose names I've just read to you as well.

And so, I agree with what Bruce R. McConkie said at BYU on the 4th of January 1972: "The Lectures on Faith are eternal scripture. It was written by the power of the Holy Ghost, by the spirit of inspiration. It is scripture. It is true." Hence the reason why I turned to the Lectures on Faith, commending them to you yesterday. And we'll look at 'em a little bit again tonight.

In the 1835 compilation of the Doctrine and Covenants, there are sections there—they're still in our Doctrine and Covenants, but they are differently numbered in ours today. When I get the transcription of this, I'll fill in the cross-reference to today's Doctrine and Covenants. But for purposes of preparing remarks for tonight, I used the old edition. I used the 1835 edition. So I'll be giving you a cite to the section and the verse that appears there.

Joseph's doctrines, teachings, revelations, and counsel was supposed to be kept and hearkened to by the church. In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants section 44 [14], it says: *Ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church through him whom I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand* (see D&C 43:2; see also T&C 29:1), making it clear that when we get something from Joseph, we—as a church—were directed by the Lord to respect what it was that came through him.

In section 32, verse 2[3] it says: *I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me; and it shall be made known unto future generations, but this*

generation shall have my word through you (see D&C 5:9-10; see also Joseph Smith History 12:4 RE). Don't read the word "generation" in that context narrowly, because the word "generation" has, sometimes, varying meanings. And the safe meaning—in that context, of that statement to Joseph—includes all those who live after the day that Joseph came and Joseph bore testimony. Therefore, it would include you.

In section 46, verses 1 through 3, it says:

*Behold there shall be a record kept among you, and in it thou [meaning Joseph, thou] shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ... Wherefore, meaning the church, **thou** [the church, you folks] shalt give heed unto all **his** [singular, personal pronoun "his," meaning Joseph] words, and commandments, which **he** [singular, personal pronoun] shall give unto you, as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before [Him]: for **his** word ye shall receive, as if from my own mouth, in all patience and faith; for by doing these things, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. (See D&C 21:1-6; see also Joseph Smith History 18:4-5 RE, emphasis added)*

"Shall not prevail against **you**," provided you give heed to **his** words—not mine; not another man's. The bastion established by the Lord that is the rock upon which the winds and the rain can beat without causing any harm to the foundation is the rock of revelation given to us in this generation through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Everything else turns to sand.

*For thus saith the Lord God, **him** [singular, personal pronoun; referring to the individual man, the Prophet Joseph Smith—praise to the man who communed with Jehovah, indeed—him!] have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good: and **his** diligence I know, and **his** prayers I have heard; yea, **his** weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that **he** shall mourn for her no longer, for his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of **his** sins, and the manifestations of my blessing upon **his** works. (See D&C 21:7-8; see also Joseph Smith History 18:5 RE, emphasis added)*

It doesn't promise Joseph Zion. It doesn't promise him anything of the sort. It promises him rejoicing because his sins are remitted—**his** sins, not ours; because at this point—

This is 1835; by 1832 the church was already under condemnation, but Joseph was not. His sins are remitted, and that will cause Joseph to rejoice.

*They shall believe on **his** words, which are given **him** through **me**, by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world. (See D&C 21:9; see also Joseph Smith History 18:5 RE, emphasis added)*

So, as I read the edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835—sections 14, 32, 46 of that volume—it becomes abundantly apparent that, to the extent that the church was a true and living church, it was a true and living church because God owned the words that came through Joseph, and God vouched for the words that came through Joseph, and God cautioned them—and us—about ignoring the words that come through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

[1835] Section 51, verse 2: *No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church, excepting my servant Joseph Smith, jr. [sic] for he receiveth them as Moses; and thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him* (see D&C 28:2-3; see also T&C 10:1).

Section 84, again this is the 1835 edition. Section 84, verse 2—this is a revelation given in March of 1833 in which Joseph Smith was called by the Lord and the words, quoting: *My son... Verily I say unto you* [again—personal, individual pronoun, identifying an individual by the name of Joseph Smith]...

Verily I say unto you the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come: nevertheless, through you shall the oracles be given to another; yea, even unto the church. And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them, lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall. (See D&C 90:3-5; see also T&C 90:1)

What is the definition of oracles? Is the definition of "oracles" a transient, changing-with-every-whim program that can shift from day-to-day and person-to-person? Or are the oracles the documents, the commandments, the revelations, the words that are contained in what Joseph Smith handed to us in the Book Mormon and the revelations given through him? Be careful about how you interpret the scriptures. Be careful about how flexible you think an unchanging God will be. Be careful about that God (who is the same yesterday, today, and forever) being so whimsically different that on one day, one thing can be asked of you, and on another, something altogether different can be asked of you. And to the extent that you detect a varying, shifting sand beneath your feet, ask yourself why that is so? And ask yourself, where might I go to find the rock upon which to establish my feet, that the winds and the rains might not mow me down? Because **God vouched for Joseph Smith**, and **God vouched for those things committed to you, through him**. And so, when I read (actually, when I heard—because it hasn't been reduced to a transcript) the testimony given by D. Todd Christofferson to BYU-Idaho, bearing testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith this week ago, I rejoiced. Would to God we all took that more seriously and recognized that if there is a Prophet whose words we need to give heed to, it begins with the primacy of Joseph Smith—and that all other things, all other revelations, all of your attitudes, all of your notions—everything ought to be measured against what we received through him. God vouched for his words. I vouch for his words. I **know** he was a prophet of God. The extent to which my knowledge of Joseph runs allows me to say:

I know that man has stood in the presence of God. And I know that God has, and does, vouch for him **still** today.

So, let us regard what Joseph vouched for as the "important doctrine of salvation" (which is what he called the Lectures on Faith) as if it were a law unto the church— God's word through Joseph, words and commandments from God to us, given by the Comforter, to which we must be obedient so we may avoid condemnation, stumbling, and falling. Because all of those things are, in fact, the things which the Lord said about Joseph in revelation that we find still in our scriptures.

We got through the Sixth Lecture on Faith, but we didn't touch the Seventh. And so I want to touch it briefly tonight because any treatment of that volume of scripture is always— invariably—brief. We can't harvest everything that's there.

The Seventh Lecture on Faith, second paragraph: *As we have seen in our former lectures, that faith was the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings, both in heaven and on earth.* It both motivates you to act and it produces power when you act. In that same second paragraph, it says: *No world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith.* God operates on a principle of faith. As I pointed out last night, all of us do, too. It's just inevitable.

All the hosts of heaven... This is in paragraph 4: *It is by reason of this power [faith] that all the hosts of heaven perform their works of wonder, majesty, and glory. Angels move from place to place by virtue of this power.* And then 5, it says: *The whole visible creation as it now exists is the effect of faith.* Turn to paragraph 9:

What is the difference between a saved man and one who is not saved? We answer: from what we have before seen of the heavenly worlds, they must be persons who can work by faith and who are able, by faith, to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation; and they must have faith to enable them to act in the presence of the Lord, otherwise they cannot be saved.

They have to act—they have to be enabled, as a consequence of their faith, to be able to act in the presence of the Lord. Otherwise, they cannot be saved. Remember when we started this in Boise, we were looking at what was said to Joseph in the First Vision about the power of godliness. They have a form, but they do not have the power. They lack something because they teach for commandments the doctrines of men. What does it mean to have faith sufficient "to enable you to act in the presence of the Lord, otherwise they cannot be saved"?

Well, Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verse 1, says: *VERILY, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am* (see also T&C 93:1).

Every soul who forsaketh his sins—you're not gonna get past your sins until God forgives you. But you need to awaken to the fact that you possess them, and turn from them. Because turning from them is repentance—turning to face Him. You can still have a load that needs to be dropped because we are all heavy laden with sin. But forsaking your sins means that you would prefer Him over everything else there is. So turn and face Him.

Cometh unto me—well, the only way you can leave that load behind is to get down in prayer, seeking Him, and asking Him to free you from the load, and to allow you (as Alma recounts in his 36th chapter of the book of Alma: the terrible agony that he felt and calling upon God to be redeemed and then, when God answered, he could remember the pain—the distress that he had—was equaled by the joy and the exhilaration he felt on the other side of that)—being cleansed.

Calleth on my name—you have to do that.

And obeyeth my voice—that would include not merely the things that were given to us by Joseph Smith that you may be neglecting, but obeying His voice in what He tells you here and now, because your agenda is different from mine. Your needs are different from mine. Your responsibilities are different from mine. You have your own family; you have your own ward; you have your own neighbors; you have your own issues. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters—you're part of a community somewhere. And inside of that, **all** of you need to listen to the voice of God because He loves everyone. He loves that eccentric aunt that you just dread having come around. And you can't, for the life of you, understand why she thinks cloves should be poked into a turkey on Thanksgiving. And you wonder if maybe there shouldn't be a procedure that more easily confines her to someplace where they administer psychotropic drugs [audience laughter]. God loves her as much as He loves you. God loves all of us. And the agenda that you have, and the people you can affect, and the relief that you can administer, and the needs that go in front of your eyes day by day are uniquely yours. And the relief that you can grant to those around you—that's yours. It was given to you by God as a gift. Don't harden your heart.

I was reading about the problems that the early saints experienced in that 1857/1856/1858 timeframe—from the diaries; not the official history, not from the stuff that is made public; these are the private diaries and journals—I was reading from that in sacrament (we went home, and I attended my church meetings this morning), and I literally cried as I read what they were called upon to go through. I am very disinclined to be critical and non-appreciative of the fact that those who went before us suffered as they suffered, in order to preserve and make possible for us today the programs, the scriptures—the fact that they would not allow the restoration, through Joseph, to lapse into silence and neglect. It doesn't matter that they made mistakes. We make mistakes, too—every one of us. If you'd lived a perfect life, you wouldn't be here. The fact is, we **all** are broken, and we are **all** in need of repair.

Come to Him, because the only repairman that exists in the universe—inside of **this** matrix—is Christ, whose assignment it is to repair and redeem and to heal us. Obey His voice, no matter how much it may disagree with the flow of that that goes on all around you. People thought I was a madman (teaching gospel doctrine) when we got to the King Benjamin talk about not allowing beggars to go by and neglecting them. And I got push- back, every four years, when we got through that material because I'm saying, "You don't judge the beggars." You really don't have any right to do that. And then you have Paul's statement about being careful to entertain strangers because angels sometimes come among you unawares.

Let's assume, for argument's sake, that John lingers still. And let's assume, for argument's sake, that John would like to know your heart. How might he do that best? I would suggest, coming to you as a beggar, smelling foul and in need, asking you for relief is the perfect way to find out if that same spirit animates you as animated King Benjamin, when King Benjamin said, 'Don't suffer the beggar to put up their petition to you in vain because are we not all beggars?' And of course, that's not merely a rhetorical question. Are we not all beggars? Well, it's self-evident—yeah.

Obeyeth my voice and keepeth my commandments—"My commandments," given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, entrusted to you, should be respected by you; given by the voice of the Spirit to you, asking you to help those around you, because the relief that people need sometimes can only come from one source, and that is you; under the inspiration of the Spirit, relieving the burdens of those around you. Why do you think God cares about the widows and the orphans and the poor and the infirm? And who at Bountiful appreciated His coming the most? Was it those that were called to preside, whose names are given to us because they were recorded in the record? Or was it those that He said—the nameless group—'Bring them up here, and let me heal them'? And all of those in need of healing were brought forward and healed. We read the record and say, "I got a name here; I got a Timothy. I got a name here; I got a Nephi. I got a name here, and this must be someone big and great and important." But unto whom did the Lord minister more? And who was it in Bountiful who appreciated more what the Lord had come to do?

Be like your Master. Do what you can for those around you who are infirm. They are here in abundance—the brokenhearted, the families that are in need. If you want to be saved, help the Lord save others—not by preaching and clamoring and demanding that they view the world like you do, but by giving them a hand. Your most powerful sermon can be in the effort that you make and the time that you take to let people know that you care about them. If you would like to repent of your sins, take a look around at those in need, and do what you can for them, because you've begun the first step. When your heart is like Him, then you open up so that He can enter in. And when your heart is unlike Him, well, there's no room except if He break it—which He will do. You do these things, *you shall see my face and know that I am—know*; not believe, but know.

This is still that paragraph 9 of the Lectures on Faith, seventh lecture about—I don't know; it looks like it's only a third of the way down; it's a long paragraph. (By the way, in

that 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants section 76, which in our current edition is like 118 verses, I think it's 8 verses there. So, if you're gonna memorize a verse in those days, dude, you're like Gettysburg-Address-worthy. I mean, it's *formidable*. *Formidable*, depending on what part of the country you reckon from.) Okay, so about a third of the way down, it says—it poses the question:

*Where shall we find a saved being? For if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved. We think that it will not be a matter of dispute, that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved; for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved; and if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be, or else not be saved. We ask, then, where is the prototype? Or, where is the saved being? We conclude, as to the answer of this question, there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible, that it is Christ: all will agree in this, **he** is the prototype or standard of salvation; or, in other words, **he** is a saved being. [Skipping down a couple of lines:] If he were anything different from what he is, he would not be saved; for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. (emphasis added)*

So, according to the Lectures on Faith, if you would be saved, you have to be **exactly, precisely** what Christ is **and nothing else**. Now, you've been told all your life that that's an impossibility. Well, it's an impossibility, in one sense, and it's a mandatory requirement, in another sense. It's an impossibility because, as it turns out, we all err. All of us err; we always have. And that's what the atonement was designed to fix—because He picks that burden up, and He carries it for us.

But the fact that He will carry that burden for us doesn't relieve **us**—from the moment that He's taken that away—from then going forward to do good. You **can** be Christ-like. You **can** administer relief to those around you. You **can**, as He said, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, visit those who are in prison. Some of the most profound, deepest, spiritual experiences that I have had recounted to me by people I know, came from people who go out to the prison in Bluffdale and hold family home evenings with prison inmates. That ministrations/service elevates the servant. Their heart gets moved with compassion. Your heart needs to be like Christ's—moved with compassion for others.

And the way you do that is imitative at first. And then it is informed by the experience later. What begins as imitation, and merely that, finds room within to have genuine compassion for the needs of others. Christ is the prototype, but you *can* be like Him. There are godly people walking around; many of them are elderly. Many of them have long since forgotten their own needs, and they spend their lives in service of others. You can find that even within the church with Relief Society Presidents. You can find that within the church with people who do legitimate-needs home teaching. You don't have to go find another church in which to serve. You don't have to find new neighbors, and you don't have to have a new family. That eccentric group of people, that tribe into which

you were born—you belong there. You belong there as an example—as an example of love and compassion.

And you know, the reason why (in the Sermon on the Mount) He says they're going to speak *all manner of evil against you falsely, for my [name's] sake* (Matthew 5:11; see also Matthew 3:14 RE) is not because of anything you've done. It's because down here, no one believes. No one believes the genuine thing exists. Everyone's heart has been broken; everyone has been disappointed. Everyone says, "The man I thought was going to be so great has turned out, instead, to be just another broken ship-wreck." Their skepticism of you has been earned in this environment by everyone they've ever met. Therefore, you've got to be different. And you've got to expect their broken heart is going to be taken out on you until you, at last—and it may require your life to do it—until you, at last, show that faith can yet exist here.

Let it exist here in you. Let it live and breathe in you. You needn't look for another life/another opportunity somewhere else far away to go. It's right here; it's in your lap; it's in your family; it's in your home; it's in your community; it's among all those egotistical, hard-headed, stubborn Gentiles that we parade around, lauding one another, and talking about what great things we are. Serve them. Submit to their rule. Do it in a way that will touch their hearts and be the real thing. Be the real thing. And finally, at last, there will be those who are worthy to lead.

You need to be like Christ. It is precise. It is exact.

So, let's turn to a few scriptures and interrupt this for a moment—because we want to repent, after all. We want to change what we are. Let's go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, and let's look, beginning at verse 33. Now, I'm simply gonna allow you to entertain your present views on some things for tonight. But we're gonna have to deconstruct a bunch of junk later, and we'll do that down in Spanish Fork, I think.

Beginning at verse 33 of Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining of these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. (See also T&C 82:16)

Sons...seed—and it's necessary that you become that in order that you become *the church and kingdom, ...the elect of God*. Because as we saw in the statements made to Joseph Smith, the hearts have to be turned to the fathers because this is going to be reconstructing a Holy Family at some point.

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord (D&C 84:35; see also T&C 82:17). Now, many of you read that verse 35 and you think that what that means is: If you fetch this priesthood by ordination, *ipso facto*, you have fetched Jesus.

Praise Jesus! (And by the way, Joel Olsteen is coming to the E Center—you're not gonna want to miss that. "It's a mega church! It's a mega church in transit! It's gonna come to the E Center! SUNDAY, SUNDAY, SUNDAY!" I'm sorry. I get worked up when the evangelicals show up on the horizon. He had some nice things to say about Mormons, though. So Joel Olsteen has kind of creeped a little more on the positive column for me of late.)

I want to suggest that verse 35 can also be read exactly as D&C section 93, verse 1 (that we were reading a moment ago) is read. And that is to say, if you're gonna receive this priesthood, you're gonna get it from Him; that is, you enter into His presence—you receive Him. **If** you have it, then **when** you have it—as a consequence **of** having it—you receive Him.

Oh... *For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me* (ibid, vs 36). I want to suggest that throughout scripture, almost invariably, the word "servants" is referring to angelic ministrants. And so, angels minister—that would be Aaronic. And then Christ ministers—that would be sons of Moses. *And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father* (ibid, vs. 37)—because it is the purpose of the Son to bear record of the Father. It is the purpose of the Son to bring others to the Father so that there might be many sons of God. Verse 38: *And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom*—'cause you can't go where the Father is without entering into and receiving an inheritance.

You know, one of the things that we tend to think is that if you get something—this is based upon statements made in 132—but if you get something here (and you get it by a covenant) that you are automatically entitled to take it into the next world. But what if the covenant that you are to receive in order to obtain that inheritance in the next world doesn't reckon merely from something handled by ordinance but that the ordinance is pointing you to something higher and more holy? What if the thing that secures for you the inheritance in the next life is not the ordinance but what the ordinance testifies to—that is, embracing the Lord through the veil? And then, having conversed with Him, entering into His presence? And then, having entered into His presence, being ministered to and taught? What if it means all that?

*This is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come. [Oh,] And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice **out of the heavens**; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you. (D&C 84:39-42; see also T&C 82:17, emphasis added)*

You know, that verse 42 of the oath and covenant of the priesthood—you ought to take a look at Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14, verse 29, talking about the

priesthood that was given after the Order of the Son of God. It says it was delivered unto men by the calling of His own voice, according to His own will, unto as many as believed on His name.

And so we have in section 76 a testimony given—and justification for—the translation Joseph rendered of Genesis chapter 14, dealing with the priesthood and qualifying it as coming from the voice of God.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verse 36: *The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one* (see also T&C 93:11). What if, instead of repentance being related to your misdeeds—which are so plentiful and persistent and will continue—what if, instead, it is related to the acquisition of light and truth—that is, intelligence? What if repentance requires you to take whatever it is that you have that is a foolish error/a vain tradition/a false notion and replace it with the truth?

My suspicion is that whatever it is that is troubling you, it will trouble you considerably less if you begin to fill yourself with light and truth, until at last you arrive at a point where you look back upon your sins and you say, "I have no more disposition for that because I, frankly, know enough not to do that anymore and because I prefer the light and because I prefer God's intelligence and glory over that which I used to trade/to substitute for it." You see, repentance may have a whole lot more to do with your own feeble education in the things of God than it does have to do with the time you spend wasted, looking at some vile picture or other.

You know, we have this Victorian sexual mores that everyone in Wall Street tacks against— like when you're in a sailboat and there's a headwind, you "tack" against it. Quite frankly, I find most of that stuff boring and not titillating. Some of it's medical, but it's not enticing. And from a certain perspective, if you will acquire enough light and truth, you're not going to be contaminated by exposure to the things that are degrading.

The Book of Mormon was abridged by a man who lived inside an environment that was filled with sex and violence. And he was untouched by it—a man of righteousness. And why is it that he could preserve himself? Because what was in him was light and truth. He had educated himself; he had learned about the things that are true so that when you minister to someone who is suffering, their sins ought not shock you. They ought to cause compassion to well up in you. People struggle with some very difficult, very challenging things. You need to try and overcome that by the light within you. The glory of God is intelligence. Be intelligent.

At one point, Christ—talking to Abraham—says He is more intelligent than them all. One will be more intelligent than another. *These two [things] exist, [if there be two beings], one [will be] more intelligent than the other...I am more intelligent than [them] all* (Abraham 3:19; see also Abraham 5:4 RE). That's what Christ said. And Joseph Smith, talking about the Holy Ghost, says, "I... know more than all the world... [or] the Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and...[it's in] me" (TPJS, 350).

The fact of the matter is that you **can** fill yourself **with the mind of God**. And if you fill yourself with the mind of God, you're gonna find yourself in a position where you, like the scriptures recite, have no more disposition to do evil but to only do good continually. **That** repentance is as a consequence of the things that you know. **That** repentance comes as a consequence of the light and truth within you. **That** repentance doesn't require you to spend time saying, "I'm not...I'm not...I'm not going to watch porn on the Internet anymore." They're bringing that new—

There was a big announcement about the Internet upgrade coming to Provo, Utah, and they're bringing the Internet upgrade to Provo, Utah to really speed up the access of the Internet. That was based upon a lot of statistical studies about the consumption of certain things online that are degrading and unwholesome. And so, it's a great target audience. And we say, "Well, shame on them." And why are they watching so much of that crap down in Provo? Well, it's because there is a bigger population attending Brigham Young University than attending Utah State, and so statistically, there's more of them.

But the problem is not that God has built within you the desires, appetites, and passions which He does not intend to have you fill. He **intends** for you to eat. He **intends** for you to sleep. He **intends** for you to reproduce. He intends for all of the appetites and passions put within you to be intelligently organized and gratified in a sacred manner, in which the purposes of God are advanced, and you find within yourself holiness in everything you do— love and understanding in everything you do. Repentance is the process of figuring out exactly how and why God made all the things available to you that He made available to you—each one to be used with prudence and with skill— [D&C] section 89.

Well, turn to section 132. (I'm just going to tiptoe here because I know the enthusiasm with which some folks look at this stuff.) Go about halfway down in verse 19 of section 132— there's a dash, and after the dash it says (and it's talking about conditions that you need to fulfill and covenants that you need to have)—it says: *Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection* (D&C 132:19), which is, by the way, one of the proofs that this is a revelation given by God to Joseph Smith, and it's one of the things that vouches for this being God—not man— writing this stuff. Because if it were Joseph, he'd be worried about coming forth in the first resurrection. But since God is giving a commandment here, through Joseph, that was intended to survive on into the end of the Millennium, God's anticipating (He foresees) that there will be generations that arise even after the Millennium and after the first resurrection has been sounded. And so, God's saying: Yeah, for those people, if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection.

And [it says:] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths. Well, these are not just words. These are descriptions of various levels of activity that take place in the afterlife. A *throne* is not the same thing as a *kingdom*, nor a *kingdom* the same as a *principality*, nor a *power* the same thing as a

dominion. These are describing different things—different levels—until, finally, you arrive up to the state of the Seraphim, which dwell in fire. They are the flaming ones.

Doctrine and Covenants section 109 has something to say about that. I'll look at that. Section 109, verse 79: *As also this church, to put upon it thy name. And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne*. See, "around the throne" it is a place of everlasting, eternal burnings. Therefore, the Seraphs who gather there have to be "the flaming ones." They have mounted up to that point.

You know, there was a verse I alluded to in Boise. (I've left it marked because I never—I move the marks up here when I... and it's never moved, and it's still got that—see that orange tab? That was Boise.) Isaiah chapter 6. This is an incident I alluded to—I even, I think, gave the scripture, but I didn't talk about it, using the scripture in front of me—Isaiah chapter 6, beginning at verse 1:

IN the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple [the Lord sitting upon the throne would be this condition of glory]. Above it stood the seraphims [the Seraphims are the ones who are flaming, the ones who dwell in this everlasting burning]: each one had six wings [this is metaphor—because these folks have climbed through six stages of the ladder, Jacob's ladder, to arrive where they were. And they cry out], ...Holy, holy, holy...And the posts of the door moved.... [And Isaiah says in verse 5:] Woe is me! ...I'm undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, ...I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the [seraphim] unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. (Isaiah 2:1-2 RE)

Now, we usually read that as "he took the tongs, and with the tongs, he touched the lips," but it doesn't say that. He took the tongs to get it off the altar, and he brought it in his hand. Because being one of the flaming ones, he is able to bear this kind of glory. *And...laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged*—improvising an ordinance using the prayer altar—the altar with the ascending smoke, which is a symbol of the prayers that ascend to heaven—that worthy speech uttered by you, in faith, that ascends to heaven, that the altar symbolized—the flame, the coals, the incense put upon it to build a column of smoke that reaches, then, the roof, and it spreads out, rather like the Tree of Life that it symbolizes—all of this stuff taking place in the temple of Solomon, and the ordinance being improvised by one of the flaming ones that dwells in these conditions of burning in glory (see also Isaiah 2:1 RE and 2 Nephi 9:1 RE).

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 128. (And you ought to be looking into all this stuff—because if you look into all the stuff, you don't have time to waste on that crap that besets you. And this is a lot more interesting than the junk that you fill your skulls with. Go **here!** Do **this** stuff!)

Doctrine and Covenants section 128, verse 21:

And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of [the] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [because the voice of God has been present throughout it all, mind you, at many occasions—and does still]! ...the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael [Micha-EL, Gabri-EL, Rapha-EL—the El or the Elohim], and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation[s]...

Is declaring a dispensation the same thing as conferring it? Can they declare it and still possess it? If they declare it, and they declare it unto me—do I possess it? Or do they retain it?

...their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (See also T&C 151:15-16)

I would suggest that in order to obtain any key, in order to obtain any right, in order to obtain any honor, in order to obtain any priesthood, you have to **perform**, because it is merely inert. And I don't care what key it is you think you possess—until you act in conformity with the law upon which it is predicated, it ain't yours. But when you do, and you lay hold of a blessing at the hand of God, that is yours and eternally so. Which is why Joseph did not surrender—having opened this dispensation—the keys of this dispensation because he did what he did. And by doing what he did, he laid hold upon it. Therefore, go **do something** for God. Go open the way. Go preach, teach, exhort, and expound, as is the responsibility of every member, Brothers and Sisters!

Did you know that "member" is an office in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? And that that office is conferred upon you whether you're male or female? And that every one of you have a responsibility to preach, teach, exhort, and expound? You are burdened, also, with a law that I'm no longer burdened by, and so I needn't give heed to some things that you still do; but I honor you, and I respect you, and I loved every minute of my membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I did not lose that because of my own volition. Some things get asked of you that require you to lay even the things you love most on the altar. And you have to choose. Each of you must choose for yourself the things that you would prefer. But if you don't give primacy to the voice of God speaking to you, you'll never lay hold upon any key, any blessing, any right, any priesthood. If all you do is what some man tells you to do—

Until you listen to God and do what God tells you to do, you will never lay hold upon anything that gives you the ability to declare your own rights, keys, honor, majesty, glory, and power of your own priesthood.

(Well, okay, now we're on a countdown, I don't want to interrupt myself mid-sentence.)

Notice, however, that once again you have this statement in 21 about a variety of things and not merely one. It's not merely unitary. The purpose of the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith was to begin a process of walking backwards to that point when it was all unitary, as it was in the beginning. Because it's been fractured, it's been fragmented, and it's been spread apart through generations. And now we need to walk our way back to the beginning, back to the point in which it was unified, as it was at the start.

We had a bunch of enthusiasm when the success in Kirtland took place—and we brought on board this enormous aneurysm. (It's like a skinny snake swallowing a huge pig. There's this gosh-awful lump there.) That was the Kirtland experience with the conversion of the Campbellites—Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt. And they came on board, and they distorted what happened in the restoration. And so **their** goal was to have a New Testament church. And that's what they wanted through Joseph Smith; that's what they demanded through Joseph Smith; and despite Joseph's encouragement to look for something else, that's what they got through Joseph Smith. Which is one of the reasons why Ezekiel 14 was a subject or topic or lesson that he had early and he had late in talking to the Saints about how they get, through the Prophet, what they want. And it's not necessarily what God wants.

You can see (in section 107) two tracks, and they are very evident. One track: they're trying to figure out church government, and you get that. But the other track is talking about the very beginning, and it's talking about Adam-ondi-Ahman, and it's talking about a dispensation at the beginning, where all this started. And you can see that the church, the converts, the people that wanted a church government got what they were asking for. But you can see God pleading for another topic, another subject, and another return.

We're gonna spend some time this year trying to get there. Tonight, we're just trying to figure out how it is we move from wherever we are back to a state of being repentant. And that requires you to exercise your effort to learn and obtain glory from God, which is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth—not darkness, dimness, error, missteps, incomplete and inadequate information. You're gonna have to face it, and you're gonna have to face it with some amount of courage. Because we all labor with a good deal of tradition that had been inflicted upon our minds and upon our hearts. And things that we may love, if they don't conform to the glory of God—intelligence or light and truth—they have to be discarded, too. Because what God wants to do is to bring you back into a state of reconciliation with Him, which comes only from bravely facing light and truth, the glory of God, the power of godliness, if you will—the very thing that Christ said was missing as an ingredient in the Christian world at the time that He talked to Joseph in the First Vision.

So, why don't we change the discs?

[Break to change the recording discs.]

Okay well, maybe we should do that all the time. Maybe we should take a break every time we get going.

Well, finishing up with that Lecture 7, paragraph 9: The... *Salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him* (Lectures on Faith 7:9).

Glory—intelligence or the light of truth—thrones, kingdoms, principalities, powers, heights, depths—these words get used in the Doctrine and Covenants section 132. We've read those. Glory of God and intelligence, [D&C] section 93:36 (see also T&C 93:11). We looked at that. Dispensations, rights, keys, honors, majesty, glory, priesthood —we've looked at that. All of these words: *salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him*. All of these words are related to an underlying notion of priesthood. And all of them are related to that oath and the covenant of the priesthood that we looked at in section 84.

In paragraph 10, Joseph translates (or Joseph refers to) a statement in the New Testament by the Savior, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Matthew 5:48; see also Matthew 3:26 RE). That will change in the Sermon in Bountiful, and Christ will say in 3 Nephi, [*Be ye therefore*] *perfect even as I, or your Father [which] is in heaven is perfect* (3 Nephi 12:48; 3 Nephi 5:13 RE). Because by the time He preached in Bountiful, He had finished the climb up the ladder. And I want to remind you of a statement that we read in Boise that Joseph gave, found in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348:

When you climb... a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until **you** learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you [pass] through the veil before you will have learned them. (Emphasis added)

Well, isn't that interesting? So now you have to pass through the veil to learn some things. It's not all to be comprehended in this world.

If any should ask, Why all these sayings?— the answer is to be found from what is before quoted from John's epistle, that when he (the Lord) shall appear, the saints will be like him, and if they are not holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect, they cannot be like him, for no being can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power. (Lectures on Faith 7:10)

When He appears, you need to be like Him. Lay down the burden of guilt; lay down the burden of sin. Stop focusing on that stuff, and become like Him. And you become like

Him by doing His works. And you do His works by serving others, by ministering to the needs of others. And when you do that, it is a natural by-product of that process, ordained by laws established before the foundation of the world, that light and truth will grow within you. You will **have** compassion when you minister **with** compassion to the needs of others. Your heart will open to—and receive within it—light and truth when your conduct reflects the same conduct as a merciful and holy and just God, whom you claim to worship. Worship Him by imitating Him. Worship Him by doing His works. Worship Him by making a living sacrifice. Set aside the junk that occupies you, and go do something that is holy for someone else. However mundane and trivial it may seem to you, when you relieve the suffering of other people, something changes in you. You become different. You become better. You become more like our Lord—because when you give whatever it is you give away, you get more in return. But make sure that what you give goes to relieve the suffering of others. ***Relieve the suffering of others.***

You're going to have to finish that path. You're going to have to rise up. If you expect to be in His presence when He returns—and He is coming in judgment—then **you're** going to have to be like Him; because if you are not like Him, you will not be able to endure His presence. Take it seriously. Study it through. Seek to be like Him whom you worship. It is possible—not while you're carrying a load of sins that trouble you and worry you and distract you, but that's what the Lord will remove from you. He can take all of that away, but it is entirely up to you to choose **then** to do something to draw nearer to Him. He can't do that because that would violate your free will. **You** have to choose to be like Him. Although He may remove all of the stains upon you, you have to go forward and not stain yourself again, because He can't stop you from doing that. You're free to choose. Therefore, choose the better part.

The atonement isn't like Tinkerbell spreading some magic dust that will make you rise up. The atonement will erase your sins and mistakes, but **you** must rise up. **You** must acquire those virtues. The glory of God **is** intelligence. And repentance requires you to acquire that intelligence—that glory of God. And you acquire it by the things that you do in His name and for His sake. And those that are here with you in need, they represent Him. And when you do it to even the least of them, He will credit that as having been done for Him. And no good deed will be gone unnoticed with Him. He even notices when the sparrows fall. So is He not going to notice when your knee bends with compassion, praying for His mercy for someone that has offended you? And when you pray for those who have offended you, do you think for one moment that that doesn't change your own heart?

The reason to rejoice and be exceedingly glad when they "say all manner of evil against you falsely" is because it affords you the opportunity, with compassion (like our Lord, who forgave even those who were in the act of killing Him—not their brutality, but their ignorance; because when the day arrives that they see things aright finally, and they realize what offense they gave out—they had no intention of offending their Redeemer. They were carrying out the execution of a criminal. And so, He had compassion on them for their ignorance)—

You have compassion for all those around you who are ignorant. If you think you know a little more than them, then use gentleness and meekness to persuade them. Sometimes, what you try to persuade them of is going to offend them. Couple it with your own testimony of the truth. Don't let them simply go away offended. Let them know that when you give offense (and you surely will give offense), let them know that you did it because of your love for them, your love of God, and your faith in the things that God is doing. When you offend, do it kindly and while bearing testimony of the truth and with the compassion that should hail from a position of greater light and truth or intelligence. They don't know what they're doing. They don't understand it yet. So help them.

In verse 11 of the Seventh Lecture, in the middle there: *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.* This is long before Nauvoo. Joseph is declaring the possibility of unification between God and man—the oneness of God and man. This is foreshadowing teachings that he will give in the King Follett Discourse, and it's right there in the Lectures on Faith. The same is true in paragraph 13: *He wanted his disciples, even all of them, to be as himself and [as] the Father: for as he and the Father were one, so they might be one with them.*

This is marvelous language. It's in the 1835 scriptures (that have been eliminated as a result of a committee in 1921—and it was removed without a vote of the saints, and therefore, I would suggest it belongs in your scriptures still).

Paragraph 15:

*The glory which the Father and the Son have is because they are just and holy beings; and that if they were lacking in one attribute or perfection which they have, the glory which they have never could be enjoyed by them, for it requires them to be **precisely** what they are in order to enjoy it. [There's that word again—"precisely". 16:] These teachings of the Saviour [most] clearly show unto us the nature of salvation, and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them—That he proposed to make them like unto himself; and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings: And for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed: and on this hinge turns the door of salvation. (Emphasis added)*

No human can be saved until that human is like God. There is so much you can do, in this world, that affords you the opportunity to be like God. There are mothers over here with little children. There's a child crying in the distance that has a mother with him. Every infant comes into this world in a condition of profound need. There isn't a mother alive who hasn't held a needy infant and not experienced the love of God because that child's existence is dependent upon her. Keep in mind that these opportunities exist everywhere—everywhere.

Still... (this is a long paragraph. This is paragraph 17, about—I don't know—a third of the way down):

It was a system of faith—it begins with faith, and continues by faith. And every blessing which is obtained in relation to it is the effect of faith, whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come. To this all the revelations of God bear witness. If there were children of promise, they were the effects of faith, not even the Saviour of the world excepted [the Savior was produced as an act of faith]... And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith: every man received according to his faith — according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges, and nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it.

This is the way in which God is no respecter of persons. **This** is the way in which you— if you will lay down your ignorance, if you will repent and turn to God—this is the way in which you can find yourself, also, the inheritor of blessings and privileges which God will not withhold from **anyone** who understands and gathers to themselves the light and the truth that comes through obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

By their faith they could obtain Heavenly visions, the ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter. (ibid)

Later, Joseph Smith made a comment about—Paul said he knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven, but I know a man who was caught up to the seventh heaven (see *DHC*, volume 5). I'll give you the cite on that in the transcript. It is sufficient, however, if you commune with those beings.

Paragraph 18:

*How were they to obtain the knowledge of God? (for there is a great difference between believing **in** God and **knowing** him: knowledge implies more than faith. And notice, that all things that pertain to life and godliness, were given through the knowledge of God;) the answer is given, through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could...obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness. (Emphasis added)*

It is **knowledge** that saves. Consequently, it is knowledge that you need to repent and obtain. "Knowledge saves a man," said Joseph Smith. "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge," said Joseph Smith (*DHC*, 4:588, 10 April 1842). Knowledge and salvation; knowledge and repentance—they are all related. But knowledge is not given so that you can take prideful advantage of the fact that you possess something. If you

have it, it is given to make you a minister, a servant, someone the Lord might be able to employ in order to raise up others. Because if you can't elevate others, then you've failed in your effort to be like Him. He came to serve. You serve, too.

20: *To obtain the faith*— and this is a ways into that paragraph,

Because to obtain the faith by which he could enjoy the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, he had to suffer the loss of all things: this is the reason that the Former Day Saints knew more, and understood more of heaven, and...heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith—to be obtained by no other means. ...where faith is, there will the knowledge of God...also, with all things which pertain thereto—revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every...necessary thing in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation; for God must change, otherwise faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom, until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent: whom to know is eternal life.

That's the purpose of the Gospel—to give you knowledge. Therefore, the way to get knowledge is to repent. It's to search into, lay hold upon, and obtain for yourself knowledge that saves—not mere theory; not mere recitations of "these symbols in the temple endowment stand for this eight items, and that stands for this, and this stands for that." Trivia is not light and truth. Light and truth will exalt you. Trivia can make you prideful.

When I gave that talk about the temple studies (and when I'm done there's going to be an announcement about another temple studies thing)—

There's a difference between the effort that is made by Margaret Barker in expounding upon the temple (and in particular, the difference between the First and Second Temple period) because Margaret Barker, as a Methodist minister, brings the knowledge that she brings at a price to herself. She has suffered an enormous amount of criticism in a lot of circles. And she's still brought forth a message that resonates with Latter-day Saints because she recreates that history in a way that conforms exactly with the way we would expect it from having the Book of Mormon. And then Latter-day Saint scholars come along, and they expound upon the temple and the temple studies, and there's an air of pride about the Latter-day Saints because "we own them," you see. And so we can look down our nose at the Christians that don't own such sacred edifices, and it all becomes one mass of pride and vanity.

You have to sacrifice, and you have to serve the Lord. And you have to have Him—and Him only—as the reason for what you do, what you say, how you act. Because He's the one that's going to judge you. There's not gonna be a peer review. There's not gonna be a panel of scholars. There aren't gonna be people who say, "I wish you'd beef-up your bibliography a bit more because it doesn't pass muster, and you will not be awarded your Ph.D. until you add more gibberish."

If knowledge saves, then it follows that repentance requires us to learn something. You must begin with the first and go on until you learn **all** the principles of exaltation.

Get out Doctrine and Covenants section 130. Doctrine and Covenants section 130, beginning at verse 18: *Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.* Now understand that we've looked at the definition of intelligence. It's the glory of God, or in other words, light and truth. So let's do that. Whatever principle of light and truth we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come. There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

Can't be changed, can't be altered, can't be fought against with any success. It can be **learned**. It can be **conformed** to. It can be **harvested**. But it's by diligence in what? And obedience to what? Knowledge and intelligence. Diligent at exactly what? Obedient to Who? Were the Nazis both diligent and obedient? Are the Jihadists both diligent and obedient? Are the drug cartels both diligent and obedient? Are the masters of the universe on Wall Street diligent and obedient?

We have a case currently pending in which we go to co-counsel as a team of lawyers because there's too many parties so that there aren't legally impermissible conflicts of interest, and so there has to be co-counsels. One of the co-counsels is located at a building in downtown Salt Lake. And inside the building, there is one of the big beneficiaries of a number of federal programs that involve billions and billions of taxpayer dollars. And so, in order to enter the building, both the client I represent and myself, as co-counsel, have to go to the front desk, show ID. They have to call down; they have to vouch for us. Then they give us a little ticket, and we get to pass by security and enter the building because, above all other things, the financial interests—and those that protect them in this country—are **diligent and obedient**. But they are not getting intelligence, and what will rise with them in the resurrection will leave them poor and weak and miserable because they are not pursuing that which gives to them the glory of God. But **you** can. Virtues are meaningless apart from righteousness. You must have both; otherwise, you can't even begin to repent.

Let's go to Second Nephi chapter 30. I want to remind you that it is knowledge which defines the millennial glory of man. Begin at verse 8 of Second Nephi chapter 30:

It shall come to pass that the Lord shall commence his work among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth. And with righteousness shall the Lord God judge the poor, and reprove

*with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling, together; and [the] little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suck[ing] child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put forth his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; **for** the earth shall be **full** of the **knowledge** of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (2 Nephi 30:8-15; see also 2 Nephi 12:13 RE, emphasis added)*

Would you like to stand in that day? Would you like to survive that burning which is to come? Then the way to obtain that—and the means to preserve yourself through that—is to obtain that knowledge which saves. Why is it possible? Beginning at verse 16:

Wherefore, the things of all nations shall be made known; yea, all things shall be made known unto the children of men. There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light; there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed. Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall at that day be revealed; and Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more, for a long time. Now, my beloved brethren, I make an end of my sayings. (ibid, vs. 16-18)

Why is it possible for such things to be revealed in that day? Why do **they** have such faith? What must **you** do in order to qualify to be among them? Does **anyone other than you** have the ability to **prepare** you? **This**—this is your dispensation. **This**. What are you going to do with it?

The Lord can lament (in the First Vision to Joseph) that all around there are those that have merely a **form** of godliness: insubstantial, unredeeming, incapable of saving. The Lord can lament that. **You** have to do something about that. The angel Moroni can say: These are the things which God intends to have happen. The culmination of all the prophecies are going to wrap up in a time following the ministrations of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Soon to come. Soon to come. Not yet, but soon. And here we are. What are you gonna do about it? The prophecies cannot be fulfilled unless those who are free to choose, **choose** to repent and to do something about what great things lay in store, and therefore, you need to know **how** great things the Lord intends to do.

I'm thirty percent of the way through an agenda tonight. I can't tell you how relieved I am of that. Every time we get another evening done, I feel lighter by the moment. We're going to pick up again in Centerville, and our next topic is going to be trying to figure out

the subject of covenants because they bear on much of what the Lord intends now to fulfill. I wish someone else were doing this. I wish none of you had ever heard my name. I wish I were an obscure trial attorney enjoying what it is—

In the perversity of my heart, I do like trial work. There's a scene—George C. Scott won an Oscar for the movie *Patton*—there's a scene where he goes over and he kisses this soldier in the middle of this gosh-awful battlefield, where tanks are smoldering and dead bodies are strewn; and there's this young man who still survived. He kisses him, and he looks around, and he says, "God help me, I do love it so!" And in the courtroom, there are times when I look around and say, "Oh, God help me; I really do enjoy trial work." I mean, it's an intellectual endeavor, and someone's always trying to shout me down and present the other side. And I'm good with that. I actually enjoy the difficulty of that kind of wrestling. I don't enjoy **this**. I really don't. If I could hand this off to one of you and say, "Okay now, you take and you run with this, and I'll just cheer you on from the sidelines," I would never do anything more than whatever I could to support you.

Somehow, for some reason, here we are 190 years on, and we're just still bogged down with the endless, trivial abuse of our time. The Gospel was intended to be delicious, exciting, awe-inspiring, filled with wonder, rejoicing, causing you to sing in your soul a song of redeeming love for Him who has rescued you. And what do we have?

Oh, oh let me read you what we have: Joseph writing from Liberty Jail in a passage that belongs somewhere between section 121 and 123 but never made its way in. I mean, if we are gonna take out (by fiat) the Lectures on Faith, why can't we put this in, at least? Here's where we are: "The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation," [Denver pauses to listen to a passing motorcycle] Not a Harley,

Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God. (*TPJS*, 137; see also T&C 138:18)

That's Joseph's lament. What are **you** doing with your time? What are **you** doing when you're called upon to teach? What are **you** doing when a teacher abuses yours and everyone else's time with something that is too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for those called of God? The Gospel is delicious. And we ought to return to it. The glory of God is intelligence, and we are absolutely unintelligent (and dumber, I might add, with our curriculum year-by-year). I don't know how we endure it unless you, like me, bring a very good book to church with you each week [audience laughter].

Well, let me end by affirming: I have loved—**loved**—every minute from the moment I found the Gospel of Jesus Christ—I have loved it above all else. I have learned more in the last 90 days... Information flows geometrically; light grows constantly.

When Moroni, excuse me, when Nephi (Second Nephi chapter 9, verse 14-ish)—about how the things that he had seen and heard, he constantly meditated upon that, writing some 40 years after the fact—

The revelations that Joseph Smith received (including that one that he received in the sacred grove) was not all to be comprehended in the first pass-through. The things of God are of deep import. Why did God reveal what He revealed when He revealed it? Why did He reveal it in the order in which He revealed it? What was He building upon? Why in the first revelation did He go there? Why in the next did He go to that point? If you think Joseph's mind wasn't caught up in the things that he had seen and heard (just as yours should be about the things that you have seen and heard), then you need to think again, because the things of God are of deep import, and time and care and careful and solemn and ponderous thoughts are the only way in which you (or anyone) can find them out. And that applies especially to you because you control you. You determine how much light and truth you will receive. And it's predicated upon a law that was ordained before the foundation of the world. Anyone of you can obey it. God is no respecter of persons, and you are authorized to exercise faith in Him unto salvation. **You** are authorized to exercise faith in Him until you know Him. You are authorized to see His face and know that He is—every one of you. Because if you intend to survive His return, you're going to have to be able to bear His presence.

Hence, the need to now talk about this stuff; and hence, the agenda that we're on. We introduced it; we talked about faith; we talked about repentance; we're going to talk about covenants next.

I know not all of you come to all of these. I don't expect you to. I don't even expect you to get the disks and listen to them. But I'm trying to transcribe them and fill in the things that I'm thinking about, even if I don't give you the scriptures. And they're up, and they'll be on the Internet and available for you to read.

I'm introducing things. I'm trying to provoke you to study. I try to provoke you to go look into this stuff. But I can't babysit you and shouldn't. I'll only make you weak and not strong if I attempt to do that. You need to take this as the beginning point and go on and discover for yourself **how** great things the Lord intends to do. And one of the neglected volumes of scripture you need to spend some time with is the Lectures on Faith. They remain scripture.

I told you how the Lord vouched for Joseph Smith. The Lord vouches for Joseph Smith again. And if no one else will say it, I'll declare it to you:

If you ignore Joseph's words, you ignore it at your peril. And if you allow any man or men, if you allow any committee, any institution, or organization to claim that they have the right to alter, neglect, or discard the words of revelation given by God to the Prophet Joseph Smith, they will damn you if you listen to them. And they will surely be damned for doing so because no one has the right to do that.

God's work is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And those who would like to throw you about by every whim of doctrine are teaching you merely the commandments of men as if they were doctrine—and they aren't! When God speaks through Joseph and we forget him, then we have no right to expect, collectively, that He's going to move anything forward for us. The first order of repentance is to remember what God gave to us through Joseph. You do that, and then you'll find God's perfectly willing to pick it up and move it forward. You don't do that, and God will simply wait for you to get around to discharge the duty that's devolving upon you.

God vouched for Joseph Smith. God spoke through him. And I don't have the right to move one of his words. But I do have the right to listen to him, to follow what came through him, and to lay hold upon the blessings that were promised as a consequence of remembering him. Because to remember the words of Joseph is to remember your Lord. Remember Him. And don't let anyone tell you that they hold some authority that allows them to neglect, change, discard, veto, forget, or contradict what God told **you** through the voice of a Prophet.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2013.10.06 Lecture 4: Covenants

October 6, 2013

Centerville, Utah

It's almost serendipitous: 40 years ago—tonight—I was in Centerville, Utah. Elder Brian Black (who baptized me) had a family in Centerville, Utah, that was still here. And the fellow who gave the opening prayer, Mel, was in the military with me. He got baptized the same year as I did, and he and I—I think we were barracks roommates at the time.

The way that the military operates is that they only deal with you by giving orders. And I found out that the military had provisions that allowed you to ask to attend a—what they called—a "religious retreat." Having found out that they would allow you to attend a religious retreat, I applied for—and Mel did, also—and I was "ordered" by the United States Department of Defense to attend General Conference in October of 1973. And so, under orders from our government, I attended General Conference in this city, 40 years ago this evening.

Back then, it was a Saturday—October the 6th. General Conference would end on Sunday, October 7th. In the closing talk that was given by Harold B. Lee (it was his last talk in General Conference because he died in December of that year; I think he died December 14th, but I may be wrong on that—he died in December of that year; it was his last General Conference talk)—he spoke about the Yom Kippur War that had commenced during General Conference that year and gave some closing remarks about how things were.

In any event, I was looking through the names of those who spoke that General Conference. Now you have to understand, I had been baptized on September 10th; we were now October the 6th, less than a month. I looked through the list of names of those who spoke in General Conference.

Because I had orders, and if you wore a uniform (and we wore uniforms), there was a door in the Tabernacle that was for active-duty service people only. And when you lined up outside that door, unlike folks that lined up other places, they let you in. And we occupied— there were either two or three rows in the tabernacle, but they were on the right-hand side, and they were very close to the front. And so I got a good look at who the Church leadership was back in those days, and I was impressed.

Harold B. Lee, H. Burke Peterson, Marion D. Hanks, James E. Faust, and Boyd Packer spoke on Friday morning, and we were there. Thomas Monson, Rex Pinegar, L. Ray Christiansen, Henry D. Taylor, O. Leslie Stone, David B. Haight, and Delbert Stapley spoke in the afternoon on Friday, and we were there. (Delbert Stapley had a grandson, Elder Stapley, who had participated in the missionary discussions. He was one of those missionaries I "used up" in the process of finally being converted and joining the Church.) Eldred G. Smith spoke on Saturday afternoon. In the Priesthood session, Marion G. Romney, N. Eldon Tanner, and Harold B. Lee all spoke. Spencer Kimball

didn't speak until Sunday afternoon. And in all candor, he didn't leave an impression. Now you have to understand that later on, Spencer Kimball was someone that I had enormous respect for. But I came and I went from General Conference having heard him talk, and it never even registered. And so when we rolled around, finally, to another General Conference and I couldn't remember who he was—though I had seen him—and I heard his voice, I wondered why on earth didn't I remember him, because his voice was as we all recall.

Well, tonight we're gonna talk about covenants and, in particular, covenants that are being referred to in a verse that we find in the Joseph Smith History, verse 39—Moroni changing the content of the text of Malachi to render it to Joseph Smith, on this fall equinox occasion, to read this way: *And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming* (see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE).

So, there is some peril if we do not have our hearts turned to these fathers. That peril is that we will be *utterly wasted at his coming* if we fail. But His coming is not limited merely to the singular "Him"—being the Lord. If you go back to verse 37 it says: **they that come shall burn them**. And therefore, when **He** comes, **they** that come with Him shall burn those who are unprepared, those who are scheduled for being *utterly wasted* at His coming. And so, we need to inquire into what exactly it is the promises were, who the fathers were that the promises were made to, and then avoid this peril of those who come burning them, that *it shall leave them neither root nor branch* (ibid), terms which, in Boise, I referred to as being genealogical, because it becomes the end of the line at that point.

In looking at the promises that were made, I want to go back to Second Nephi chapter 3 and begin there, which we also referred to earlier. Because when we're tracking back the covenants that were made, and we're talking about the promises that were made to the fathers, and we're trying to identify who the fathers are, we get a real advantage in making the determination by what we have in Lehi's blessing to his son, Joseph. Beginning at verse 4 of chapter 3 of Second Nephi, Lehi says: *I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried [away] captive into Egypt. And great were the **covenants** of the Lord which he made unto Joseph* (see also 2 Nephi 2:2 RE).

As soon as you encounter the word "covenants," an alarm ought to go off, because much of what's going to go on in the history of the world is gonna go on as a consequence of these covenants that have been made—one of the possessors of those promises and covenants being Joseph, who had been carried away captive into Egypt.

*Wherefore, Joseph truly saw **our** day* [meaning Lehi's day—and when Lehi is talking, he's talking about events that he believed that Joseph of Egypt had foreseen about what would happen in his own day]....*he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be*

broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness....Joseph truly testified, [verse 6:] A seer shall the Lord...God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins... [and he goes on to talk about this choice seer is going to bring] them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers (see also 2 Nephi 2:2-3 RE).

So the assignment that is given to this choice seer, descendant of Joseph, is that this person is going to bring to the world, to us, to the descendants, to the people in the last days *knowledge [concerning] covenants which [God had] made with thy fathers*—"thy fathers," in this statement, being: thy fathers, Joseph of Egypt. So the promises that God made to fathers before Joseph of Egypt—a seer is going to restore the knowledge about that. It may be complex wording, but it's dealing with very simple events, and the identities are important.

I will give unto him [that is, this choice seer] a commandment that he shall do none other work.... (see also 2 Nephi 2:3 RE). That is to say, he will not cause Zion to come. That was not the assignment of the choice seer. Joseph Smith was not in charge of, and not required to do, the work of bringing again Zion.

...none other work, save the work which I shall command him...I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work...he shall be great [and] like unto Moses, whom I...said I would [deliver] up [verse 11:] But a seer [I will] raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; ...unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins— (see also 2 Nephi 2:3 RE)

In verse 12 (see also 2 Nephi 2:4 RE) it talks about how there's gonna be this restoration of *knowledge of their fathers in the latter days...also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord*. And then in 15 (see also 2 Nephi 2:5 RE), it says, *his name shall be called after me...it shall be after the name of his father*—after "me" being Joseph of Egypt; so the name should be Joseph. That will also be the name of his father—*he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord [God] shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation*.

And then he goes on, and he tells Lehi [Joseph], he tells his son in verse 23 (see also 2 Nephi 2:7 RE): *Because of this covenant [that is, the one that was done with Joseph of Egypt], he [the son of Lehi] is blessed, for his [the son of Lehi's] seed shall not be destroyed, ...they shall hearken unto the words of the book. And there shall rise up one mighty among them*. I talked about that in Boise.

And so, if Joseph Smith fulfills the prophecy that was delivered to Joseph, that is recovered, in part, in the Book of Mormon, in this third chapter of Second Nephi, then Joseph Smith should give to us the ability to know something about these covenants that were made with the fathers.

Well, we do not have to rely upon merely what we have in Second Nephi chapter 3. Nor do we have to have the Brass Plates, as it turns out. Because Joseph Smith restored the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt, and you can read it, right now, in the Joseph Smith Translation, beginning in Genesis chapter 50 at verse 24. It reads slightly different than Lehi's summation given—and Lehi's choice of what he adds in, and what he selects out, and what Joseph says have some interesting things... It's absolutely worth your time to study out all the differences and to pick apart what it is that Lehi did because it tells you much about father Lehi—what he chose to include and what he chose to pass over.

However, for our purposes tonight, I want to look at what was said to Joseph that we find in the Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis chapter 50, beginning at verse 24. Joseph of Egypt says: *The Lord [hath] visited me and I have obtained [a] promise of the Lord.* This is what Lehi will refer (to in his prophecy to his son Joseph) as a covenant. Because when the Lord delivers a promise to someone, He delivers it by way of covenant. God is bound by His word. Therefore, when He delivers a promise, it is a covenant.

*I have obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of my loins [this is the covenant with Joseph of Egypt—out of **his** loins], the Lord God will raise up a righteous **branch** out of **my** loins [so that is talking about Joseph of Egypt, one of the sons of Israel, one of the twelve tribes]; And [now we're changing topics—and] unto **thee**, whom my father Jacob hath named Israel [so this is not just the descendants of Joseph, this is **all** of the twelve tribes, raised up unto **all** of the twelve tribes] a prophet; (not the Messiah who is called Shilo;) and **this** prophet shall deliver my people out of Egypt in the days of thy bondage [that's a covenant about deliverance to be had for all the tribes of Israel, not merely the descendants of Joseph].*

*And it shall come to pass that they [that is, all of Israel] shall be scattered again; and a branch shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days [now, when is **that**? Is it when he was resurrected, and he appears in Third Nephi? Or is the "latter-days" some other time?], in the Spirit of power; and shall bring them out of darkness into light; out of hidden darkness, and out of captivity unto freedom.*

*A **seer** shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of **my** [that is, Joseph's] loins [different topic, different person, different time frame].*

*Thus saith the Lord God of **my fathers** [this is Joseph speaking—his fathers would include, at a minimum, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; his "fathers," in the plural] unto me [so the Lord God of Joseph's fathers said unto him], A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins...he shall be*

esteemed highly among the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins; and unto him will I give [a] commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins, [and] his brethren [that is, other members of Israel].

And he shall bring them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers.... (JST Genesis 50:24-28, emphasis added; see also Genesis 12:36-38 RE)

Now we're beginning to have laid out in the restoration through Joseph Smith, part of what it is that we need to know in order to avoid being utterly wasted.

*He [the seer] shall do whatsoever work I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work; and he [that is, Joseph of Egypt's descendant—"seer"] he shall be great like unto **him** whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel ["him" that he's going to raise up is Moses, okay?] ...for a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt [this is Moses]; he shall be called Moses. And by this name he shall [be known] that he is of thy house [that is, "O, house of Israel"— that's the house, not Joseph's—the House of Israel]; for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son.*

And again [so we're changing topics again] a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins, and unto him [that is, this seer] will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins [that's Joseph's seer—and he's to give us God's word]... (ibid, vs. 28-30; see also Genesis 12:38-39 RE)

And then he goes on to say in verse 31 (39 RE):

*The fruit of thy loins [that is, Joseph's loins] shall write, ...the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; ...that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, ...also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false [doctrine], ...laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins [a yet future event], and bringing them to a knowledge of their **fathers** in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.*

Joseph's seer is to do this. This is what Moroni is telling Joseph in verse 39 of the Joseph Smith History.

*Out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my work shall go forth among **all** my people ["all my people" include all of the various branches of Israel], which shall restore **them**, who are of the house of Israel, in the last days.* (JST Genesis 50:32, emphasis added; see also Genesis 12:39 RE)

That's the objective. To fix and reconnect the house of Israel, restoring them in the last days.

And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you [Joseph of Egypt]; for I will remember you [Joseph of Egypt] from generation to generation; and his [that latter-day seer—his] name shall be called Joseph [as if the Lord Himself wanted to be had in remembrance in all generations—Joseph of Egypt: Joseph of Egypt who was sold into slavery; Joseph of Egypt who kept his faith; Joseph of Egypt who was sold into slavery by the jealousy of brothers whom he only sought to declare the truth to—His name shall be called Joseph] ...it shall be after the name of his father [so his father shall be that, too]; and he shall be like unto you [that is, like unto Joseph of Egypt]; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation.

*And the Lord **sware** unto Joseph that he would preserve his [Joseph's] seed forever, saying, I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, ...he shall lead them as a flock, ...he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod...*

He shall have judgment, and [he] shall write the word of the Lord....he shall not speak many words, for I will write unto him my law by [my] finger of mine own hand. And I will make a spokesman for him, and his name shall be called Aaron.

And it shall be done unto thee in the last days also, even as I have sworn. (ibid, vs. 33-36, emphasis added; see also Genesis 12:40-41 RE)

So the Lord to Joseph is swearing. It is from this text that father Lehi lifts out what father Lehi lifts out, in order to write what he composes in Second Nephi chapter 3, in the patriarchal blessing he gives to his son Joseph—the names "Joseph" and the son named Joseph, commending to the mind of Lehi attention to this very material that we've just looked at.

And so, if the seer of the last days, who was responsible for completing this assignment and fulfilling this foretold opportunity is Joseph Smith, then through Joseph Smith we should be able to say: We can learn something about knowledge of covenants—covenants that were made with the fathers. *And the seer will do none other work.*

- He will have power to bring forth God's words.
- He will restore knowledge of their fathers.
- He will restore knowledge of God's covenants.
- He will restore, ultimately, a basis that makes the House of Israel alive again.
- His name will be after Joseph of Egypt.
- It will be the same name as his father—that is, Joseph.

And in every particular, Joseph Smith **seems** to be the one about whom this is written. And therefore, doesn't seem that we need to look for another.

Chapter 4 of Second Nephi talks about (this is Nephi, now, interjecting): *He* [that is, Joseph —verse 2 of chapter 4—*he*, Joseph of Egypt] *truly prophesied concerning all his seed* (see also 2 Nephi 3:1 RE).

"All his seed" include not just the folks that were included in the tribe of Manasseh and through others that joined the party, Ephraim—descendants of Joseph in the Book of Mormon—but it includes, as well, other portions of the tribe of Joseph, scattered wherever they were throughout the world, many of whom may be here among us tonight, in your bloodlines.

Well, it's not a prophecy about Joseph's seed only. It's talking about the ministry of this latter-day prophet—and this latter-day prophet restoring knowledge. Through Joseph, then, we should be able to find knowledge of covenants made to the fathers and to identify who the fathers are.

In order to know something about covenants, Joseph Smith needed to give us some material about that. And I want to refer you to section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning at verse 8, where the Lord tells Joseph:

Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord...and not a house of confusion. Will I accept...an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was? (D&C 132:8-11)

See, everything proceeds according to law. And the government of God is not necessarily limited to an organizational structure, but it hails back to things that were committed, by God—in promises made to the fathers—which have to be fulfilled. And it doesn't matter if we try to capture that. God's purposes are ordained according to a law that was ordained before the world was.

I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you [a] commandment—that no man shall come unto my Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord. (ibid, vs. 12)

In other words, if you are going to come—whoever you are—unto the Father, the only way you are going to get there will be through the Son.

And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by me; ...whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed. (ibid, vs. 13-14)

This is another way in which we can know that *the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there* (2 Nephi 9:41, emphasis added; 2 Nephi 6:11 RE). Because when it comes to this kind of material, involving this kind of salvation—for any of the children of men—God is hands-on. And our Redeemer is the one who not only keeps the gate, protects the way, but greets those along the way whom He is going to introduce to the Father.

And it has to be *by me, or by my word, saith the Lord...* If it is not, *then it shall be thrown down [and it] shall not remain* (D&C 132:13). Only God can, or does, ordain covenants. We do not make covenants. Covenants come as a consequence of God's will, and **only** as a consequence of God's will. We can accept them, or we can reject them—but we cannot create them. He does. Our participation is limited to acceptance of—or rejection of—what He offers.

The way in which we accept the covenants is set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 130: *There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated* (D&C 130:20-21). Therefore, what is important for you to understand and to know is whatever it is that law consists of. Because the way in which you accept the covenant that has been offered to you is by learning the principle or the law upon which the blessing you seek is predicated. And then, having learned what law that is upon which it is predicated, obeying it.

We learn all of this through the revelations given to us through Joseph Smith.

Before Joseph of Egypt, one of the fathers that we need to look at is Abraham. And therefore, I want to turn to Abraham chapter 1, beginning at verse 2:

And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers...

Once again, now we have Abraham, and we've gone all the way back to him generations before Joseph of Egypt, and we encounter the same thing—that is, searching for the blessings which belong to the fathers—Abraham looking for the blessings of the fathers, hoping to find, thereby, happiness; hoping to find peace and rest for himself.

...and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge...

You know, when I spoke in Logan, I talked about repentance being related to knowledge and that it's our ignorance that damns us, most of all. Abraham perceived the same thing. And Abraham believed that redemption and possessing great knowledge went hand-in-hand. And if he could obtain that great knowledge, then he wanted to be:

a greater follower of righteousness, and [as a consequence of that] to possess a greater knowledge...

Because this is one of those laws upon which blessings are predicated. Knowledge, light, truth, the glory of God—all of those things are obtained by obedience to law. And Abraham sought for and desired to possess more light and truth. And as a result of that, he wanted inevitably to become:

*...a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and [he desired most of all] ...to receive instructions, and to keep...commandments of God. [As a result of all that desire, he] became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me **from the fathers**; it came down **from the fathers**, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or [the] first father, through the fathers unto me.*

All of this ties back, necessarily, to Adam.

I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed. (Abraham 1:2-4; see also Abraham 1:1 RE)

Everything about the original form of priesthood, everything about what it is that Abraham was seeking, all of this ties together because there is only one gospel.

In the Lectures on Faith, the Second Lecture paragraphs 37 to 53, there is a chronology given. I'm not gonna go through the chronology, and you needn't have brought it with you tonight. But that chronology is listed in the Lectures on Faith in order to save you the trouble of going through and tracking it yourself. But it was important enough to Joseph Smith to put it into the Lectures on Faith so that you know how to reconstruct the fathers— who they were.

Noah was 502 years old when Shem was born. 98 years later the Flood came. Noah was 600 years old when the Flood came; Shem was 98. (You can see that in paragraph 45 of the Second Lecture.) Shem lived to be 600. Shem was 448 years old when Noah died. Shem was acquainted with both Noah and Abraham. Abraham lived to be 175 years old, and Shem was alive and a contemporary with ~~Shem~~ [Abraham] for 150 of the 175 years of the life of Abraham. Shem knew Noah. And Shem knew those on the other side of the Flood, having lived with them for 98 years before the Flood.

Abraham had the records of the fathers. Look at Abraham chapter 1, verse 31:

But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day,

and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me (see also Abraham 2:4 RE).

Since Abraham was acquainted with the priesthood that belonged to the fathers—and since Abraham had a knowledge that was reckoned from priesthood, that goes back to the time of the patriarchs—he, as a consequence of possessing that, knew about the beginning of creation, knew about the planets, knew about the stars as they were made known unto the fathers.

Go back to Doctrine and Covenants section 121; it's talking about our dispensation. I want to look at—beginning at about verse 28:

A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest [because that's included within the knowledge that the first fathers had—that's included with what was here at one time]. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, [and] to the dry land, ...to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all [the] glories, laws, ...set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest. (D&C 121:28-32; see also T&C 138:21)

Abraham is not merely talking about something—both in this verse, Abraham 1:31, as well as what we encounter later on in the Book of Abraham about the various stars that were shown to him and the relationship between them and his Facsimile #2, as I recollect—that is, an effort to lay out a relationship in the heavens between certain positions of glory and authority. But Abraham is testifying that it was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the fathers and that those records were handed down to him. In Doctrine and Covenants section 121, we find out that that's part of what is supposed to have been included within, and is ultimately scheduled for revelation to, those that will receive the restoration of the Gospel, when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Abraham received his priesthood ordination through Melchizedek. You can see that in Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 14: *Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah* (see also T&C 82:10). Now, Bruce R. McConkie reads that verse, and he disagrees with what the church had previously taught; that is, that Melchizedek was Shem. He takes the position that this 14 means that *Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah*, means that there were fathers between Melchizedek, on the one hand, and Noah, on the other—and therefore, Melchizedek could not be Shem. I

take the view, instead, that it was received *through the lineage of his fathers even [until] Noah*, meaning from Adam down to the time of Noah, the priesthood was preserved, and that Melchizedek—that is, Shem—received it from Noah. In any event, it's clear in verse 14 that Abraham received it from Melchizedek. But if you go to Abraham chapter 2, in the Book of Abraham, beginning at verse 6:

But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which [will I] give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice. For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence— ...behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, ...I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations; ...I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father (see also Abraham 3:1 RE).

"Ordination" and "confirmation by the voice of God" are two separate events. We'll speak more about this in the next talk, which will be on Priesthood. But it's enough to simply take note of that here.

Jehovah, speaking directly to Abraham, tells him that from this moment—from the moment God spoke to Abraham before his departure—Abraham would now become the father of all the righteous. Now you ought to ask yourself: Why would that be the case? Why is it that Abraham becomes the prototype of who will be saved and the father of whomever **is** saved from that point going forward? When you go back to the fathers and you begin with Adam—although there were apostasies (and apostasies began immediately—it was generations before Eve bore Cain and thought she had a son that would, at last, be faithful. They were grandparents when Cain was born. And then Able was born. And Cain slew Able. And Seth came as a replacement to the grandparents, Adam and Eve. And from Seth reckons then the seed of the righteous)—

Father to son to grandson to great-grandson—when you look at the list of those that are gathered together into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, in the first Zion, where the Lord came and dwelt among them—And he rose up and he called Adam, Michael [El being the name of God]—Jehovah appeared in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and you have — seventh from Adam being Enoch—you have a line of continuity from Adam, directly down all the way until you arrive at Shem.

But when you hit Shem, it interrupts. There is a complete falling away. There are no righteous fathers for Abraham. His fathers had turned to idolatry. Abraham is the prototype of the saved man and the father of all who would be righteous thereafter because Abraham represents coming to the truth in a generation of apostasy. Abraham represents coming back to the light, despite the fact that his fathers taught him idolatry. Abraham represents the challenge that every man who would be saved from that point forward must find themselves within and then overcome: the idolatry of their fathers. Abraham is the prototype.

And so Abraham is acknowledged by that same Jehovah who visited with the fathers in Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified Himself again to Abraham who—after apostasy—becomes, literally, the first—the first to return to the righteousness of the first fathers; the first to return to the religion that belonged in the beginning to mankind; the first to discover *a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, [as] also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers* (Abraham 1:31; see also Abraham 2:4 RE).

Abraham was the one who desired to be *a follower of righteousness, ...one who possessed great knowledge, ...to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess...greater knowledge* still (Abraham 1:2; see also Abraham 1:1 RE). It is this which made him a candidate the Lord could speak to. It's this that made him the prototype in his generation of what it takes to turn away from idolatry, to turn away from the kind of corrupt and degrading religions that were then in play on the earth—the fertility cults and the human sacrifices and the vileness that surrounded him. And then, having done so, to be asked by God to slay his son, as if there was some legitimacy to the rites that were practiced all around him.

Now in the version that we have in the King James Bible, Isaac is not slain. There is an older tradition—that you can find in the book of Hebrews, and you can find it in the Book of Mormon—where Isaac is slain, and he's brought back to life, rather like Lazarus is brought back to life. But it's clear that the Old Testament version that we have in King James: he raises his hand with a knife to commit the act, and then the ram is found in the thicket to deliver him. Sometimes, as it turns out, rams are not found in thickets, and the sacrifice will be required.

The Lord says:

*I will bless them that bless thee, ...curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) [because fundamentally, what distinguishes Abraham and what distinguishes the covenant is the knowledge that he has—Abraham is in possession of something because Abraham **knows** some things that are true that relate back to the very beginning; and as a consequence of that, those who are given the same **knowledge** necessarily have to belong to the same priesthood] ...in thy seed (that is, [in] thy Priesthood) [because you **become** a son of Abraham if you take upon yourself the requirements for the covenant; you inherit that, just as Abraham inherited it—it comes down from the beginning from*

the fathers], *for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or...seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking [un]to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee.* (Abraham 2:11-12; see also Abraham 3:1 RE)

And there again, Abraham stands as the prototype of the saved man, the father of the righteous, the example of all those who, coming out of apostasy, find themselves redeemed—because all the servants that will be acknowledged by Him must seek Him earnestly and will, as the Lectures on Faith promise, assuredly find Him. Everyone who receives the gospel, this gospel (verse 10 of that Abraham chapter 2): *As many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name.* You ought to ask yourself: What is *this Gospel*? And are you yet in possession of it? Because it would appear that the promises made to the fathers includes rather more than what we know about, as yet.

But it is, nevertheless, the case that it is through Joseph and Jacob, Isaac and Abraham that the promises remain. You can see that in Doctrine and Covenants section 27. We only need to look at verse 10 of section 27: *[As] also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain;* that is, promises are still in play, right now, as a consequence of what God did in covenant with Joseph and covenant with Jacob and covenant with Isaac and covenant with Abraham. Those promises are still in play. This is what Moroni was talking to Joseph Smith about. *And [verse 11] also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days.* Promises that are in play today go all the way back to them.

The covenant which we receive will come as consequence of **them**. What **they** got secured for **us** promises which the Lord intends to honor. Therefore, when we are the beneficiaries of those covenants, we are going—like Abraham—to have restored to us a *knowledge of the beginning of creation, ...the planets, ...the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers,* and as Section 121 tells us is going to be the case in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Time.

Go to Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14, beginning at verse 25:

Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram. Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, ...quenched the violence of fire. ...thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, It being after the order of the Son of God. (JST Genesis 14:25-28; see also Genesis 7:17-18 RE)

There is an order that is after the son of God. But there was a covenant that preceded even the days of Melchizedek; it came down as a consequence of what happened with Enoch.

*It was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas...dry up [the] waters, ...turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, ...break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things...according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; **and this by the will of the Son of God** which was from before the foundation of the world. (ibid, vs. 29-31, emphasis added; see also Genesis 7:18-19 RE)*

See, it's not your will. Even if you're given this ordination, it is by the will of the Son of God. That is to say, nothing gets broken, nothing gets held in defiance, nothing gets done except by the will of the Son.

*Men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven. ...now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace...his people [his **people**] wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved **it** unto the latter days, or the end of the world; And hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire. (ibid, vs. 32-35, emphasis added; see also Genesis 7:19-20 RE)*

These are they who are coming, whose glory and brightness will burn them up who are on the earth, who are unprepared to receive them. **These** are they about whom Moroni was speaking to Joseph Smith.

And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace....he lifted up his voice, ...he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; Him [unto] whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all...he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need. And it came to pass, that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession; according to the covenant which he had made, ...according to the blessing[s] wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him. (ibid, vs. 36-40; see also Genesis 7:20-21 RE)

Joseph Smith restored this information—as he restored the rest of what he gave us—in order for us to understand that when God swears by Himself to the Fathers about what it is He intends to accomplish in the last-days, and we get near enough to that event so that we're over the horizon and inevitably going to fall into that dark day, some few will take it seriously enough to say, like Abraham, "I would like to seek for the blessings of

the Fathers. I would like, also, to have from God a covenant. I would like to inherit what it was that was given in the beginning."

God alone makes the covenant. We accept it by abiding the conditions. The only thing we can do on our own is attempt to make **vows**. We can make **vows**, but Christ discouraged us from doing that in Matthew. Go back to Matthew chapter 5—this is in the Sermon on the Mount (you read the same thing in 3 Nephi chapter 12). But look at Matthew chapter 5, verse 33:

[And] again, ye have heard...it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but [thou] shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black [well, cosmetically some of you women can, but...]. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (see also Matthew 3:24 RE).

He'll say the same thing in 3 Nephi chapter 12, verses 33-37 (see also 3 Nephi 5:29 RE).

The fact of the matter is that you can make a vow to God, but you can't make a covenant with God. God can make a covenant which you can fulfill by your performance. God can offer you something; it's up to you to accept it. And you accept it by what you do. It's not enough to say, "Yea, Lord; I'll go out, and I'll do as I'm bidden." You have to do it—because it's only in the doing that the covenant is kept. It's only in the doing that the covenant is able to be empowered sufficient to give you the blessing upon which a law has been established for the blessing to be predicated. You can't get there without God offering and you accepting.

So now we should realize, I hope, that that city which Melchizedek, the King of Peace, was able to teach righteousness sufficiently so that it was taken up from the earth, reserved to the last days of the end of the world—

The **next** time we have such an event on the earth, the **next** time there is this kind of gathering and this kind of a population anywhere, it will not be for the purpose of going up. It will be for the purpose of permitting those who have gone up to come back down. It will be for the purpose of having those who can endure the presence of those who come because those who come will burn up all those who are unworthy. And therefore, **some few** need to be gathered so that the earth is not utterly wasted at His coming.

As it was in the days of Noah, so [also shall it be] at the [time of the] coming of the Son of Man (JS-M 1:41; see also Matthew 11:11 RE). How many people were required in order to have the Ark be an acceptable place in which God could preserve all of humanity? It was a portable Ark of the Covenant in which the family was preserved. And so, if it's going to be as it was in the days of Noah—

There is this net that has been cast out to gather together all manner of fish. But as the Lord tells the parable, the angels are going to come, and they're going to pick through all manner of fish, and they're going to keep the good, and the rest are going to be scheduled for burning. And so the question is, how diligent ought the search be into the things of God? How carefully ought we to consider the things that have been restored to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith?

The fact is that this stuff is assigned to our dispensation. And I'm reading from the Book of Mormon, which the world does not have or accept. I'm reading from the Book of Abraham, which the world does not have or accept. I'm reading from the Joseph Smith Translation, which the world does not have and accept. All of you have this information in front of you. All of this material has been restored through someone that we claim we honor and regard as a prophet.

Well, they who come will burn up those who are unprepared. And therefore, what should we be doing in order to make sure that we are included among those who **are** prepared?

Well, I wanna look more into Enoch. So let's go back to the book of Abraham—oh, excuse me, the Book of Moses. Moses chapter 7, beginning at verse 60:

*And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live [this is covenant language—this is God swearing by His own life. This is God promising that if He lives, so shall this word live; if He's alive, He shall vindicate what He's about to say—As I live], even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah; And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, **but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth,** [even] unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: **Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there** [these are they who, when they come, will burn up those unprepared for their coming so that it leaves neither root nor branch], ...we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be [called] Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; ...for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to*

dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years; But before that day he saw great tribulations among the wicked; ...he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men's hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which [shall] come upon the wicked. (Moses 7:60-66, emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:22-23 RE)

This is the Lord describing to Enoch what would happen by way of covenant, the Lord swearing *as I live, even so will...* and He tells him what's going to come to pass in the last days. This is among the promises that were made to one of the Fathers—and this **is** one of the Fathers, and these **are** the covenants whose time is now upon us. This is the day in which we need to be prepared, so that those who went before and ascended up the ladder can return and fall upon your neck and kiss you, and you fall upon their neck and kiss them—a sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship between you here and them there, the Lord promising and covenanting these things are gonna happen.

But notice—there has to be a tabernacle; He has to come and take up His abode. There has to be preparation made. These things require some effort to be made **here**, in order to prepare for His return. If there is no one here who is willing to engage in what's necessary to bring this to pass (because everyone looks around and expects someone else to do it), then you're neglecting a duty that's devolving upon you as one of those who was assigned to come down, in this day, in order to honor the fathers and honor the Lord, by allowing the covenants that have been made to be fulfilled.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 107, because in this we see that first Zion:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth [his son], Enos [his grandson], Cainan [the son of Enos], Mahalaleel [son of Cainan], Jared [son of Mahalaleel], Enoch [son of Jared], and Methuselah [son of Enoch], who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. (D&C 107:53; see also T&C 154:19)

This is the original, first, patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there. And as he's giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death: *the Lord appeared unto them*. So the Lord comes to dwell with these seven high priests and Adam:

The Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him [Mich-a-el] Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam [Ask yourself, what comfort is it that the Lord administers?], and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, ...thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto

the latest generation. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time. (ibid, vs. 54-57; see also T&C 154:19-20)

This is the original covenant. **This is** the first father. **This is** what was set in motion before the death of Adam, under the binding influence and ratification of the Holy Ghost (or the mind of God), in which Adam, under the influence of that Spirit, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. This is the original covenant. This is the original father. Words spoken as a consequence of the influence of the Holy Spirit become the words of God. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled. The everlasting covenant in our day is "new" only as a consequence of it having been restored to our attention **recently**—it is **not** a new thing; it is a very old thing, going back to the days of Adam. It was known to him. **You** were known to him. What was going to happen in your day was predicted and promised as a consequence of him.

Prophecies, as I've said before, revolve around two (and primarily two) events only— one being the first coming of the Lord; the other one being the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the world. Now, there are plenty of prophecies that reckon to other events that are intermediate. However, the primary focus is the first and the second coming of the Lord—the vindication of the promise that the Father made in the beginning that He would redeem us all **from the grave**, and the vindication of the promise that, at some point, the world would come to an end as to its wickedness, and there would be peace again on the earth. Everything revolves around those two prophetic events.

The seed that's to be preserved—and the effort that the Lord has made to try and preserve the seed that He needs to have in order to establish a population on the earth at His coming—is a topic about which Zenos prophesied, an allegory that was picked up by Jacob; and Jacob preserves it in his testament, the Book of Jacob, in chapter 5 (see also Jacob 3 RE). Nephi wrote the first books in the Small Plates of Nephi, and in there is his testimony, is his prophecy. What he did was he adopted the words of Isaiah in order to explain what it was that he, Nephi, had seen. But he used Isaiah's words as the means to do that. And Jacob does the same thing.

Jacob says, "I want everyone to come up to the temple; I'm gonna deliver to you a prophecy." And when they get there and he delivers his prophecy, he reads them the allegory that's taken from Zenos, which goes on and on about the history of God's chosen people. And when he finishes reading this lengthy chapter from Zenos, he says, "Here's the words of my prophecy 'cause I told you I was gonna give it. Here it is; it's coming: What I just told you is true!" And that's Jacob's testimony. Jacob adopts the words of Zenos in order to bear testimony of the things which he, Jacob, had been taught by the Lord when the Lord spoke to him face-to-face.

Jacob didn't invent a new allegory. Jacob didn't invent a new narrative. He didn't invent a new story. And he didn't invent new scriptures. He simply took the words of prophets that went before, and he said, "Here they are. The words of my prophecy are: They are true."

Nephi had done the same thing. Jacob does the same thing. And so in Nephi, Jacob saw the example which he chose to follow, and he did follow. And we're gonna look at this prophecy, which, delivered by Zenos, is reaffirmed, ratified, renewed, and a second witness is given to us, in the form of Jacob in the fifth chapter of Jacob.

But as I understand it, we're gonna take about a two-minute break while you change discs. So—

[time lapse for disc change]

Alright, so I want to skip to the time period that is relevant to our day in Jacob chapter 5, beginning at verse 48—because all the rest of that stuff is past history, and what we're trying to do now is to figure out, from where we are, how we get to the spot in which we might not be burned up, root and branch.

Beginning at verse 48: *And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of [the] vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good?* (see also Jacob 3:22 RE). That is to say, the roots, the original covenant, the original stock from which we reckon—they were good. But we've become lofty in the way in which we approach things, and as a consequence of that, we have done something that has so cumbered the construct of where we find ourselves, that we've essentially destroyed the ability of the roots to do us any good.

And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves [that is, their pride, their haughtiness; they decided that they were driving this and not the covenants that were originally made in the beginning], Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have [all] become corrupted? And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let us go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard, for I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard? But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer. And the Lord said: Yea, I will spare it a little longer, for it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard. (Jacob 5:48-51; see also Jacob 3:22 RE)

See, the Lord (despite the fact that He can't think of anything else that He's left undone in all of His preparations—and it is only that; it is only His preparations)—

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 19, and look at what it is that the Lord did for us in the atonement. In describing what He went through—in verse 19 of section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the Lord says: *Glory be to the Father, ...I partook and finished **my** preparations unto the children of men* (emphasis added; see also T&C 4:5). That's what **He** did! And He has finished that. **He** finished **His** preparations. But 20, now, is us: *Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power*

(see also T&C 4:6). That's us. He's done His part. What more could He do? Well, the only other thing He could do is rob us of our agency, and He's not prepared to do that because our existence then would come to an end—because without the freedom to choose, we don't have existence. Therefore, what more could He have done? But it does grieve Him that He's going to lose the trees of his vineyard.

Wherefore [the Lord says], let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard [that's where we find ourselves], and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came [that is, let's restore the covenant—or at least make it possible for it to be so]; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter [that's coming], and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof. And this will I do that the tree may not perish, that, perhaps [perhaps; on the off chance that; that without the ability to control the outcome; that depending upon what you decide to do; perhaps] [the Lord may preserve unto Himself] the roots thereof for mine own purpose [that is, some of the promises that were made back to the Fathers (that their seed would not be utterly destroyed), might be fulfilled...perhaps]. (Jacob 5:52-53, emphasis added; see also Jacob 3:23 RE)

How great a number is required in order for the Lord to vindicate His promise? It's not numerosity. It's never been about a big volume. It's the quality of the salvation. Because if you can save but one, what you have saved is infinite and eternal. And therefore, it continues on forever.

Behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would are yet alive... (ibid, vs. 54; see also Jacob 3:23 RE). Those promises remain; they are still in play. What the Father promised—what the covenants that were established did—remain in play. It is **yet** possible for the Lord to vindicate everything that has been given.

Wherefore, that I may preserve them also for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of this tree, and I will graft them in unto them (ibid). This is the process by which the house of Israel is restored, not in the way that you mass-produce, but in the way in which some rise up and lay hold upon that original religion that belonged to the Fathers, that came down from the beginning, that existed one time—that is to exist again.

Yea, I will graft [into] them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self.... Notice the word "mother" appears in there, too—the mother tree. *...when they [may] be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me, [that] I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard* (ibid).

And then they go through things, verse 61 (24 RE): *...call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit....* That's the whole purpose of the endeavor. And when they

call servants in order to help them, the labor of the servants is confined to trying to make the vineyard finally produce fruit again.

Verse 62 (25 RE): *Let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard.*

He tells them again in verse 64: *...the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it [so be] that these last grafts shall grow, and [shall] bring forth...natural fruit, then [ye shall] prepare the way for them, that they may grow.*

Again in verse 71 (26 RE):

For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh... the season speedily cometh; ...if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. And it came to pass...the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them...

Because the Lord, in the last effort, is not going to leave the servants (that He sent) unattended to by **His** ministrations. This is why—in the verses we've been reading and every location we've been at—we find the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ: direct, immediate, and involved. He continues to remain personally in charge of what is going to happen. But as it begins to happen, they have to sit back and watch—because the question isn't: Is the laborer any less, any well prepared, any less capable, any less complete? The question is: What are the branches going to do?

You can minister all you want to the tree, but the tree has to respond, sometimes to what they view as offensive pruning, offensive digging, offensive conduct of cutting and moving and grafting—and saying, What you have here is error; what you have here is a bundle of false tradition that will damn you.

You can plant the doctrine; you can restore the truth; you can have the Prophet Joseph Smith declare to you that he wants to be held to account for every word of the testimony that he delivers to you in a canonized set of scripture. But if you decide that you're going to throw that away—and you will not allow it to graft in and inform you about the nature of God and the nature of the religion that God is seeking to deliver to you—then the ministrations and the pruning and the care does not result in **fruit**. It simply results in a rather damaged vineyard, continuing to produce precious little—other than what is suitable to be gathered in bundles and burned—the loftiness of the people.

Grafting is to restore, to reconnect, to return, or in other words, to *plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to [the] fathers*. That's what Moroni said. That's why Moroni reworked the language of Malachi in verse 39 of the Joseph Smith History: *He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers*. The work has been for one purpose. Joseph Smith began it. And he laid

out all the information necessary for you to be able to identify who the Fathers are. And he laid out all the information necessary for you to be able to identify what the covenants were. And now the question is, Are we able, at this point, to preserve the roots, which is the Lord's purpose, by producing fruit in our day?

Well, I'm hoping, as a consequence of the things that we've looked at tonight, that you conclude that the choice seer in Second Nephi chapter 3, verse 7—and in Genesis chapter 50—was more than answered by the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith. And I hope that you conclude that the knowledge that was supposed to be restored through Joseph—of the Fathers and the covenants given to the Fathers, that will ultimately result in restoring Israel, that's referred to in Second Nephi chapter 3, verse 15—has also been something that Joseph Smith accomplished.

Now, I want to change subjects only slightly, in order to address something that we have all been fixated upon. And one of the problems with understanding the will of God is that religion was always intended to be proven—and **provable**—personally. I cannot prove it to you. You cannot prove it to me. But God can prove it to both of us.

When it comes to the proof of the things of God, it is *necessarily anecdotal*. Anecdotal proof means that someone went out and they had an experience, and they come back and they tell you, as an anecdote, that that is what happened to them. You cannot know whether—when they tell you what happened to them—they are telling you the truth or not. What you can do is say, "Joseph Smith seems to persuade me; Joseph Smith seems to have arrived at a point in which the things that have come to us appear to be beyond the capacity of a man to accomplish; Joseph Smith seems to say things which—because of their volume, because of their consistency, because of their apparent purity—appear to me to be something which hails from God." But you must **trust** him.

The only way in which you can **know** for yourself is if you go out and you encounter something **for** yourself—in which you come back from that experience and say, "God spoke also to me. Therefore, as a consequence of God speaking to me, I now know something which—independent of Joseph Smith and independent of these scriptures—God has covenanted with me, and I know now to be true." **Your** knowledge of God is necessarily anecdotal. **Your** knowledge of God is necessarily yours and yours alone—your property, belonging to you; your **covenant**, in the final analysis, in which God promises, by His own voice to you, in words that He cannot break (because He is a God of truth, and He is the same God today as yesterday and will be the same tomorrow; He does not change). When you fall into His orbit, you are now revolving around the center, in which all truth is to be found.

All the answers to the dilemmas that you have are to be given. But they're to be given to you, individually, by Him and not by another. Even if a man has power to declare things that have been kept hidden from the beginning of the world until now, it's of no use if it's mere voyeurism, if it's just entertainment; it's not supposed to be entertaining. It may appropriately be inspiring. But if it is inspiring, it's only so if it results in you taking action. Because the action that's required is for you to go out and to acquire for yourself your

own anecdote, your own experience—if you will, your own testimony; or more correctly, your own knowledge of the things of God.

One of the reasons why we look at the scriptures is because these are evidence of how often the Lord has—and how frequent He does—covenant with those who seek after Him. When the restoration began through Joseph Smith, there was already in place a restorationist movement; it was all over frontier Ohio, moving into upstate New York. That restorationist movement already knew that what was wanted was a New Testament church—what was **needed** was a New Testament church that was modeled, governed, patterned, and authorized in the same way in which Jesus had authorized a New Testament church in the meridian of time.

But what was Jesus up to in the meridian of time in establishing that church? He was about to launch the Gospel into the Gentile world, in which you would not **find** those who could organize themselves as the House of Israel. Therefore, in order to accomplish that, as a substitute for the twelve princes of Israel (the twelve sons of Jacob), He called twelve apostles to model that family. And they called 70 others, because the family of Israel included 70 others—in Exodus chapter 1, verse 5, you'll find that when they went into Egypt, the family of Israel consisted of 70. And so He remodeled the ancient family of Israel in the New Testament church.

But the restoration of the Gospel in the last days is not reaching back to the meridian of time. The restoration of the Gospel in the last days is reaching back, at a minimum, to the time of Enoch. Because what you have to have is not the center. You have to have —walking back in a mirror image to—the beginning, so that the symmetry of the history of mankind matches at the end as it was in the beginning. It's unfolding according to a pattern. It's unfolding according to a plan. It is vindicating the promises and the prophecies that were made, beginning with Adam in the first days.

And what is wanted in the last days are those who will at last say: "I am not satisfied with my Sunday School lessons and the disappointment that I see all around me. I'm not prepared to wait on another before I rise up to know God myself." If any of **you** lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to all men liberally. He does not upbraid; that is, He doesn't send you away discouraged, telling you, Don't do that; don't ask me that.

We saw in that first talk in Boise that we were commanded to pursue after the mysteries of God. What is more mysterious than what went on in the beginning generations? Because we have so little left from which to reconstruct that. And yet, we have enough to know the pattern that the Lord intended the last days to unfold in accordance with. And that pattern was to return us, in the end, to what was here in the beginning—to return us to a state of knowledge about things that He has always had in His heart as the goal, as the ambition, as the desire to fulfill—not a New Testament church, though a New Testament church is absolutely part of the pattern.

When the Lord hung on the cross and the sun was darkened at noon, if you looked up in the sky to see what was overhead, you would see the sacrificial lamb in the pattern of

the stars (that we call Aries today). Proceeding forth from under the foot of Aries—we have renamed it "the bands of Pisces," but it should be more appropriately rendered the "net" of Pisces— because from under the foreleg of the Lamb was cast out a net. And that net gathers in at least two kinds of fish. The larger one that is gathered in the net is circumnavigating the ecliptic and will do so eternally. The larger group in the starfield will never rise up to the North. The smaller group, the smaller star field of Pisces, also caught in that same net, is pointed to the sides of the North, where the Throne of the Father is found—the spot around which all things revolve.

The religion that was established in the beginning and the testimony that was set out in the stars above us—that we cannot touch, corrupt, corrode, alter, or apostatize; and leave neglected and forgotten, beyond our ability to reach to—that testimony remains overhead still. And it serves **you** no purpose because when you can't destroy the testimony written in the heavens, then you simply cause ignorance or, in the words we read tonight from Enoch, **darkness** to reign upon the earth. Satan's content with darkness; works just as well as anything else.

The God of heaven intends for the testimonies that He has given to be understood. And in the beginning, they **were** understood. Now don't think that you can start doing Google searches and you can reconstruct what it was they knew. I know, 'cause I've looked at it [audience laughter]. And I've looked at the best sources that are out there. And I've bought a library of material to look into whether or not it would be possible to talk about these things without using any source other than—

Francis Rolleston did a really good job of laying a bunch of stuff out. John Pratt uses Rolleston in a lot of what he's written. And [Joseph] Seiss followed, thinking... but could do better. And I can tell you—and I've looked at what John Pratt has done as well, a Latter-day Saint astronomer, who's paid attention and written articles in Meridian Magazine—and I can tell you that the resources simply do not exist. And you would probably be better off not trying to reconstruct it, at this point, because even the constellations are so messed up in what has been bequeathed to us.

One of the earliest ones is a constellation that you can find at an Egyptian format at Dendra. And it's a mess, and it's late, too, though the Egyptians tried to preserve the things that came down from the beginning, as we read in the Book of Abraham. The Pharaoh sought earnestly to imitate the order that came down from the beginning. And the Pharaoh succeeded, in large measure, in doing that. And he was a righteous man:

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom...judged his people wisely...justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even...the reign of Adam, [as] also... Noah, his father. (Abraham 1:26; see also Abraham 2:3 RE)

Pharaoh was not out there freelancing. He was trying to imitate something—and Egypt did a good job of preserving some things that have fallen into decay elsewhere. But the

restoration through Joseph Smith, and the promises that were made to the fathers, and the statement that was made by Moroni to Joseph on the evening that he came to him and talked about—and reworded—the promise given through Malachi, all of these are pointing to something that is, at this moment, still incomplete—a work that is, at this moment, still undone; a project that remains for us, if we will receive it, to finally receive.

Because the way in which Zion is going to come about is going to necessarily be something that is so comfortable and so familiar on the earth, as a pattern, reflecting what it is that exists in the heavens—that they who come not only do not burn them up, but they fall upon them and they kiss their necks because, at last, they have a sister and a brother on the earth—united by belief; united by covenant; united by knowledge; united by light and truth or, in other words, the glory of God, which is intelligence. Because the purpose of the Gospel has always been to inform, to edify, to raise up, to instruct. It was never meant to be reduced to something that is merely repetitious. It was intended to challenge you to your very core. And what you do and what you think and how you act—it's intended to make you godlike in your understanding. And you're not godlike when you're bored out of your mind in a meeting [audience laughter].

If you have the opportunity to teach, you **must** push the envelope. You **must** teach, instruct, and try and raise people up. The grafting serves no purpose if it simply continues to produce the same barrenness. *Fruit* is a genealogical term. *Fruitful and multiply* was what Adam was told to be with Eve, at the beginning. It's about preserving a **family of Gods**, if you will. It's about creating a circumstance in which it is possible that the work—which began an eternity ago—can continue to go on for an eternity from now, because **you** were saved; because **you** were redeemed; because **you** tied into that same connection that unifies all of the Gods who have gone before.

The work of salvation is not achieved by your ignorance and indifference. And the Gospel of Christ is not limited to making you feel better about yourself. Quite frankly, my wife and I marvel, all the time, at how unprepared and unworthy she and I feel in everything that has gone on. But—I know God. And therefore, because I know God, I am confident that you can know Him, too—absolutely confident that you can know Him, too; and that He **will** speak to any one of you, just as He spoke to Joseph Smith; and that He will answer any earnest seeker. No one is sent away disappointed.

Do you think the Lord, who would not turn away the blind and the halt, the crippled and the leprous—

Do you think the Lord who, seeing the widow whose only son was being carried away dead and was moved with compassion to restore the life of that young man, so that she (in that circumstance, in that culture, in that environment)—she now had future security because she had a son to look out for her—Do you think that that Lord doesn't intend to answer the prayers of the earnest seeker?

My suspicion is that God has answered, and you've turned a deaf ear to much of what you've looked for because you want something other than the answers He's already

given in the material that sits in front of you, unexamined. My suspicion is that if you would spend time looking into the revelations given us by the Prophet Joseph Smith (and studying the history, however perilous that may prove to be to you), that you will conclude that God's already had an answer to the inquiry that you've made, and that with a little effort, you can find it. And when you find it, you'll hear the voice of God saying, "There it is. Now was that so hard? [audience laughter] Why don't you keep going and see what else is in there for you." Because this stuff was given to us at the price of the life of a 38 1/2 year old young man and his older brother, whose blood was shed in order to restore what we now have in our possession. And we take it lightly, and we look away.

I could write my own Gospel. I could bear my own testimony. I could invent a new narrative about our Lord if it were necessary to do so. But I'll tell you, the only thing that is necessary is to open the scriptures and read them and to tell you: the things that we've looked at tonight are true—like Jacob.

In fact, if you go all the way back to Jacob chapter 6: *And now, behold, my brethren, as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive-tree, must surely come to pass* (Jacob 6:1; see also Jacob 4:1 RE).

So here's the words of **my** prophecy: that the things that we have looked at this evening, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith—the seer named Joseph, the son of a father named Joseph—fulfilled the promise of Joseph of Egypt, and they are all true. And I know them to be true. And you can know them to be true, too. But the price you have to pay in order to gain that knowledge is to pay some attention to what it was that was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Otherwise, they're just something gathering dust on a shelf. Don't read them as if you're trying to vindicate the religion that you think that you already understand. Don't read them as if you're trying to defend your current group of preferred doctrines. Read them as if you are as ignorant of the will of God as the convert is that you hope to make living somewhere in Florida or New Guinea or Guatemala. Because the truth of the matter is that we have been devolving in our understanding, from the day of Joseph Smith until today, at an ever accelerating rate. And what we have left, Enoch called "gross darkness."

I bear testimony that Joseph was a prophet. I bear testimony that our Lord lived and lives. I'm one of those who can say that I'm a witness of that. I have seen His suffering. I have heard His voice. He doesn't intend that I be a solitary witness of Him or Joseph be one. He intends for everyone of you to rise up and do as James bids you to do: if you lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to you—He gives to all of us—liberally. He's real. It is His work to bring this stuff to pass. The only thing that we can do is to offer to be a servant. And I am confident that I'm a poor one of those. But I am His servant. And I serve Him—however poorly, however offensively, however inadequately. He intends to call (in the plural) **servants** to fulfill what needs to be done in the last days. He does intend to bring again Zion. That will be His—and not a man's—work.

And when we get together again—or if you listen to the CD's again—the next time we talk, the subject is going to be Priesthood. And the time after that (we'll take a break, but the time after that), we're gonna talk about Zion. And hopefully—as a consequence of covering the subjects that we do, in the order that we do them—you'll begin to appreciate the restoration that has come about through the Prophet Joseph Smith as only the beginning of the work of God in the last days; and that much of what is left yet to be accomplished will not be accomplished unless it is through **others**, eventually leading to the return of the natural fruit—a proposition that remains a challenging and undone, incomplete labor.

The things I've talked about tonight were chosen precisely because they focus on the issue—the real issue, involving covenants—that we need to begin to understand in the last days, in order to know that the covenants of the Fathers (and the work of reuniting His children with the Fathers) is something that is yet to be accomplished but is something which, hopefully, we will see begin to happen **again**. Joseph did not return without some success. Joseph was able to obtain what he sought. Now **we** need to do the same.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2013.11.02 Lecture 5: Priesthood

November 2, 2013

Orem, Utah

Oh, welcome, welcome Saturday morning. I guess in some parts of the world, in some groups (subgroups), it's Sabbath morning even still. 40 years ago, I had been a member of the Church for almost 2 months. Bishop Ernie Ellsworth (he would be transferred—he worked for the Navy, although he was a civilian—he would be transferred to Hawaii shortly after I left New Hampshire, but he was still Bishop at that point), and he called me to be the ward newsletter writer for the Portsmouth, New Hampshire Ward. That was the first calling I had in the Church. Although, before **that**, I had...

The fellow who ordained me to the Aaronic Priesthood (George Hoger, he was the Elders Quorum President; he ordained me—I mean, his line of authority... A topic that we might look at a little today...), and he had made me a home teacher, and then he took me home teaching. And I had a route that required that I leave the state of New Hampshire in order to go home teach ('cuz the wards and stakes back in New England, particularly in those days, were enormous). And so, I had to leave the state in order to home teach.

I had a fellow who was inactive and kinda hostile and lived up in Maine. And I went to home teach him with George, and he was kind of angry and upset and hadn't had a home teacher in a while and wanted to know what the crap we were invading his privacy for. Ya know, this was, ya know, my first impression of what home teaching was all about. And after he had vented a little while, and me (in the zeal of my recent conversion), I asked him, "Well, why the hell are you a damn Mormon, then, if you're gonna act like this?" Well, he showed up in the Portsmouth Ward shortly thereafter, and he said, "I got home taught. My home teacher wanted to know why the hell I was a damn Mormon." He said he thought that was interesting enough that the Church probably has some new characters in it. He was gonna show up and see what this was all about.

Well, today we're talking about priesthood—a topic about which probably everyone in this room thinks they know a whole lot and can recite a whole lot of history and give a whole lot of details and explain everything there is to know about it, in so far as the Restoration and what Joseph has said and what the scriptures tell us are concerned. And I'm gonna ask you, for purposes of today, to assume that what you know is riddled with incompleteness, omissions, gaps in the storyline. And, in fact, Joseph Smith never set out to give—ever—a comprehensive accounting of the subject of priesthood. He gave snippets. He gave a grab here and a grab there. And in the process of doing so, he left things that have been filled in by the imagination of people—but not necessarily by anyone who, like Joseph, knew what he was talking about. Therefore, as you run into (and you will throughout the talk today) things that you think I'm off-base with or I'm making a mistake because it doesn't agree with what you **think** you already know, I would ask you to be patient enough to hear the whole matter through today. And then

be further patient enough to take it back into the scriptures, and prayerfully look at it. Because it's just possible—in fact, in my view, it is probable—that you know things that are wrong, and you need to abandon them. And so, I'd ask you to be patient as we go through this today, and at least... at least try it on for size, and see if something doesn't click.

Joseph Smith said, "**All** priesthood is Melchizedek, **but** there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion [which] brought Moses to speak with God face-to-face was taken away, but that which brought the ministry of angels remained. All prophets [had] the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself." That's in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on pages 180 to 181.

Ask yourself if there is a possibility that when Joseph speaks about "different portions or degrees" of priesthood, that he's talking about something altogether different from the offices in the Church of Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon, Bishop, Seventy, Apostle, High Priest, yada, yada... Because even in the understanding of the Church, the way in which we ordain today (and the way that we once ordained, before an interruption that lasted over two decades) was to lay hands upon someone and to confer upon them, alternatively, either the Aaronic priesthood or the Melchizedek priesthood; and then to ordain them to an **office**. And the way we phrase it today is an "office within that priesthood," but they confer, on the one hand, Aaronic or, on the other hand, Melchizedek priesthood. I would like you to entertain the idea that Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon and so on aren't priesthood at all; they are **offices** in the Church—and that they occupy the position in the Church (of these various **offices**) with or without the presence of priesthood.

When the first missionaries went out and preached, taught, exhorted, and expounded, they did so because they had been sustained by common consent to an office within the Church. And since the Church had been organized by the command of God, the offices within the Church had the authority to go and to implement the program of the Church.

Therefore, I would like you to entertain the idea that an **office** in the Church is not coincidental with **priesthood**. There is no such thing as the priesthood of Deacon. There is no such thing as the priesthood of Teacher. There is an office in the Church called "Teacher." There is an office in the Church called "Deacon." And the occupant of that, out of tradition, is supposed to have Aaronic priesthood in order to discharge that.

However, within the Church, we also sustain as "teachers" (for example, Gospel Doctrine teachers) females who hold the office of "Gospel Doctrine **teacher**" within the Church. What is the difference between the office of Gospel Doctrine teacher (that we sustain by our common consent), on the one hand, and Teacher in the Aaronic priesthood (Teacher held by someone with the Aaronic priesthood), on the other hand? We make a big deal out of the **offices** in the Church which are associated with Aaronic priesthood. However, they are offices in the Church. They were offices in the Church to begin with; they are offices in the Church yet today. And priesthood and offices in the Church are not necessarily coincident with one another.

So, when Joseph says that there are different portions or degrees, that all priesthood there is... All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are "different portions or degrees" of it —I wanna suggest to you that he is not talking about offices in the Church. I wanna suggest to you that, instead, what he's talking about is a continuum that I hope, by the end of today, we have some greater appreciation or understanding of.

So, if we turn to the oath and covenant of the priesthood that's contained in Doctrine and Covenants 84—and that's something about which we all think we know because, as parents, we've heard our kids go through this; as adults, we've had it parsed through—but if you look at it with the idea that all priesthood is singular and that there are merely different portions or degrees of it, starting at verse 33 of section 84:

For whoso[ever] is faithful unto the obtaining [of] these two priesthoods... (D&C 84:33)

Now, I wanna pause there for a moment because here (in revelation, given through Joseph Smith) is a statement by the Lord in revelation to Joseph in which he calls it two priesthoods. And yet Joseph explains there's only one. There's only one, and the one is Melchizedek, but there's different portions of it. Here in the revelation, it's dividing it into two. Therefore, there are two portions of it or two distinctions. And the possibility that those two distinctions are significant enough that they warrant treatment in the plural instead of the singular shows up right here in the revelation. I think Joseph knew what he was talking about. And I think the Lord knows what He's talking about. Because they're trying to get ideas across into our minds that we tend to resist.

Now, I should mention as a footnote that there were... There were discussions in the leadership of the Church about what was required in order to pass along priesthood. And during the administration of Heber J. Grant, for a period of over two decades, he ceased the practice of conferring priesthood upon people—but he had them only ordained to an office in the Church. Therefore, whenever someone was ordained to priesthood during that two-decade-plus time period, they were ordained to an office. After the death of Heber J. Grant, the practice was reverted again, and they began to confer priesthood in addition to ordain into office. But that is something that Heber J. Grant, at least, did not think occupied any significance. So, when I tell you there is a difference between an office in the Church and the priesthood, Heber J. Grant, at least, would say that I'm dead wrong on that point, and I don't know what I'm talking about. But entertain the idea, and see where it takes you.

There are in the church, well...

Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining [of] these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling... (Ibid)

See, priesthood is not simply "yada, yada, yada"; "ipso facto"; "conorus mundorum"; there you are! It requires... See, ya get it, but then, "faithful to obtain"; and then, "faithful

to magnify"—and faithful to magnify it as a **calling** (calling being an operative word there that means service)...

...are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies... (Ibid)

"Sanctified by the Spirit"; "renewing their bodies"—these things have meaning. Perhaps we'll get to that at some point.

They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. (Ibid, vs. 34)

See, they **become**—but they become as a consequence of having been sanctified. They become sanctified because they magnify their calling. They had to first obtain the priesthood, and the obtaining of the priesthood requires something that is "faithful." And you oughta ask yourself, Faithful to what? And always it is faithful to **Him**, to our Lord, the One who redeems. All of these things flow together as one continuum. It's not just "I got ordained." Doesn't matter that you got ordained. There's a process that's involved after ordination in which you follow these steps. We read it as one sentence and say, There it is; he was faithful. I mean, he passed the Bishop's interview; he obtained it. That is, he sat down there, and they got a certificate. I mean, when I was on the High Council, I was the one responsible for fetching the Melchizedek priesthood certificates and delivering it to 'em. And that was a definite point in time at which we could point and say, On **this** day, **this** person gave **this** authority to **this** guy on **this** occasion... And when that happened, he also got a line of authority.

When I got ordained to be a High Priest, the Stake President handed me a line of authority which, when I looked at, I found mistakes in. And I went back, and I did the research, and I corrected the line of authority. Then I went back to my Stake President, and I said, "You gave me your line of authority, but it was wrong; here's the right one." And then he had to go find all of the people that he had ordained and correct that. (Some fellow in the line had thought it would be more commendable to have been ordained by Marion G. Romney **after** he was an apostle rather than as he **was**: when Marion G. Romney was called to be the Bishop. And he called **this fellow** to be his counselor, and so Marion G. Romney was ordained to be a High Priest, to be the Bishop, and he ordained this other fellow to be a High Priest and his counselor. And then, subsequently, when Marion G. Romney got to be an apostle, this guy hailed his priesthood line from the date on which Marion G. Romney became an apostle, which screwed the whole line up.) And therefore, I had to fix that, and President Pugh was grateful. But it imposed upon him the obligation, then, to go back and straighten out all those whom he had ordained. Well, that's neither here nor there.

*They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the **seed** of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God. (Ibid, emphasis added)*

I spoke in Centerville about what it meant to be the seed of Abraham. You ought to listen to that talk. We don't have time. We have to accumulate, we have to aggregate

information. And we gotta assume that you've "got" what we've talked about before, so that we can press on.

Once you have done those,

...also all they who receive this priesthood... (Ibid, vs. 35)

Now it's in the singular; now it has been reduced back to the unitary. Now we're talking about that which is the fullness—we're now talking about something other than the different portions. We're talking about **this** priesthood.

...receive me saith the Lord. (Ibid)

We take that to mean that not actually **the Lord**, for goodness sake—but to mean, rather instead, that if you have this priesthood, somehow the Lord has received you. Somehow, if you've got this, you belong to Him in some metaphysical sort of fashion in which, "On account of having priesthood, I am received of Jesus." Take the words literally, and say to yourself: if you've got **this**, if **this** is what you have managed to accumulate, then one of the evidences of having accumulated it will be receiving the Lord.

For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me. (Ibid, vs. 36)

I suggested in Centerville that the word "servants," in this context, meant angels. An "angel"... The word is derived from a Greek word that simply means "messenger." And the messenger can't be on their own errand. They have to have a message that is being brought from another, the other being the Lord. Therefore, if the message originates **with** the Lord, and the message is delivered by a messenger, it does not matter if the one delivering the message is a mortal, as we find in the Book of Mormon where someone says, Last night... King Benjamin, I believe, said, Last night the Lord told me this; or, Last night the angel taught me this, and so today I'm going to teach you this (see Mosiah 3:2-23; see also Mosiah 1:13-18). In that context, King Benjamin **was** the angel. And therefore, as long as they bear a message from the Lord, they fit the definition.

...he that receiveth my servants receiveth me. (D&C 84:36)

That is, if it's the voice of God and it's coming to you from Him and it's authentically His message and you receive it as if it were from His own mouth, then you've received from Him at least His voice. But it doesn't end there.

He that receiveth me receiveth my Father. (Ibid, vs. 37)

In this context, what he's talking about is the same thing that you find in the 14th chapter of the book of John, in which Christ says that He will not leave you comfortless, but He will come to comfort you. And then He and His Father will take up their *abode with [you]*

(John 14:23; see also John 9:8 RE). This is not an abstraction. The idea that this is something that happens in your heart (you can read in the Doctrine and Covenants) is an old sectarian notion and is false (see D&C 130:3). It means a literal appearance of these holy beings to minister, to comfort, and ultimately, to take up their abode.

...he that receiveth my Father [and I would add, while yet "in the flesh"] receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. (D&C 84:38-39)

And what is that oath and that covenant? It is the Father's word which cannot be broken. It's not something **you** aspire to, but it's something that you accept by the conditions that are set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 84. It is something which, received by an oath and a covenant, given by the One who **can** give covenants (just as we talked about in Centerville)... It's a covenant which originates from God. It is His word which cannot be broken (see Ether 3:12; see also Ether 1:12 RE). Therefore, when the Father covenants that you're going to inherit, it is a covenant that **will** surely come to pass.

*Therefore, all...who receive the priesthood [singular, implying it in its fullest manifestation], receive this **oath and covenant of my Father**... (D&C 84:40, emphasis added)*

This is not talking about abstractions, quorums, churches, organizations, orders, choruses. This is talking about a direct, covenantal relationship established by **the Father** with **this**—*this priesthood*—the one about which today I would like to speak—**this priesthood**...

*...which he [the Father, he] cannot break [because if He were to break this once He has made this covenant with someone, He would cease to be God, and He cannot do that—therefore, **this** covenant cannot be broken by Him] neither can it be moved... (Ibid)*

That is, once the Father has made that covenant, earth and hell cannot make it otherwise.

But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor...the world to come. (Ibid, vs. 41)—

...a curious statement if your view of "this priesthood" is the mechanism you understand through the agency of the Church and the various quorums that result in someone becoming Melchizedek priesthood holder and an Elder. Does that mean that when an Elder drifts off into inactivity in the Church that he is not going to have forgiveness of sins in this world or the world to come?! It doesn't mean that at all. It's not talking about what has gone on in the Church, and it's not talking about receiving an ordination and

participating in an Elders Quorum or (thank God) a High Priest group. The string of obscenities that parse through my mind during any given High Priest group just... It's a good thing that you're not always talking out loud. Sometimes I want to and then say, "Did I say that? Or did I just think that?" I bite my tongue.

But here in 42, now... 41 is talking about the condition of having arrived at the point in which the covenant has been established with the Father—**that** covenant. If you turn from that (because you are turning from the Father), you're in a state, at this point, of willful rebellion against **He who has called you** to be His son—against Him who sits on the Throne, in the midst of all eternity, from whose Throne He sustains everything that exists, including everyone in this room and this creation itself (see Mosiah 2:21; see also Mosiah 1:8 RE). You have been in contact with Him, and you've turned from Him. It's not the same thing as an Elder drifting into activity [inactivity]. It is standing in the light of the noon day sun and denying that it is light. It is rebellion—and it is rebellion against knowledge. That's what that verse is talking about.

But look at verse 42:

*And wo unto all those who come **not** unto this priesthood...* (D&C 84:42, emphasis added)

So, there is a "wo" associated with that. It is not: "wo, wo, wo." It's not a threefold condemnation. It is not a dreadful, despicable, wretched outcome. It's simply disappointment because the invitation has been extended to you, and if you do not rise up to receive that invitation, then **you will** suffer disappointment. **You will** come to the point in which your condition is woeful, because there's something that you know that you might have obtained, and you did not.

Then we get to some words which I think are critical to understanding the topic, and we're gonna spend a lot of time on today:

...which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; ...even [as] I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you. (Ibid; see also T&C 82:16-17)

Oh my! You see, the priesthood is being conferred—and the priesthood is being conferred, not by the laying on of hands, but by the voice of God given to those who were present on this day.

On another occasion (this is section 84, which is in September of 1832)... On another occasion, there was a conferral of priesthood (in June of 1831). One of those upon whom it was conferred on that date, by the voice of God out of heaven, was Ezra Booth—Ezra Booth, who would later drift off into inactivity and write a series of nine letters that were published in a newspaper explaining why he rejected Mormonism. And so, he had had the conferral—by the voice of God—in June of 1831, and we get all the way

down to January 1841 and we find out that the fullness had been taken away, at least as it pertained to the Church (see D&C 124:28; see also T&C 141:10).

Well, so we wanna focus on those words in [D&C 84:]42, but we've got some other things to look at in order to get there. First of all, I want to go to Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14, which... I'm gonna need to borrow from someone. Does someone have Old Testament that I can use? (Yeah. I've taken that, and I've stapled it separately, and apparently, it's in my bedroom. I blame my briefcase.)

So, in Genesis chapter 14... This is in the back of your Bible. Verse 26:

Now Melchizedek was a man of faith... (JST Genesis 14:26)

By the way, Melchizedek is a title; it's a name-title. It's a compound of two words. One is "king," and one is "priest"—and therefore, in one sense, it's a name-title, and in another sense, it's a new name. And it's not the birth name given to someone, rather it is the new name/title which is fashioned after Christ because Christ is the great King and the great Priest who's the King of Kings, and He is the Great High Priest. And so, Melchizedek is really a name-title that belongs to Christ, it being used as a substitute to prevent the frequent repetition when you're talking about the Holy Priesthood—that the correct full name would be the *Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God*. But to prevent the too frequent repetition of that, Melchizedek (which is a name-title for Christ) got used as a substitute.

But Melchizedek—that is, the person who grew up to become the one that got that name-title,

*was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a **child** he feared God, and **stopped the mouths of lions**, and **quenched the violence of fire** [this is Melchizedek as a child; this is Melchizedek doing something by **faith**]. And thus having been approved of God, he was ordained [that is, ordination occurred **after** faith]... (Ibid, vs. 26-27, emphasis added)*

Can a man heal **by faith without priesthood**? Of course they can. Can Melchizedek, as a child without priesthood, stop the mouths of lions? Yes, the scriptures say so. Can "by faith" a man (Melchizedek being one who did so) quench the violence of fire without priesthood? Yes. Therefore, is it evidence that...

Oh, what was the guy's name in Oklahoma? The evangelical minister whose ministry was largely based upon healings? Can he heal? Can he do so without priesthood? Yeah, of course. I mean, these are two different things. These are altogether two different things.

So, Melchizedek accomplished these things by faith. And then, having accomplished these things by faith, God ordained him:

[a] high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch. It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man nor by the will of man... (Ibid, vs. 27-28)

That is, we can't vote in **that guy**. We can't 'hope and pray and sustain with our prayers and faith and confidence' **that guy**. We can't have our will bundled into **that guy**. **That guy** comes as a consequence, exclusively, not of father, not of mother, not of the will of man, but by the will of God. This is, after all, sons of God that we're talking about.

... neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God... (Ibid)

...because God is endless; therefore, His word is endless, and His covenants are endless, and His commitments are endless. And if you lay hold upon it, you lay hold upon something which is itself endless.

And it was delivered, just as we saw in Doctrine and Covenants section 84:

And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God. (Ibid, vs.29-31)

Now, take that impressive list of things, and read it in light of this:

*...to do all things according to **his** will, according to **his** command, subdue principalities and powers; and this **by the will of the Son of God** which was from before the foundation of the world. (Ibid, vs. 31)*

See, such persons holding such power **are not freelancing**. And in fact, evidence of the possession of this power does not come as a consequence of someone displaying **every one** of these things, **but** if they display **any** one of these things... For example, Nephi (when he was bound in the desert and left to die by his brothers) broke every band that bound him, having been strengthened by God (see 1 Nephi 7:16-18; see also 1 Nephi 2:4 RE). And that **same Nephi**, bound to the mast when the storm came that threatened the survival of the ship, not only could not break the band, but when they finally got around to relieving him, he said his hands were much swollen as a consequence of the trauma that he'd suffered (see 1 Nephi 18:15; see also 1 Nephi 5:30 RE). Nephi—who had power given to him by God to break the bands that would've cost him his life—was left subject to the bands because it was not according to the Father's will or the word of the Son when he was bound to the mast. And so, had Nephi called upon that power and not suffered, Nephi would've been offending—and not conforming to—the will of God. And he would have had to suffer some loss.

Moses had power to divide the seas. And he did that by the word of God (see Exodus 14:15-16, 21; see also Exodus 9:3-4 RE). And yet, when Moses used the power to cause the rock to bring forth water (and not at the command of God), he suffered some loss. Possession of the power does not mean you freelance. Because in the very statement about the possession and the capability and the capacity, it says it's according to His will. Therefore, in order to be someone who can be trusted, you have to be someone who will subordinate to His will.

The Lord was not mis-stating the case, when He said, "No man takes my life," because the Lord had the capacity, at His own word, to prevent the entire armies of Rome from doing any harm to him. "Don't you know," he asked Pilate, "if I asked, there'd be twelve legions of angels?" (see Matthew 26:53; see also Matthew 12:11 RE). You know, you don't even need a legion of angels to take on a legion of Rome, much less a little Centurion's cohort in Galilee (or in Judea, rather).

When you have someone who arises to this point **and** can be trusted, they nevertheless can be slain. Because, like our Lord, they don't get to **use**... Well, they are trustworthy enough so as not to **misuse** what has been entrusted to them. Therefore, the fact that they can "hold at defiance the armies of nations" means that they will do so only in accordance with His will—because sometimes it **is** His will to destroy the children of Israel, when they have sinned against Him. And then, they have to detect the error and repent of it before they can go forward. Well,

[all] men having this faith, coming up unto this order...were translated and taken up into heaven. (JST Genesis 14:32)

...that being a statement about not today but the moment of Melchizedek's ordination, his day, and those that had lived before him, in their day. *Translated and taken up into heaven*—we will get to the point later where we'll find out that this same authority that was in the beginning is going to return at the end of the earth, also. But its return at the end of the earth has a different purpose. At the beginning of the earth, **this** was the purpose.

And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, ...was called the Prince of peace [that is also is one of the titles given to the Lord, the Prince of Peace]. ...his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world. (Ibid, vs. 33-34)

See, and you wonder what they've been doing for lo these many thousands of years; and yet, if you understood the physics of it all, you'd realize that you can go out and back in a hurry, and it's overnight if you travel fast enough and far enough and return. There's really... Ah, well, that's another matter altogether.

*And [He] hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth **should** come together...* (Ibid, vs. 35, emphasis added)

See, they... That city of Enoch is reserved until the latter days of the end. It was separated from the earth, but it's going to come again in the latter days. And the Lord swore,

...with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire. (Ibid)

...meaning that when they return again, those sons who remain standing are going to have to be able to endure the fire that is coming. They who come shall burn them up—we talked about that briefly in Boise, and we've been trying to track that down through Idaho Falls, and now we see it again here. Therefore, this priesthood has something to do with all of the talks that I've been giving up to this point and where we go from here.

And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace [because he brought peace to them]. And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; [whom] Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. [And] Abraham paid...him... (Ibid, vs. 36-39; see also Genesis 7:18-21 RE)

...and so on. In any event, Melchizedek established priests/established righteousness; his city was a city of peace.

(And if you don't mind, I'm gonna hold onto this for a minute 'cuz we're gonna go back there, and so... Is your name on it? Oh, good; your name's on it. I'm using Carol's scriptures. And if you see me walking around with a set of scriptures that have Carol's name on it, you **know** I've stolen them.)

Priesthood is **not** a franchise. Priesthood is **not** something that is given in order to control others. Priesthood is an opportunity—afforded you by God, in its highest form—to serve and to bless others. (That's not true of it in other forms, and we'll get to that.) But in its highest form, it is a call to service. It is a call to save; it is a call to redeem; and it is a call to rescue.

Now I want to suggest a new definition for priesthood. And I wanna go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121 and read some old familiar words—and then see if today we can pour some meaning into this.

This is Doctrine and Covenants section 121, verse 36:

That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. (D&C 121:36)

I wanna suggest to you that the word "powers of heaven" is a proper noun and not just a phrase incorporating encompassing some abstraction. Powers of Heaven: oooo yada yada, can you feel it? Go get a pyramid, put it over your head. Ohmmmm, got some, got some... I can feel it! That's not it.

Powers of Heaven is actually a proper noun. If you are an Elder or you are a High Priest or you are a Seventy or you are a member of the Quorum of the Twelve... Whatever that office is, it is appropriate to refer to you by the nomenclature "Elder." "Elder" LeGrand Richards, "Elder" McConkie, "Elder" Nelson. (Hmm. Good thing we can't hear thoughts.) In any event... There is—within the structure of the afterlife—different rungs on Jacob's ladder. And they leak through in our scriptures, though Joseph never bothers parsing them. And whether you are talking about an Angel or an Archangel or a Principality or a Power or a Dominion or a Throne or a Cherubim or a Seraphim, it doesn't matter which one you are referring to, it is appropriate—just like it is appropriate to refer to all those offices as Elder—to refer to any and all of them as **Powers**.

The Powers of Heaven: Whatever rung these ministers may be upon, they are all **Powers**. So, I wanna suggest to you that the **real** definition of priesthood is an association between mankind, on the one hand, and those on the other side of the veil, on the other hand. It is a brotherhood.

Oh my! And it is potentially also a sisterhood. And it is a fellowship. And it is a ministry, if you will, in which there is connected together (and the real definition of priesthood is the connection between) a fellowship between the **Powers of Heaven**, on the one hand, and **you**, on the other.

We can form a fellowship—and **have**, among ourselves. And we've ordained one another in our various fellowships, and we've called ourselves Elders Quorums. And we've called ourselves High Priest Group. And we have called ourselves all kinds of different bodies of fellowship. And they are, I suppose, a form of priesthood. There are others who have formed different kinds of associations, and they are a form of priesthood.

But the scriptures are talking about a relationship between Powers of Heaven and the recipient of authority—that is, priesthood is fellowship. And when you do something to sever that fellowship, then you have done something that damages, injures, hinders, or altogether departs from the fellowship that you had.

and...the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon...principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (Ibid, vs. 36-37)

So then, if one has this fellowship and has this authority (or is in fellowship with that group from which such power reckons), how is it, then, that you exercise that authority? Well, the answer's also contained in the same revelation.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, ...by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. (Ibid, vs. 41-42; see also T&C 139:5-6)

So, if you find someone who is armed with this, what you're gonna find is someone whose tool is persuasion and who offers knowledge—and whose knowledge will not reckon merely from the writings, the theories, and the philosophies of men, but it will reckon, rather, from a higher place.

I wanna turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 132 and take a look at that because in here we then run into a brief description of some of that "Powers" that exist. This is in Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 19. And it's about in the middle of that verse. It says you *come forth in the first resurrection [to] inherit [and here are the words] thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths.* Those are, in fact, referring to different steps in the process of rising up to the place where God is. This is telling you something about the map to the afterlife. This is telling you something about how there is a hierarchy that is organized there. And you proceed, as Joseph said, from one step to the next. When you begin to climb a ladder, you always begin at the bottom, and you go step-by-step until you reach the top.

Well, there are those... And I'm not gonna vouch for this, but I'll find it useful to use today. And I use this not because I'm trying to originate anything, but rather, this is already out there, and so I don't think I'm speaking out of turn. Rather like what Nephi did with Isaiah, if I can lay it at the feet of someone else, I can say, Well then, I didn't break any confidences.

In any event, the ranking goes:

- Angels, and then
- Archangels, and then
- Principalities, and then
- Powers, and then
- Dominions, and then
- Thrones, and then
- Cherubim, and then
- Seraphim...

(The Seraphim being those who dwell in everlasting burnings, the glorious ones, the ones who are flaming. For a description of them, we've already looked at that in Doctrine and Covenants section 109, [verse] 79. I'm not gonna go there.)

But in any event, here you have (in section 132) a listing of some of the things which get inherited. And you think that we have a singular afterlife that consists of heaven and hell or —oh, no! You're Mormons; therefore, you got three of them. You got your Telestial (which kingdom you're presently occupying, by the way). You've got your Terrestrial (we hope to manage to get there sometime during the Millennium, also occupying this same globe). And you got your Celestial (which you know, apparently, you'll be all garbed up and glowing and wearing a robe and nicely put). However, this is suggesting a much more complex afterlife in which, literally, the ascent is by degrees as you move upward. As Joseph said (and I read that in Boise), it'll be a great time after we have crossed through the veil before we will have learned all that needs to be learned in order to qualify for our salvation and exaltation.

Well, let's go to Moses chapter 7. This is Moses chapter 7, verse 27: *Enoch beheld **angels** descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were **caught up by the powers of heaven** into Zion* (Moses 7:27, emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:15 RE). There they show up again —"the powers of heaven"—plural, in the same verse where it's talking about angels descending. This is the kind of thing that is littered throughout the scriptures if you have the eyes to see it. Because there is actually a structure there.

There are, within what we regard as priesthood, two brotherhoods or two fellowships:

- One is between men (or women). It is a fellowship that exists among us here on this side.
- There is a second one. There is a second fellowship. **That** exists with us to the other side, and on that other side, there is a fellowship or a priesthood.

And by and large, when the scriptures speak about priesthood having authority/ priesthood having power, that is connected by a mortal with a fellowship that extends into the immortal, to the other side. It's a relationship with the "Powers of Heaven."

So that you can be clear in your own mind about this, let's look at Doctrine and Covenants section 107, and go to verse 52: *Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah* (see also T&C 154:18). Okay? So, ~~Moses~~ [Noah] got priesthood as a consequence of the hand of Methuselah having ordained him. **That** is a priesthood (or fellowship or brotherhood) on this side of the veil.

Now, go back to Moses chapter 8. In Moses chapter 8, verse 19, it says, *And the Lord ordained Noah after his...order, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch* (see also Genesis 5:8 RE)—or in other words, in the case of Noah, the fellowship that originated as a relationship between him and his older brethren **here** [was] extended by God ordaining him also to a fellowship on the other side. Therefore, he belonged not merely to the priesthood held by men but to the priesthood held by the immortals.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 107, and look at verse 48:

Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. (D&C 107:48)

So, he got that when he was 25. But look at what happened when he was 65:

He was sixty-five and Adam blessed him. And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years, making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated. (Ibid, vs. 65; see also T&C 154:15)

And so, there is the ordination at 25, which allowed him to join in the fellowship (the brotherhood, the association, the priesthood) that involved men. And then at 65, there is another priesthood, there's another association, there's another fellowship.

Jethro, the father-in-law, ordained Moses—D&C 84. Look at that. D&C 84, verse 6:

And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he [that is, Moses] received under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro. (D&C 84:6)

Okay? Then go over to verses... Beginning at 21:

...without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. [For] this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also. (Ibid, vs. 21-25; see also T&C 82:3, 12-14)

If you go to Moses chapter 1, beginning at verse 1:

The [word] of God, which he spake unto Moses at [the] time when Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain, ...he saw God face to face, ...he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence. And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty [threefold; three titles], and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless? And, behold, thou art my son. (Moses 1:1-4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE)

And so, he was ordained by man, and he was ordained by heaven.

You can see it in the case of Jacob. We'll look at that, and then we'll stop. Jacob—go to 2 Nephi chapter 5, verse 26, *And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people (see*

also 2 Nephi 4:5 RE). Then, if you go to Jacob chapter 1, and you look at verse 17 of Jacob chapter 1, you see Jacob saying, *Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them...words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord* (see also Jacob 1:4 RE)—because Jacob didn't go out and commence a ministry of teaching (even to his own people over whom he had been consecrated as a priest) until he had first obtained that second ordination.

Well, you can find it throughout if you look for it. The fact is that there are two levels, one of which requires a connection beyond the veil and one of which is here. It is not enough (and you ought never be content) to simply have the association that exists here.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 26, it talks about *the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel* (see also T&C 82:14). Even the lesser priesthood holds **some** connection with heaven. Even the lesser priesthood holds forth the opportunity to have **some link with** the Powers of Heaven. Therefore, in the lesser priesthood there is an association—a fellowship—that is anticipated.

And, of course, the greater priesthood (that we looked at before in those verses describing what Moses...) is that a priesthood that has a power of godliness that gets manifest unto men, **in the flesh**—*For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live* (D&C 84:22; see also T&C 82:12)—

Don't let anyone deceive you into believing that this association is merely meant for the afterlife. If it were so, the words *in the flesh* would not appear here and other places in the scriptures that I pointed out to you as I've gone through these various talks. It was meant to be laid hold upon **here**. And as a consequence of laying hold upon it here, you qualify to receive that in the world to come (see D&C 76:118; see also T&C 69:29). And if you fail to lay hold upon that here, then *wo unto [you]*. That doesn't mean that you are condemned forever. That just means that you've wasted **an** opportunity—and therefore, the struggle for you will continue. Put it away; get it done.

The question was asked, and I read it before (I read the answer, not the question). The question was: "Was the priesthood of Melchizedek taken away when Moses died?"

Joseph said (and it was in this context where I began earlier): "All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it" (*TPJS*, 180-181). I'm hoping that now when we read that, you say to yourself, "Different portions or degrees of it has reference to these different fellowships, these different associations that one can have with those **Powers of Heaven** which exist on the other side"—because there is a level of growth, a level of development, and an entrustment of the authority and the power of godliness that continues on into eternity, until at last you arise at the point... Joseph calls it "attaining to the resurrection." And attaining to the resurrection, in that context, means to inherit everlasting burnings so to be able to dwell in a position of glory, from which descent is well-nigh impossible.

But remember, "all priesthood is Melchizedek but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face-to-face was taken away but that which brought the ministry of angels remained" (ibid). Then he added, as I read, "All the prophets had the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself" (ibid).

Possible, I suppose, to pass along "Melchizedek priesthood" in a fellowship between men, but invariably, it is the case that when you find someone in possession of the Melchizedek priesthood in the form in which Joseph was referring to it in **this** answer, it is **always** the case that all prophets had the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God Himself. Always the case.

Now, all priesthood is perishable. We saw that in Doctrine and Covenants section 121, verse 37: *That [it] may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, ...gratify our pride, our vain ambition, ...to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness...* (see also T&C 139:5). And let me couple that with: What is the tool? How do I get to use the priesthood? How is it that I do get to exercise some influence? *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned* (ibid, vs.41).

I thank God I do not preside over any of you. I thank God I have no responsibility for any of you, my family aside. (Yeah, okay. We're getting close to the first break.) Let me tell you that even within my own family, I don't feel it is my prerogative to do anything other than to use persuasion, to use long-suffering, to use gentleness and meekness and love unfeigned, and to try—**kindly**—to use pure knowledge to lay the matter out. But it is ever so much better to lay that out when the question is asked rather than it is to lay out the answer and force-feed it to someone who doesn't even have the idea occur to them that there's an issue to be discussed. One of the reasons why I solicited questions was to find out to what extent you're ready to hear something about something that confuses you. And some of the questions are quite poignant, and we'll hopefully be able to solve a number of them as we go along.

Priesthood is perishable. Even that priesthood conferred by the voice of God **is perishable**, if you are unwilling to **restrain** and to **contain** yourself within the bounds which the Lord has prescribed.

As we get to sealing power (and we will get there before the day is up), there are some things about that you need to have parsed, and you need to understand. But the fact of the matter is that when we talk about priesthood, we throw about lavish claims among ourselves because we have a vocabulary. And as a consequence of possessing that vocabulary, we think, then, that we have understanding when, in fact, the scriptures are telling us a whole different story. And that whole different story is what we're pursuing here today. Hopefully, when we get to the end of this today, you'll walk away saying, "I need to go back and study my scriptures, 'cuz it sounds like there's a whole lot in there about priesthood that makes distinctions which I had not heretofore appreciated."

(So, what we're going to do is take...? What? Five minutes? We're gonna take five minutes, and when they signal me, we'll begin again.)

(Okay, we're good to go.)

As a reminder that all priesthood is perishable, if you look at Doctrine and Covenants section 124, verse 28, it says, *There is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood* (see also T&C 141:10). Now, that's a verse that (at this moment) I'm not prepared to get into all of the implications of. I just want to use it as a reference point for the proposition that something given can be taken away—that priesthood is, in fact, perishable. While we are here in the mortal realm, it is possible that a person fall away.

(Carol, I returned your scriptures because I found it on my iPad. So, even though I resist the iPad as a source of scriptures—and mocked those who were early adopters in the lessons I taught—I nonetheless have a set of scriptures on my iPad.)

Okay, so, this then leads me to the next topic that I wanna try and get through—a topic about which some of you may be completely unaware, but one that has occupied a lot of attention of a number of very careful and thoughtful people (and with whom I will probably disagree—but it's not because I don't view their efforts to parse this topic as unworthy or worthless; it's because I reckon my understanding from a different point from which I triangulate on this topic—and not merely the record that we have before us).

This is from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. And *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* were a reduction (into a singular account) of a variety of note-takers' accounts of Joseph's words. The original note-takers' accounts have been gathered together in Andy Ehat's book, *The Words of Joseph Smith*. And so, if you go to the Andy Ehat version and you look at what all the note-takers say, you can see—and you can contrast—what the note-takers have and then what *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* have.

For my purposes, it's not important today to parse all the different accounts. It would take too long, and I find what's in *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]* to be adequate in order to talk about the topic. But it doesn't mean that I commend this as a great reconstruction—because, in fact, in many cases there's **doctrinal significance** to the difference between the note-taker's accounts; and you can almost feel that (from the varying accounts) that they're listening to Joseph and then recording their notes based upon **their** understanding, measuring Joseph's words against what **they** believed the doctrine to be—as opposed to, instead, allowing the words of Joseph to inform **them**. And then the compiler of *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* has made his own consolidation. But once again, this is adequate for my purposes today. I'm reading from page 322 of *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*. Beginning there:

Respecting the Melchizedek Priesthood, the sectarians never professed to have it; consequently they never could save any one, and would all be damned together. There was an Episcopal priest who said he had the priesthood of Aaron, but had not the priesthood of Melchizedek: and I bear testimony that I [have never] found the man who claimed the Priesthood of Melchizedek. The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of "endless lives"; for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken. (see also *DHC* 5:554-556; August 27, 1843)

See, Joseph here is referring to that covenant given when you obtain that priesthood **by the Father** who swears by Himself about the results of having attained unto that priesthood. So, it holds that power of endless lives—for the everlasting covenant made by the Father cannot be broken.

The law was given under Aaron for the purpose of pouring out judgments and destruction. (Ibid)

So, the Mosaic law was given, and the priesthood was accommodated in order to pour out judgments and destruction.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 1, there's this interesting set of verses beginning in verse 8 of D&C 1:

And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious; Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure— Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man. (D&C 1:8-10; see also T&C 54:2)

These are all negative. These are all sealing up unto destruction. These are all condemnations. These are all, in a word, **Aaronic**. But bear in mind, the Aaronic priesthood is not without hope, because within it is the power to baptize, which is an ordinance of hope. Primarily, however, the purpose of the Aaronic priesthood is to condemn.

There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here. 1st. The king of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. **Angels** [now, remember what I said earlier about there being different ranks, Angels] desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. (*DHC* 5:554-556; August 27, 1843, emphasis added)

See, the angels were unwilling to receive what they might have received, and as a consequence of that, they could not go.

Look in Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 16: *Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.* Angels, in this context (if you will hear it), are included within Joseph's description of "angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes," as a consequence of their unwillingness to receive what God freely offers to all. And they're hedging up their own way by their failure to develop that faith and confidence necessary to lay hold upon the blessings of heaven, because they believe that those blessings are reserved for others and not for them; because, as the (de-canonized now) Lectures on Faith suggest, they fear that they do not have the power to lay hold upon all the blessings which were entirely reserved and promised **to** them (see Lectures on Faith, Lecture Third, paragraph 23). Because they have not that faith required, they become limited in what they seek for and, therefore, what they obtain.

God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses. The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned (*DHC* 5:554-556; August 27, 1843)—

...which is why when the Lord sets something in motion and begins to declare the truth again (and He offers a message that needs to be received, and it is not received by those to whom it is offered), the results are 'they refuse to receive the blessing or knowledge that is offered to them, and therefore they will be damned'—damned in the sense meaning that they hedge up the way, that they limit the ability of God to confer upon them what they might have received. They partake of, ultimately, the sufferings of the damned because the pain of the mind is exquisite when they realize that they have not laid hold upon what God freely offered to give unto them, and therefore, they are their own condemnor, and they are their own judge.

The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law. (*Ibid*)

Can you imagine?! If the children of Israel in that day were cursed by God because they said Moses must talk to God and not us, **how much greater must be the damnation** upon those who say, "You must not talk to God, because we have one who does so for you! And you're not entitled to receive anything beyond the bounds of your limited position in this beehive we've constructed!" Damnable heresy! Doctrines of devils! Propounded by those who are purveyors of a false priestcraft! Unauthorized by God! Unsanctioned by Him! They suffer not themselves to enter in, and they will hedge up the way if you will heed them. There is no man... There is no man on his own errand in this world who can offer to you salvation. But if God sends a message, you'd better heed it, even if you find it difficult to hear.

What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers...outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings (Ibid)—

...because the Aaronic holds and is given for judgments and destruction. The Melchizedek is given for blessing. And when someone claims to hold Melchizedek priesthood and they use it in order to offer up judgment and condemnation and control and compulsion and authority over the souls of men—and they refuse to constrain themselves, to use persuasion only and gentleness and meekness—then you know you're listening to an Aaronic and not a Melchizedek authority. Because the office and the authority and the keys of the Melchizedek is to bless; it's to enlighten; it's to raise and to bring to you light and truth.

In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam. (Ibid)

Because, once again, it is **always** genealogical. It is **always** familial. It has **always** been "turning the hearts of the children back to the fathers"—the final father in that chain being Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all...thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood. Salvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ. How shall God come to rescue...this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet. The law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation. Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. (Ibid)

This talk, on this day by Joseph Smith, is seven years **after** the 1836 Doctrine and Covenants section 110 incident. So,

Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. The anointing and sealing is to be called, elected, and made sure. "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, ...made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. (Ibid)

That is not to say that because one receives that priesthood that they cannot fall from that. Because while you are in **this** world, as Paul put it, you stand in jeopardy every hour. **Here** is the place in which the trial, the test, the temptation, the burden of mortality exists. And it exists for so long as you have the flesh. You do not... Even if you possess

the authority, you do not have that abide with you continually on into eternity until you have finished the course, until you have resisted the temptation, until you have completed the race and finished the work. Only when you lay down the burden—here—successfully having completed it, are you permitted then to take it up there, as a matter of right. But here, although the priesthood is endless, although the covenant of God is eternal, a man may fall from it; and therefore, you proceed recognizing that you proceed with eternal peril.

The 2nd Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood. (Ibid)

Now, there is a controversy in which, almost to a man, all of those who have researched the subject have reached the conclusion that Melchizedek priesthood is greater than Patriarchal priesthood and that Levitical priesthood is inferior to them all. So that if you were (as those who have researched it) ranking them, you would say it is Levitical and then Patriarchal and then Melchizedek. And that that's the way in which it's parsed. I disagree with that.

I disagree with that for two reasons. First of all, I do not believe that this talk, given by Joseph Smith, in the order in which he expresses it is top, middle, bottom. I believe it is middle, top, and then he picks up the bottom (with Levitical).

The other reason why I think Patriarchal ought to be viewed as the highest form is because the priesthood which began with Adam was priesthood which was after the Order of the Son of God. And that that priesthood after the Order of the Son of God descended from Adam down to the time of Enoch, and then it got renamed the Priesthood after the Order of Enoch. And then later it got renamed the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek or the priesthood of Melchizedek.

When Adam promises that the priesthood that was in the beginning is going to return at the end of the world also, he is talking about a return at the end of the world of that priesthood which was held by the original patriarchs—a time when, for generations, it was unitary (there was only one) and that the designation (the correct designation) of that priesthood is the "Holy Priesthood" or the "Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God." It's a long name, but it was **that** priesthood that was held by the patriarchs. As a consequence of it being **that** priesthood, held by the original patriarchs, which was in the beginning of the world and is to return at the end of the world also, I prefer to regard the highest order under the name designation of Patriarchal priesthood. And so, when I use the term, I'm referring to that priesthood originally held by Adam, that priesthood held by Enoch, that priesthood which is more correctly called the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. Therefore, if you are going to say Patriarchal priesthood as a scholar and parse the words differently, you need to understand that I'm using them in this way. And I disagree with you. And I have my reasons for doing so. And I think that Joseph had reasons for doing so also, because of what I just read you.

Go to and finish the temple, and **God** will fill it with power, and you will then receive **more knowledge** concerning **this** priesthood. (Ibid, emphasis added)

I'm suggesting to you that something which, by its nature, required the completion of the temple and required the presence of God, which relates to the revelation given in January of 1841 that I read a few minutes ago—*For there[']s] not a place found on the earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood* (D&C 124:28; see also T&C 41:10)... It requires **Him**—God—to come to that place, and for **Him**—God—to restore to you that which has been taken away—**the fullness**. Go to, and God... You finish the temple, "God will fill it with power...you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood."

Even in the words of Joseph, taken together with Doctrine and Covenants section 124, [verse] 28 that I just read to you, it suggests that the highest form—the one which brings you into contact with God in His holy temple—that one, that priesthood, is correctly designated "Patriarchal."

Therefore, in this talk, I don't think he's enumerating them by priority. I think he's just giving you a list. He's not trying to prioritize that list.

The 3rd is what is called...Levitical Priesthood, consisting of priests to administer in outward ordinances, made without an oath; but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is **[made] by** an oath and covenant. (*DHC 5:554-556; August 27, 1843, emphasis added*)

But the "oath and [the] covenant" is the oath and the covenant that is given by the Father—it's not what **we** read to the newly-ordained Elder; **that** is an aspiration, and it's very good to have aspirational notions preached to us in connection with the priesthood, but aspiration is not reality. And "knowledge concerning the content" is not possessing the same thing as the covenant itself. And therefore, if you're going to receive the covenant which cannot be broken... The covenant which cannot be broken is obtained by—and from—the Father.

The Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in **all** those priesthoods. (Ibid)

You see, it was by faith and the power of the Holy Ghost that Melchizedek did all that he did. And if someone gets possession of any or all of these priesthoods, the way in which the priesthood proceeds is in accordance with the power of the Holy Ghost. Joseph just said: it's by the power of the Holy Ghost.

So, let me ask **you** the question, and **you** answer it yourself: Let us assume the case that a woman is filled with the Holy Ghost—rather like Anna in the temple when Christ was brought; and Anna, by the power of the Holy Ghost, prophesies concerning the young boy, the babe, that was brought to the temple. Given the fact that the authority by which priesthood is to become operative (as Joseph just explained) is the Holy Ghost, what possible difference does it make if the prophetess Anna, standing in the temple,

prophesying concerning the child who is brought in, cannot grab a knife and go over to the place they tied the animals and cut the throat of the sheep? And then divide it up and carry part of its carcass over and drop it on the iron at the top of the ramp on the altar where they burned? And can't take the bowl and hyssop and walk around and splatter the four corners of the altar at the bloodline of the altar? Why would it be more significant that Anna was deprived of the outward ordinance performance than that she, as a prophetess, filled with the Holy Ghost, spake and prophesied concerning the Son of God on the day that He was brought to the temple, for the offering of the cleansing of Mary, having completed her day? You see, the Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in all these priesthoods.

Well, you envy the unenviable, and you focus on the irrelevant because, quite frankly, given the fact that the purpose of that Aaronic priesthood is to pour out judgments and destructions, and its purpose is to seal people up to condemnation, I can't imagine... Well, I take that back—I can imagine why a woman would want to possess that. I have a partner who does divorce work. So, I can imagine. And she's a female too.

Jesus Christ is the heir of this Kingdom—the Only Begotten of the Father according to the flesh, and holds the keys over all this world. Men have to suffer that they may come [up unto] Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens. I know a man that has been caught up to the third heavens and can say, with Paul, that we have seen and heard things that are not lawful to utter. (Ibid)

Well, I believe that the purpose of the heavenly association is to accomplish two things: One is to have valid ordinances, and the second is to obtain answers or direction. I wanna read from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*:

Where did the kingdom of God begin? Where there is no kingdom of God there is no salvation. What constitutes the kingdom of God? Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives His oracles; there is the kingdom of God and where the oracles [of God] are not, there the kingdom of God is not. In these remarks, I have no allusion to the kingdoms of [this] earth. We will keep the laws of the land; we do not speak against them; we never have, and we can hardly make mention of the state of Missouri, of our persecutions there, but what the cry goes forth that we [were] guilty of larceny, burglary, arson, treason, murder...which is false. We speak of the kingdom of God on the earth, not the kingdoms of men. (*TPJS*, 272; see also *DHC* 5:256-259)

If you've read that paper I wrote, *Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom*, you'll recognize in that that Brigham Young thought that the kingdom was to be an earthly institution. Joseph was denouncing that. He denounced a lot of things that we have subsequently taken up and said is really our cause.

The plea of many in this day is that we have no right to receive revelations; but if we do not get revelations, we do not have the oracles of God; and if they have not the oracles of God, [then] they are not the people of God. But say you, What

will become of the world, or the various professors of religion who do not believe in revelation and the oracles of God as continued to His Church in all ages of the world, when He has a people on earth? I tell you, in the name of Jesus Christ, [that] they will be damned; and when you get into the eternal world, you will find it will be so, they cannot escape the damnation of hell. (Ibid)

...the "oracles of God" (meaning the revelations of God). And the revelations of God were given to us from Joseph Smith as the foundation, as the font from which we draw. But it was always intended that there should arise in **you** the power of obtaining oracles for yourself.

As touching the Gospel and baptism that John preached, I would say that John came preaching the Gospel for the remission of sins; he had his authority from God, and the oracles of God were with him, and the kingdom of God for a season seemed to rest **with John alone**. The Lord promised Zacharias that he should have a son who was a descendant of Aaron, the Lord having promised that [this] priesthood should continue with Aaron and his seed throughout their generations. Let no man take this honor upon himself, except he be called of God, as was Aaron; and Aaron received his call by revelations. An angel of God also appeared unto Zacharias while in the Temple, and told him that he should have a son, whose name should be John, and he should be filled with the Holy Ghost. Zacharias was a priest of God, and officiating in the Temple, and John was a priest after his father, and [he] held the keys of the Aaronic priesthood, and was called of God to preach the Gospel of the kingdom... The Jews, as a nation, having departed from the law of God and the Gospel of the Lord, prepared the way for transferring it to the Gentiles. But, says one, the kingdom of God could not be set up in the days of John, for John said the kingdom was at hand. But I would ask if it could be any nearer to them than to be in the hands of John. The people need not wait for the days of Pentecost to find the kingdom of God, for John had it with him, and he came forth from the wilderness crying out, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of...[God] is nigh at hand," as much as to say, "Out here I have got the kingdom of God, and you can get it, and I am coming after you; and if you don't receive it, you will be damned"; and the scriptures represent that all Jerusalem went out into John's baptism. There was a legal administrator, and those that were baptized were subjects for a king; and also the laws and oracles of God were there; therefore the kingdom of God was there; for no man could have better authority to administer than John; and our Savior submitted to that authority Himself, by being baptized by John; therefore the kingdom of God was set up on the earth, even in the days of John. (Ibid)

John was a legal administrator. Christ recognized him, even though there was an existing priestly authority He **also** respected who were in control of the temple at Jerusalem. (That's me—I'm inserting. That's not reading from *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*.)

There is a difference between the kingdom of God and the fruits and blessings that flow from the kingdom; because there were more miracles, gifts, visions, healings, tongues, &c., in the days of Jesus Christ and His apostles, and on the day of Pentecost, than under John's administration, it does not prove by any means that John had not the kingdom of God, any more than it would that a woman had not a milk pan because she had not a pan of milk, for while the pan might be compared to the kingdom, the milk might be compared to the blessings of the kingdom. John was a priest after the order of Aaron, and had the keys of that priesthood, and came forth preaching repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, but at the same time cries out, "There come[s] one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" and Christ came according to the words of John, and He was greater than John, because He held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood and kingdom of God, and had before revealed the priesthood of Moses, yet Christ was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness; and Jesus in His teachings says, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What rock? Revelation. Again he says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter...the kingdom of God;" and, "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." If a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he can get into the kingdom of God. It is evident the kingdom of God was on the earth, and John prepared subjects for the kingdom, by preaching the Gospel to them and baptizing them, and he prepared the way before the Savior, or came as a forerunner, and prepared subjects for the preaching of Christ; and Christ preached through Jerusalem on the same ground where John had preached; and when the apostles were raised up, they worked in Jerusalem, and Jesus commanded them to tarry there until they were endowed with power from on high. Had they not work to do in Jerusalem? They did work, and prepared a people for the Pentecost. The kingdom of God was with them before the day of Pentecost, as well as afterwards; [as] it was also with John, and he preached the same Gospel and baptism that Jesus and the apostles preached after him. The endowment was to prepare the disciples for their missions unto the world. Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, **there** is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God; for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged **either by God or angels**. I know what I say; I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield; and what can man do if God is my friend? I shall not be sacrificed until my time comes; then I shall be offered freely. All flesh is as grass, and a governor is [no] better than other men; when he dies he is but a bag of dust. I thank God for preserving me from my enemies; I have no enemies but for the truth's sake. I have no desire but to do all men good. I feel to pray for all men. We don't ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more. What if all the world should embrace this Gospel? They would then see

eye to eye, and the blessings of God would be poured out upon the people, which is the desire of my whole soul. Amen. (Ibid)

This is Joseph in January of 1843.

Joseph Smith also said, "John wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power...the glory from the Jews...by the holy anointing and decree of heaven." That's *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 276. Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 28 points out that John *was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power* (see also T&C 82:14). John was sent forth and, in part, was sent forth to be rejected of the Jews so that he could wrest "the keys, the kingdom, ...the power and the glory from the Jews, and this by the holy anointing and decree of heaven." Because an angel had established it and because it was the Powers of Heaven that were behind it.

Well then, we have this also from Joseph:

All men are liars who say they are of the true Church without the revelations of Jesus Christ and the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which is after the order of the Son of God. It is...the order of heavenly things that God should always send a new dispensation into the world when men have apostatized from the truth and lost the priesthood, but when men come out and build upon other men's foundations, they do it on their own responsibility, without authority from God; and when the floods come and the winds blow, their foundations will be found to be sand, and their whole fabric will crumble to dust. Did I build on [an]other man's foundation? [I've] got all the truth which the Christian world possessed, and an independent revelation in the bargain.

That's *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*, on pages 375 and 376.

There are three priesthoods. There are three orders of priesthood. And if you turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 107, that same prophet (who described the existence of three priesthoods) said in the opening verse of Doctrine and Covenants 107, *There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood* (D&C 107:1, emphasis added). This is yet another reason why I think the third priesthood ought be called Patriarchal. And it's not priesthood which one obtains by going and being sealed in the temple. It's one [that] one obtains by going and meeting with God in **His** temple. That greatest priesthood... *Before [the days of Melchizedek] it was called [this is verse 3 of section 107] the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*. My view is that we've had enough... We've had enough name changes—that when the priesthood returns again in the last days, it will no longer be called after a man (or men or those who have held it in the past), but it will be called the Holy Order after the Son of God—that being, at the end of the world, in conformity with that which was in the beginning.

Even Christ... Even Christ had to be ordained to this order. Look at Matthew; chapter 3 of Matthew, verse 16: *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:16; see also Matthew 2:4 RE).

The other night, Margaret Barker suggested that if she were describing the voice, she would have that voice be the voice of a woman saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Which—I didn't say it at the time—but if I were staging it, I would have the voice of a man **and** a woman, speaking in unison the words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"...if I were staging such a thing or attempting to portray it.

Which reminds me of a conversation I'd had with her earlier that evening. They're doing a conference on weaving and sacred fabrics, and she's going to try and put together a veil—and was suggesting the depiction of cherubim as a winged disc ("winged disc" being the symbol of the feminine). And I suggested to her that if I were using that as a representation, I would have six feathers or six flutes on each wing to depict the state of ascent. And she liked that idea. So, if in her next presentation in the veil of the temple there is a winged disk cherubim being depicted and it has six flutes, I told her she can own that. That's her idea. She can have it from me.

Again, in the book of Hebrews chapter 5, verse 4, beginning at verse 4: *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him...* (Hebrews 5:4-5). You see, Christ didn't do this. It was done by **he** that said unto him, *Thou art my Son, to day I have begotten thee* (ibid, emphasis added; see also Hebrews 1:12 RE).

Okay. Just... I'm gonna do this. It's a complete aside, but I really like the work that Bart Ehrman has done because he's tried to reconstruct the Christological debates of the Second and Third Century, in which they rewrote the New Testament in order to conform with their false Christological ideas and arguments. See, when Christ was baptized, the statement that was made to Christ (Bart Ehrman has shown) is the statement that you find in Psalms chapter 2, verse 7, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee* (see also Psalms 2:2 RE), which was changed to, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matthew 3:17) in order to solve a debate going on in the Second Century over the idea of adoptionism (that Christ was merely mortal, and He was **adopted** by God through that statement). And so, that statement—which appears in Psalms chapter 2, verse 7—was really what was one time in Matthew in the words I read you before. But it got changed. And Bart Ehrman points, in part, *Thou art my son, [to]day have I begotten thee...* This is the Hebrew statement, because Paul was writing the book of Hebrews at a time...

And I recognize there's an argument over whether Paul is the author of Hebrews, but we're just gonna take it as a given. Joseph didn't quibble over it. I'm not gonna quibble over it. I don't wanna go there; it's a whole 'nother argument. Leave that to the damned scholars, because they surely are damned.

This writing came at a time before the revisionism that occurred in those debates. And therefore, the words that we find here in Hebrews are the words that mirror the statement that you find in Psalms. It's an earlier record. The Deuteronomists were busy not only during the time of the Old Testament Second-Temple-Period; they were busy post-New Testament era, before the formation of the great harlot. (And they are surely busy even today—we call them "correlationists.") And so, He was begotten by the Father. That is a statement that was made to Christ at the time of His baptism.

Go back to Moses chapter 1. I've already read it, but I wanna remind you that it's there. In Moses chapter 1, it is the Lord speaking to Moses:

Behold [this is verse 4], thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all... (Moses 1:4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE).

Look, this is another astounding example of what the purpose of God... The purpose of God is to bestow upon people the glory of God. And what is the glory of God? *The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth* (D&C 93:36; see also T&C 93:11). And what is truth? It is the *knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come* (D&C 93:24; see also T&C 93:8). Those are all in the scriptures, and you ought to all know that. **That's** the purpose of God. And the glory of God is reflected when you know something (which is why I am trying to communicate something—so that **you** might have glory).

Look what happens to Moses:

Behold, thou art my son; wherefore look...I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. (Moses 1:4; see also Genesis 1:1 RE)

Look at that! **God's words never cease**. Even when silence is caused to reign because the Powers of Heaven are so disgusted with humanity that **they** withdraw themselves, God's words don't cease at all. His words do not stop. And even if the angels refuse to minister, communicate, visit... Yet, will God still speak unto men.

Some people asked the question about God speaking to Cain (as a result of the talk I gave in Idaho Falls referring to your privilege of talking to God because He spoke to Cain). It doesn't say that God **appeared** to Cain; it says that God **spoke** to Cain. Cain heard the voice of God speaking to him. He didn't get caught up to the throne of God; he did not have a throne theophany; he was not brought back and redeemed from the fall—but he **heard** the voice of God. God spoke to Cain **after** the murder of Abel. The

angels withdrew from him. The angels were grieved. They would have nothing to do—and yet, God still spoke to him.

His words are endless. I don't care what malignancy you think you carry around within you. The fact is, none of you have done the same crap that Cain did, because Cain possessed greater knowledge than you did at the time of the murder that he committed. And yet, God spoke to him still. Therefore, have the confidence—even if you grieve angels—that **God** will talk to you. ...*My words, for they never cease* (ibid).

Yeah, God is talkative. God desires us to know more than we know—if we will receive it. And the minute we tell Him to be quiet and withdraw and leave us alone, we are in the very act of damning ourselves. Because what we're saying is, "That which You offered unto us, we would prefer to be silence, instead." Don't do that.

Abraham chapter 3, verse 12, we encounter Gød [Abraham] saying, *And he said unto me [Abraham saying]: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof* (Abraham 3:12; see also Abraham 5:3 RE). Once again, you have (at the same instance that he is being acknowledged as a son) the outpouring of the intelligence of God, the glory of God, light and truth—*knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.*

Joseph—Joseph Smith—in Doctrine and Covenants section 121, verse 7: *My son, peace be unto thy soul* (see also T&C 138:11). Okay, if you view priesthood as a brotherhood or an association, then I want to suggest that the way in which you should parse the three orders of priesthood is to parse them this way:

- As among men, it's merely a brotherhood of men.
- As between mankind and the heavens:
 - the first order is an order in which there is an association between men and angels.
 - The second order is an order in which there is an association between mankind and the Son of God.
 - And the third order—the highest order, the Patriarchal order—brings one into contact with the Patriarch who (of all the names that He could choose to be called by) chooses to have us call Him *our Father who art in heaven*—the third grand order being sonship to the Father and association with Him who sits in the bosom of eternity and sustains all the creation. The highest priesthood is an association with the Father, brought about as a consequence of the Father calling: "My son." It is the Holy Order after the Son of God because those who inherit that become, by definition, His Sons. They are the Church of the Firstborn because they are in association with—and made by the Father equal to—all those who rise up to be Firstborn.

Go to Moses chapter 5 [6]. This is a prophecy given by Adam which constituted one of the covenants which I referred to in the talk given at Centerville. Moses... (Oh, excuse me; it's chapter 6, verse 7): "Now this same Priesthood"—this is Adam speaking: *Now*

this same Priesthood which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world, also. Now this prophecy Adam spake, as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:7-8; see also Genesis 3:14 RE). Therefore, it was the power of the priesthood, animated by the Holy Ghost, which established, as a matter of right—and therefore, of covenant—the promise that this thing, this authority, this power, and this relationship which once existed in the beginning of the world is to exist again at the end of the world. And that that, too, arises as a consequence of the covenant given in the beginning.

So, what kind of person receives that ordination? I'm going back to the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14. This is the kind of person: *Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness.* You have to have faith. You have to ~~wrought~~ perform righteousness, which is not the same thing as virtue. Virtue... Virtue can be **offended** by righteousness. Virtue is...

Virtue would never kill, okay? It just never would. But it is righteous—in the case of Nephi, at the command of God—to slay Laban. Virtue would never **do** any number of things, **say** any number of things, or **behave** in any number of ways in which John the Baptist behaved. *[You] generation of vipers* (Luke 3:7; see also Luke 3:5 RE). Look, we translate that as if what we're reading is some nicely-phrased King Jamesian version of an insult. If you were trying to put it into modern English... This is John the Baptist (a righteous man with whom the kingdom of God existed) essentially, in the language of their day, saying, "You sons of bitches!" Because in our vernacular, by saying, "...sons of bitches," what you're saying is your mother is a female dog; and therefore, you are a dog; and since you're a dog, you are a cur, and you are unworthy. This is guttural language. We read, "You generations of vipers!" and we say, Oh, isn't that a nice way to parse out that John's thinks he's talking to the bad guys. And yet, we look sometimes at **righteousness**, and we say it can never be so because it is not virtuous. Because we overlay virtue atop righteousness—and it does not work and never has worked that way. Righteousness controls, and virtue surrenders. And virtue yields **every time** to righteousness—else Abraham could never have been commanded to slay his son. Because **that** was not virtuous. Therefore,

Melchizedek was a man of righteousness; ...when a child he feared God [not man], ...stopped the mouths of lions, ...quenched the violence of fire. ...thus, having been approved of God [not man]... (JST Genesis 14:26-27)

In fact, to be approved of God, in many cases, will make you offensive to man. But the opinions, and the vagaries, and the fashions of men, the opinion-polling and the drifts of what is and what is not popular at one point or another are damnable. They ought not even be considered. Righteousness **does not give** any regard to such things. And yet, it may be virtuous... It may be virtuous to be a limp-wristed, weepy, happy-go-lucky, "have a nice day" kind of chap... But righteousness will kick his ass everyday.

...having been approved of God... (Ibid)

It is God—and God's approval alone—that matters. It is what God regards of you. It is what is in your heart, because God can detect what is in your heart. God knows why you do what you do. God knows why you say what you say. God **knows** what is in your thoughts. Therefore, to be approved of God is to be weighed against the standard of righteousness and not the whims of fashion. Fashion will come and go. Ideas will be popular or unpopular. Righteousness will endure forever. This. This. This is the kind of man upon whom the words get spoken, "My Son."

The **fathers** (about whom I spoke in Centerville) had this association with God. They had this fellowship with God. They had this sonship **with** God. And they had this priesthood **from** God. And the hearts of the children need to turn to the fathers, and that, too, because Elijah is coming to plant in the hearts of the children the promises that were made.

Now, I wanna take another detour into parsing things in a way that you might not have considered before, and for this I wanna go to Doctrine and Covenants section 128, and I wanna look at verse 21. This is Joseph... This is Joseph writing a letter that got canonized. And he's talking about all of the stuff that had gone on in the process of getting the Restoration fully established on the earth, and he mentions in this letter that he writes these things:

*And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through[out] all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! [So the voice of God has been there throughout all of this, as Joseph presided and as the Church rolled forth.] **And the voice of Michael**, [Michael], the archangel; the voice of **Gabriel** ["El" being the name of God], and of **Raphael**, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, ...there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:21; see also T&C 151:15-17)*

So, I wanna suggest to you that Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are known to us as those who have come—though they were part of the El (or, in the plural form, the "Elohim")—they came, and they served here. They came, and they ministered here:

- **Micha-el** descended, and he came to the earth, and he was known as Adam in mortality.
- **Gabri-el** came to the earth, and he was known in mortality as Noah.
- There is a big debate over the identity of **Rapha-el**. I'll tell you what **I** think, and you can take it or leave it. Raphael is the name that was given to the man who in mortality we know as Enoch.
- Now there are four angels who preside over the four corners of the earth. And Joseph **surely** knew that. And Joseph mentions the names of three of the four, but he leaves the fourth one out. And I find the absence of the fourth one rather extraordinary. The fourth one's name is **Uri-el**, also one of the Elohim. And although

there are those who will absolutely cry heresy, throw dirt on their hair, and tear their clothes because they are scholars, and they are bona fide, and they know I'm talking out of my hat—but I'd remind you Joseph talked out of his hat, too—that fourth and missing, unmentioned angel is Uriel who, in mortality, was known to us as John.

Adam is the one in the East, the angel who was considered the one who presides over and has control of the air—which is apt because unto Adam was given the breath of life in the beginning.

Raphael is in the South, and he is associated with the power of fire—which is apt because of his fiery ascent with his people into heaven.

Gabriel is the angel in the West who has the power over water—which is apt because, in mortality, he managed through the Flood.

And Uriel, though not mentioned, is the one who, in the North, has the power over the earth—which is apt because he remains upon the earth, and he is the guardian at one gate, with Elijah at the other end.

But you can take and leave all that as you will. I find the mention here (in this letter by Joseph) of these individuals and these powers—and these four (three of whom are named; the fourth of whom, potentially, is unnamed)—to be interesting, though he does mention *divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time* (ibid).

Now I wanna focus on... Are we out? Five minutes still? Okay. Now I wanna focus on...

You think, and you hear, and you get beaten into your head on a continuous drum beat... I know, 'cuz I go to your meetings too. And I know this 'cuz you broadcast your general conference, and so, I can hear what you guys think. And—ohmm—here's what you think: "Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! We got keys! We got keys! We got... We got... We're bustling with keeeeeees! We got your keys!"

Now, you tell me, Mormons... You tell me—you declare to me—what are your dispensations? Tell me what your rights are. Tell me what your keys are. Even John Taylor tried to develop the *Book of Keys* because he didn't know what they were. You tell me what they are. Stop proclaiming that you **own** them, and **tell me** what the hell they are. If you got 'em, you oughta understand 'em. Tell me what your honors are. Tell me what your majesty is. Tell me what your glory is. Tell me, then, what the power of your priesthood is. Because if keys alone were sufficient, I rather think that Joseph Smith (who understood what he was writing) would not have gone to the trouble of parsing through the words *dispensation...rights...keys...honors...majesty...glory, and...power* (ibid) if it was all speaking to exactly the same thing. It is **not** speaking to the same thing. There is so much more that has to go on and be understood **if** you are going to save yourself and any soul in this generation in that kingdom which **we claim** we would like to inherit. And we claim we would like to inherit it without any idea of the consequences of what it would take in order to ascend there—or without any regard to

the fact that you don't take one of the EI and bring them down into mortality pain-free. You say that the Son of God condescended to come and be here. And I say, so did Michael, and so did Raphael, and so did Gabriel—because coming down and condescending to be here (on a rescue mission) by those who dwell in glory is an act of service and sacrifice that we simply take for granted out of the abundance of our ignorance.

(Well, we're in need of another break. We have to change the disk, so another five minute break, and then we'll try and finish it.)

(Should we start? Okay.)

If you go to and you look at Doctrine and Covenants section 76, beginning at verse 50, and you read through the list of things that are descriptors of those that are going to inherit Celestial glory... Beginning at verse 50—and we don't have time to go through all of the things that are there—but in 51 it says that these are people:

...who received the testimony of Jesus [that is, Christ testifying to them that they're saved], ...believed on his name [these are people who]...were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in...water in his name, ...this according to the commandment which he has given—

*That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, ...receive the Holy [Ghost] by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power [that sounds a little different than what we do]; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth...on all those who are just and true. [These] are they who **are** the Church of the Firstborn. [These] are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—*

*[These] are they who **are** priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory [I hope you read those words now with a little different meaning than you did from before 9:30 today]; And **are** priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods...*

*...all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs...they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. ...they **shall** overcome all things [that's in the future].*

*...let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet. These **shall** dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people. These are they who **shall** have part in the first resurrection. These are they who **shall** come forth in the resurrection of the just. These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.*

These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. ...just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant...

...[bodies] *whose bodies are celestial, ...glory...of the sun* [those who inherit everlasting burnings]... (D&C 76:51-70, emphasis added; see also T&C 69:10-22)

These are those who are referred to as the "El." **These** are those that were referred to when Moroni said that Elijah will come to *plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the father* (D&C 2:2; see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE) and when Joseph spoke in August the 27th of 1843 that Elijah **will** come. He **will** come. I've written a paper on this, and I'm not gonna repeat that.

I do wanna talk about sealing authority because there have been questions asked about sealing. I intended to address that, in any event. And I wanna suggest to you that there are three kinds of sealing authority which are given.

There is a first form of sealing power (and I'm talking about the kind of power not that can seal you up unto condemnation or judgment; I'm talking, instead, about Melchizedek sealing power, the kind that was designed to bless and to preserve). The first kind of sealing power is that kind which is given to someone when there is a dispensation of the gospel being founded. An example of that you can find in Exodus chapter 34 (involving Moses as a dispensation head) where, in verses 27 and 28, the Lord says, *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights...* (Exodus 34:27-28; see also Exodus 18:15 RE) and so on. And so, as a dispensation head, a form of sealing power is given to that person which establishes a covenant that was intended to go beyond that individual alone.

Take a look in Second Nephi chapter 1. And in Second Nephi chapter 1, we find Lehi speaking,

*Notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath **covenanted with me** should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.* (2 Nephi 1:5, emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 1:1 RE)

This is a covenant made by God with Lehi as a dispensation head, the beneficiaries of whom are beyond merely that dispensation head. It includes all those who come thereafter. They are beneficiaries of that. The covenant gets established through one; it is intended for others.

Joseph, in Doctrine and Covenants section 22: *BEHOLD, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and...everlasting covenant, ...that which was from the beginning* (D&C 22:1; see also Joseph Smith History 18:8 RE). So, through Joseph there was a covenant formed which would be binding beyond the person with whom God covenanted directly.

Dispensation heads are given the power—the sealing power, the authority—the ability to use the power to "seal up" by embodying the covenant that is given to them by God **into an ordinance**. And that ordinance remains in effect **after** the death of Moses, **after** the death of Lehi, **after** the death of Joseph Smith, so long as it remains embodied within the **ordinance**. This kind of ordinance—or this kind of sealing authority—then requires, and gives rise to, the second kind.

And the second kind is a sealing power that is embodied within authoritative ordinances. All dispensations of the gospel follow the covenant-giver's ordinances. For so long as the ordinances that were handed to you through the dispensation head are kept intact, the **covenant** is kept intact. And the second form of sealing power is a sealing power which is not dependent upon the persistent presence of a dispensation head. It is only dependent upon keeping faithfully the ordinance that has been established and handed down by God through covenant.

This second form of sealing power is the sealing authority which the Church claims to possess. It is the sealing authority that was referred to by Henry B. Eyring in the General Conference talk he gave in April 2012, "Families under Covenant," in which he proclaimed that the Church has the authority to seal families together by using the ordinances that have been handed down. I'm quoting from his talk:

The Holy Spirit of Promise, through our obedience and sacrifice, must seal our temple covenants in order to be realized in the world to come... "The Holy Ghost is one who reads the thoughts and hearts of men, and gives his sealing approval to the blessings pronounced upon their heads. Then it is binding, efficacious, and of full force" (Melvin J. Ballard, quoted by Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 111).

I agree with what he has said. I believe that is a correct way to explain the limited authority to seal enjoyed by the Church and the condition that remains, even in the ordinance, requiring the faithfulness and the subsequent sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise in order for those ordinances to endure. Nevertheless, the Church possesses that second kind of sealing authority, and it uses it in the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The second form of sealing authority, however, has conditions upon it—because God is not bound by anything that differs one iota from His word. And that doesn't matter **who** it is. God is bound by His word, not by man's. Therefore, when you handle such

ordinances, you need to keep in mind the admonition that was given in the prophecy of Isaiah:

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. (Isaiah 24:5-6; see also Isaiah 7:1 RE)

It's talking about a future time that is coming. But it's lamenting a condition that you have to decide about its currency. That's Isaiah chapter 24, verses 5 and 6.

So, when you have possession of that second form of sealing authority, you have to recognize that the covenant handed down from the dispensation head **can** be broken. It was broken rather abruptly in the case of the covenant given to Lehi when, at the death of Lehi, his family fragmented into two groups—one of whom desired to preserve the covenant, and one of whom rejected it and walked away from it. Therefore, it was not to the ones that had rejected the covenant that the Lord would subsequently come to appear—but they, by and large, would have been destroyed. So, handling the second form of the covenant, after the dispensation head has established it, is a matter of fidelity to the word of God and faithfulness to the word of God and faithfulness in preserving and practicing the ordinance that has been established.

There is a third kind of sealing power. And this third kind of sealing power goes beyond either of the first two. And it has absolutely unique application, and it is given only in rare circumstances and for highly specific purposes. That third form involves giving the authority to control the elements. This was authority that was possessed by Enoch. This was authority that was possessed by Melchizedek. This was authority that was possessed by Christ. This was the authority that Christ had to suspend (or not employ) in order to permit those who would kill Him to kill Him. This is the kind of authority which, in the case of **every** such individual, they give their lives up willingly. Their lives cannot be taken.

An example—and it's a good example, because it gives you insight into **why** such authority would ever be given to a man—is found in Helaman chapter 10, beginning at verse 5. This is the Lord speaking to Nephi, son of Helaman, son of Helaman. To Nephi he says:

And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness...

And the "unwearyingness" is described in verse 4—that is, Nephi has gone, and he's declared what the Lord has asked him to declare, and he hasn't feared **them**, nor has he sought to protect his own life, but he has instead sought to keep the commandments of God. Therefore, because he has done this with such unwearyingness...

*...behold, I [this is God speaking to Nephi] will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, **for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.** (Helaman 10:5, emphasis added)*

That's not a commandment. That's a description of the character and the nature of Nephi. That's not saying, "I'm giving this to you, but be careful how you use it. Please don't do anything that isn't according to my will." That's the Lord saying, "I, God, have faith in **you**, Nephi—that **you**, Nephi, will not do anything other than my will." You see... The whole thing turns on its head, at this point. You see, this is **God** having faith in a **man**. What manner of man, then, does **God** have faith in?

Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels. (Ibid, vs. 6)

Because this decree in this circumstance may require those who are watching to obey the word of the man. Therefore, the angels (the Powers of Heaven) must give heed—because God is declaring it in the presence of the hosts who are standing before Him.

I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people. Behold [that is a rather Aaronic behavior... Behold] I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye...seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; ...whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people. (Ibid, vs. 6-7)

This is rather Melchizedek because you can seal up unto eternal life. This is the positive side. This is the thing which those who are given this authority seek earnestly to do.

...thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done. (Ibid, vs. 8)

...because the temple is subordinate to the word of God. The temple is not the place that **controls** the word of God, the temple is the place which most of all ought be subject to the word of God. It's not a place to innovate in ordinances. It's a place to obey, to follow, to give strict heed unto, and to not vary.

And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if [thou shalt] say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. (Ibid, vs. 9-10)

And then, because he knows the nature and the character of the man involved in giving this authority, God commands him. He has to go out and deliver the message:

...Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction. (Ibid, vs. 11; see also Helaman 3:19 RE)

He didn't wanna do that, because that's not in the character of the person who, with unweariness, would go out and declare the word of God—because such people have in their heart one and only one objective, and that is the salvation of the souls of men. But now this troubling message has to be given. And when he goes and he delivers it, he doesn't even use the authority that he's been given. He simply asks the Lord if the Lord will smite.

Look at Enoch in the book of Moses, chapter 6—because, once again, we're looking at someone to whom this authority was given. Moses chapter 6, verse 34 (God speaking to Enoch): *Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all **thy** words will I justify; and the mountains **shall** flee before you, and the rivers **shall** turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me* (emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:2 RE)—because it was Enoch's purpose to abide in God. Therefore, when he speaks and the elements obey, they obey precisely because it is the word of God which Enoch is speaking. It is not Enoch out there innovating. Enoch would have forfeited his life before he would have said or done anything that was not in accordance with the will of God, as would have Nephi. Therefore, they are trustworthy.

And then, we looked at Joseph Smith translation of Genesis chapter 14.

As to these three kinds of authority,

- the first authority, given unto a dispensation head: only God can pass that to man. Man cannot pass that to man.
- The second kind of sealing authority that we talked about can be passed from man to man, from generation to generation—remains in full force and effect for so long as the covenant is not broken.
- The third kind not only cannot be given by man to man but is given as a consequence of that extraordinary combination of mortality and immortality, in which you find a person on the earth that God has faith and confidence in. You be that kind of person.

Now, I wanna talk for a minute about sealing (as it manifests itself in some of the records of the Church) and parse some things that we find in the scriptures. Because in the minutes of Far West in October of 1831, Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. said that "the order of the high priesthood is that they have power given them to seal up the Saints unto eternal life. And said it was the privilege of every elder [present to be] ordained to the high priesthood," which led everyone to think that they had the power to seal, and they ran about doing all kinds of sealing things which, again, I reckon that as authority given to a dispensation head, which at that point had not been embodied into an ordinance, and he was simply saying: We can do this stuff. At which point, those who thought they had that authority ran about doing that.

Well, if you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 68, first verses 3 and 4: *This is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of*

the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. Then go over to 12: And of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen (see also T&C 55:1-2).

So, this is talking in the context of someone having authority to seal when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And that is authority which anyone of **you** (and the prophetess Anna, in the temple at Jerusalem, when Christ came into the temple—a **woman** can use) when moved upon by the power of the Holy Ghost. And it is the word of God, and it is the power to seal if it originates from God. That doesn't mean it's the same thing as a dispensation head. It doesn't mean it's the same thing as an ordinance. And it doesn't mean that it's the same thing as the control of the elements, given in those rare cases. But what it **does** mean is that the word of God will always be respected, both in time and in eternity, **if** it is given by God, **if** it is the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are those who have heard that their calling and election is made sure. And they've heard that as a witness from God. Don't doubt the word of God given to you. However, don't think for one moment that's the end of the matter. Remember (that in the cases that we looked at before) that one of the purposes of ascending up into the presence of the Father is to be endowed with knowledge, with light and truth, and with intelligence, to possess a God-like mind and a God-like understanding. Therefore, no matter what you receive, you ought to always search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. Indeed, we're commanded to do so, as I reminded you in Boise and won't repeat again here. I've also read you previously and won't repeat it again here—Doctrine and Covenants section 1, verse 8... 8 thru 10 (see also T&C 54:2), the sealing power manifested in an Aaronic setting, in which it is sealed up unto condemnation.

I want to mention that beyond there being a fellowship of man (or males) and a brotherhood, there is also a fellowship that is extended, as well, to women. If you find a woman in scripture who has had the ministry of angels, you have a sister who has joined in that association. I won't take time to do so, but if you look in Judges chapter 13, verses 2 to 5, you have Samson's mother being ministered to by an angel promising the coming of the one who would be a judge in Israel (see also Judges 6:1 RE). You have in Genesis chapter 18, verses 9 to 15, Abraham's wife with angelic ministrants (see also Genesis 7:36 RE). And the most obvious case being Mary in the book of Luke, chapter 1, verses 26 to 31, in which Mary is ministered to by Gabriel, one of the Elohim, who came to announce that she would conceive and bear a child, though she knew no man (see also Luke 1:5 RE).

Boy... Take note that there are, on a number of occasions, women who conceive and bear children, but the births are miraculous. In the case of Mary, the child that was born was conceived in a miraculous way. As also was Samson. As was John. Whether it's infertility and barrenness, whether it's being past the age of menopause, or whether it's not having had intercourse, there are these beings who come into the world as a consequence of something other than the normal manner of conception. And yet, everything else unfolds biologically the same as a normal birth. The child that is born, obviously, inherits mortality and blood from the mother.

Parse that in your own mind, and then take a look at what the Lord says in Abraham chapter 3 about the "souls" in the pre-existence who were good. And recognize that the definition of the soul (given in the Doctrine and Covenants) is both the spirit and the body. And yet, they are "souls," and they're coming into this world, but...

Most people think of priesthood in a model that is given by the Church: that is, something that is passed from man to man; that it is something that involves a brotherhood among men; and that it can be removed by institutional shunning.

It is probably better to think of priesthood in terms of—at one degree (that we would call Aaronic or Levitical)—possesses an association with angels. And another order that possesses an association with the Son of God. And yet another level at which the association is one that makes you a son of God, which is the Holy Order **after** the Son of God; that is, the status of the individual involved has been changed to themselves being a son of God, a bar-El.

Now, how is priesthood communicated in every instance? If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 20 to find out how you do ordinations... Ordinations (in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants): *Every elder, priest, teacher, or deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him;he is to be ordained by the **power of the Holy Ghost**, which is in the one who ordains him* (D&C 20:60, emphasis added; see also Joseph Smith History 16:14 RE). And so, it's the power of the Holy Ghost that animates the one doing the ordination, and that ordination is to one of the **offices** in the Church that consists of Elder, Priest, Teacher, or Deacon. And **that's** the manner in which these offices are supposed to be filled.

In Moroni chapter 3: *After this manner did they ordain...* This is chapter 3, verse 4: *After this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; ...**they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost**, which was in them* (emphasis added; see also Moroni 3:1 RE). And therefore, if they have the power of the Holy Ghost, they had the power to ordain.

At the beginning, when the Church was first formed, the notion that there was this integrated priesthood that animated everything **was not present**. And those that went out, went out because they had been chosen by common consent and ordained by those— through the Holy Ghost—to have the authority to go out and do these things. And they were supposed to preach, teach, exhort, expound, and so on. And they did so. And their baptisms had the required effect.

When we... When you read the Book of Mormon, and you look at the baptismal prayer that's furnished in the Book of Mormon, it says: *Having authority of Jesus Christ I baptize you in the name...* (3 Nephi 11:25; see also 3 Nephi 5:8 RE) and so on. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we say, *Having been **commissioned** of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and...the Son and...the Holy Ghost* (D&C 20:73, emphasis added; see also Joseph Smith History 16:23 RE). That was

actually a word change. It's a word change instituted by Joseph Smith, and it ought to give you confidence that since the Lord, in the first instance, **commissioned** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (and He did so at a time in which priesthood had not been generally disseminated), that by commissioning the Church and giving to it the authority and the **commission** to go out and baptize, that the Church possesses the authority to baptize still.

Also, when John came (and it doesn't matter if you read the account that is given by Joseph in the Joseph Smith History, or you get it in the footnote in the Joseph Smith History, written by Oliver Cowdery—the words are, in effect, the same), that authority by Aaron to baptize, that's going to linger. That is a far more persistent form of priestly authority. It's gonna be around.

But it's a question that had been asked I want to answer; it's been asked by a variety of people in a variety of ways, and probably the most blunt way of posing the question was this, "Is there any priesthood authority or power in most of the LDS Church?"

I wanna remind you of an incident that we find in First Samuel—this is First Samuel chapter 1. Now, remember that Hannah is barren. Hannah cannot have a child. And Hannah is a faithful woman. She is a faithful, believing woman. And she goes up to the tabernacle presided over by Eli. (Eli, who raises despicable children, who will ultimately be slain by God; Eli, who will be replaced by Samuel—and replaced by Samuel on the same day that his two sons are slain in battle, the Ark is lost to the Philistines, his daughter—who was pregnant—miscarries the child, and he—Eli—falls over backwards and fractures his skull and dies; the whole family wrapped up in a holocaust of death on the same day. This is Eli. This is oft-times called the "wicked priest Eli.")

Well, Hannah goes up to the Tabernacle; and Hannah, in faith, is praying at the Tabernacle. And to give you an idea of the lowly state of the Tabernacle in that day, it's so common-place a thing that when Eli sees her praying, her ~~mou~~ lips moving but no words coming out, he assumes she's like the rest of them there; she's just drunk. And so, he's a little upset that a drunken woman has joined in and is now here in the Tabernacle; and so, he complains. And she says...

Well, Eli (in verse 14 of the first book of Samuel first chapter): *How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.* And Hannah says, "No, I'm not. I'm not. I've come here to pray." And verse 17, Eli answered and said, *Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him* (see also 1 Samuel 1:4-5 RE).

A faithless, wicked, insubordinate priest (who will be slain by the hand of God with his sons and his grandson, all on the same day) is able—because of the **worthiness** of Hannah—to give to Hannah—because of **her** faith—a blessing from God.

Because in the **ordinances**, the **power of God is manifest**; not because of some white-shirt wearing, dark-suit clad, institutional chap with a certificate and common consent is doing something; but because you come in faith to God, believing, and you

wrestle a blessing from God, through the means that He has allowed it to be bestowed: by **your** faith. And you have God take note of **your** diligence and **your** faith.

I want to suggest that if you go to a patriarch in the Church, in faith, believing that God is able, through any inspired man giving a blessing by the power of the Holy Ghost, without regard to priesthood—because priesthood is animated by the power of the Holy Ghost—therefore, if they have the power of the Holy Ghost, it comes from God.

In large measure, your faith matters far more than you think it does. I know a great deal more than I knew at the time I went to the Jordan River temple to perform vicarious work for deceased ancestors, an incident that I recorded in one of the little vignettes in *The Second Comforter*. I went to the temple—in faith, believing—and I met eleven of my ancestors who were redeemed because of **my** faith. And they could use any condition in which they can find the rites, any tattered ruin left they could use, so long as there was **faith** upon the earth to act in their behalf.

We think there's some magic, whammy voodoo in possession of a franchise which the franchise-holders are able to use in order to push away or gather in, and so that their families and their insiders and their beneficiaries and their cronies can get supercharged Celestial blessings. And "the least" can be shunned and held away. And all they are doing is behaving like a parade of fools. Don't be taken in. **Your** faith matters. **Your** confidence matters. **Your** driving the power of the Spirit into your life matters. You want an authoritative baptism? Go get someone to baptize you who claims that they know the ordinance and can perform it. And you go in faith, believing, and let the Holy Ghost ratify the event.

The first missionaries sent out by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were not ordained to anything. And they baptized, and their names are on the record of the Church, and we've done some revisionism with our history, and we kinda, kinda, sorta put priesthood on 'em now. But if you go to the contemporaneous stuff, it wasn't present. And yet, their baptism mattered—because the people came in faith, believing, repenting of their sins, and going before God to shed their sins. And they emerged from the waters of baptism, having been cleansed of their sins **by the power of the Holy Ghost**.

At the end of the day, the ordinance that you receive by the laying on of hands is simply an admonition for you to go get it! In fact, if you pay real careful attention to the scriptures... You look this up; prove it one way or the other—the only ones that have the power to give the **gift** of the Holy Ghost in all of scriptures are apostles. Now, we conflate it—because in the same verse it says *apostles*, it says *elders* (D&C 20:38; see also Joseph Smith History 16:11 RE). An Apostle is an Elder, and we can go on... yadda yadda... and we say, "Gift of the Holy Ghost." But the purpose of establishing the apostleship was to give someone (who had contact with the Second Comforter) power to be able to give the Comforter. And so, the laying on of hands authoritatively was originally restricted. But the **admonition** is given to **all**; and therefore, **all** have the ability to lay hold upon it by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Lay hold upon it.

So, well. Joseph Smith said on page 308 of *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*, "If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments, and by obeying all the ordinances of [~~the house of God~~] the house of the Lord."

I wanna suggest that if you define the house of God as a temple—a building with walls and a spire and an angel on top—if that's your definition, okay, then there are an infinite number of things that can interfere with your ability to accomplish this, one of them being that the temple has been defiled. Another one of them being that the ordinances have been changed; and therefore, the covenant has been broken. Another of them being that the officiator who shows up has left his adulterous paramour to come in and perform the sealing. And so, there's any number of ways in which you—at the altar, kneeling in good-faith—have no way of knowing whether or not you can do this, and therefore... Oh, oh, oh, you can let your doubts lay hold upon you.

Let me read it to you again though and offer another definition. "If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments, and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord." I wanna redefine that "house"—not in terms of physical structure, but in terms of familial relationship, in which God alone establishes His house, and that too, by acknowledging who His sons and daughters are. **That house** can never be overtaken, touched, trampled, broken, forsaken, compromised, or adulterated, because man is powerless. And so, when the house of God is to be set in order in the last days, don't think of that as a movement that you're awaiting for someone else to accomplish. How do you not know that the One Mighty and Strong, to be sent to set in order the house of God, is not Jesus Christ himself, waiting to minister to all those who will come to Him? Because receiving our Lord is, in itself, an ordinance.

Now, keeping in mind everything I've said, now we're really gonna parse the scriptures in a way that may not yet have occurred to you, but I find perfectly delightful. Doctrine and Covenants section 132; I wanna begin at verse 8. And I want you to remember what I've said the house of God is.

*Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept...an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, **before the world was?** I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord. And **everything** that is in the world, whether it be **ordained of men, [or] by thrones, or [by] principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be**, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, **shall be thrown down**, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in [or] after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For*

*whatsoever things remain are by **me**; and whatsoever things are not **by me** shall be shaken and destroyed (D&C 132:8-14, emphasis added).*

The Powers of Heaven. And this is the reason why that third form of priesthood is so rare a commodity—because even the angels desire to inquire into it, but the angels don't possess it. And it doesn't matter if, in that hierarchy of those that exist on the other side of the veil, you manage to wrestle something from those who are powers there and possess thrones or principalities. God is saying in this revelation—if you understand the words—that even His **angels** (and those who have ascended far up) must, in every case, only establish that which comes by the will and covenant of the Son and the Father: the Son, because He possesses the keys to do so; the Father, because He is the one from whom the original covenant began in the pre-existence. So, don't think, because you've had an angel promise you something... In Doctrine and Covenants section 132, you have to connect up with the Father.

In the first meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Adam was not considered to be among those who were mortal because Adam had begun life in the Garden in the presence of God. Therefore, mortals who were born into the mortal realm in that meeting began with Seth. The seven who gathered at Adam-ondi-Ahman were mortal because they were born outside of God's presence. And they were restored again into God's presence at the meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman.

The fact is that that same thing that was in the beginning will be in the end of the world, also. That's the covenant; that's the promise; that's the destiny—and God will surely fulfill that.

I also think... We take a lot of comfort, and we spend a lot of money buying all of the stuff around Springhill, Missouri (valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman) because that was a place where Adam was. And it's the place where God will come to once again. I wanna suggest that the wicked, the knavish, the proud, the boastful, those who seek the honors of men will never have possession of and be able to control or prevent the unfolding of God's work. The words Adam-ondi-Ahman mean "Adam in the presence of the Father." Therefore, any place that the Ancient of Days comes to, while Christ is there also, is by definition "Adam-ondi-Ahman." Therefore, it doesn't matter if a fallen and corrupt society owns a piece of real estate that they claim. God is not bound by the stratagems of men. Nor are His purposes controlled by the vanities of men.

And yet, if they will repent and if they will hear what the Lord has to say, He can still work with them. But if not, then He'll work with **you**—assuming you came and you're willing to hear, and assuming your heart is soft and you're willing to take in the things that God required to be included in what I'm saying today (some of which came as recently as this morning).

I'm doing this to be faithful to the things that have been asked of me—not by man or men, but by God. I don't even control the content of this material. I'm not parsing these

scriptures because I **think** they are nice. I'm telling you what I **know** to be true, because it's what I've been asked to declare by Him whose presence I have been in.

In *The Second Comforter*, I told you that shortly after being baptized into the Church, I was told by an angel: "On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." Well, a couple things about that: "On the first day of the third month in nine years," I was called to be Gospel Doctrine teacher. And so it began, then and there, and in that setting, and among you good people! But it has never ended. It began by a calling from an angel; it continues still. And therefore, don't think... Don't think I'm just some vain fellow hoping to attract notice. Most of what I attract in my universe, in my setting, it's... It's negative, as some of you know. It has not been the source of delight. It's been the source of profound discomfort.

But there was a question I was going to answer: "How are you and your family doing since the excommunication? We worry about you." Great. The blessings of God are without constraint. And you do not have, and no man can control, the outpouring of blessings upon those who will give heed to Him. And therefore, I've been surprised at how much of a rather non-event it has been, in many respects.

There are a couple things that are a little different, and that is that I really gotta go out of my way to make some people feel comfortable inside my own ward, because they just don't know how to behave. It's the damndest apostate they've ever run into, 'cuz "he still has a testimony and attends his meeting and all the rest of that." But I feel worse for other people and their awkwardness. It's like "Ummmmmm... What do we talk about now? 'Cuz we used to, like, talk about doctrine and stuff, and we're not so sure that maybe your doctrine might be, like, like toxic waste. And so, if you say something, I might get poisoned by it. And so, ya know... How 'bout them Sox?" [laughter]

Hey, how 'bout them Sox? I mean really! They were supposed to be last place, and they won it all. I mean, Farrell, that guy... He's legit. Batting coach last year. World series manager this year.

Things are great, couldn't be better. We continue to preach, teach, exhort, believe, teach our children, go to Church, make compensation for the awkwardness with which people approach it. I even...

Look, if I had not been excommunicated, in the chili cook-off I was going to make the habanero chili, and I was gonna win the "hottest chili" award. My wife—wise counselor that she is—suggested that that might be viewed by some as retaliation [laughter]. And so, that's a difference. I toned the chili way down; we still had people, like, dancing around saying, "Oooo, ahhhh, oooo, ahhhh." I mean, it was like the background to some of those do-wap songs.

But, I mean, things are fine. Things couldn't be better. And you know, my Little Leaguer is trying out again for the boys' baseball team, having dabbled once again in softball and

found them unworthy of her presence. She's gonna go back to baseball, and so, we have things to do. And stuff to do.

I wanna thank you for coming. We've gone on way too long. Doug wanted to make an announcement, but I'm disconnecting all the paraphernalia and going.

2014.04.12 Lecture 6: Zion

12 April, 2014

Grand Junction, Colorado

This is a series of talks given in connection with 40 years of membership in the LDS Church. At about this moment at about 40 years ago, I had been responsible for a number of conversions and baptisms into the Church. I was one of those obnoxious missionaries, you know. I kinda confronted you with my zealotry back in those days. And there'd been, by this point, a series of baptisms that had taken place. The first one was 18 days after my own baptism, and that involved Ron Mahle—I mentioned that earlier in the second talk that was given in Idaho Falls. There was a Jewish fellow named Shapiro that converted. There was Pitman. There was Ford. There was Manchester.

There were others, but at about this moment, on a Saturday or a Sunday (I don't recollect which, but it was nearly this point in time back in that calendar), there was a fellow who was in the military barracks where I was staying who left his door open. I got up early in the morning. I was going to some church-related activity, as things were wont to be back then. The church was everything. I mean, it was your Wednesday; it was your Tuesday; it was your Saturday, and it was certainly your Sunday. And as I was leaving, his door was open, and he was sitting on his bed in the barracks. And I said, "Hey, Mike, what's going on?" And he said, "Oh, there are no good people left in the world today." And I said, "Yeah, there are! Hey, get your stuff; come with me; I'll show you some!" So, he said, "Where am I going?" I said, "Don't worry about it. You'll know. You'll find some good people when we get there." And so, he got his shoes on and put a shirt on, and he came with me. And we were doing some kind of gosh-awful activity like we did back in those days. And I introduced him to the Elders ('cause the Elders were always there), and that was the end of that. Mike Kirby is now... He's living in Colorado, been married in the temple, has several generations of his descendants who are members of the Church.

And so, let me tell you, missionary work is (and has been from the day I was baptized through today) the easiest thing of all to do. And I would encourage any of you who run into someone that's curious about Mormonism—

And it's even easier today because people know a whole lot more about Mormonism today than they've ever known before. They know Mitt Romney. I mean, when I began, the world did not even know Donny and Marie. But now they know David Archuleta. I mean, there's a thousand things to talk about. And then there's all that anti-Mormon crap (which, by the way, if you approach that, that is the best entrée). When they've got some complaint, some "absolute, demonstrable proof that..." and, you know, choose your bad issue: book of Abraham; Joseph Smith and plural wives—choose whatever you want. That's an invitation to talk. And by the way, the more upset someone is about Mormonism/the more angry they are/the more emotionally connected they are to denouncing Mormonism, the easier it is to have a conversation with them, and (as it turns out in my experience) the easier it is to make a convert—because they care. And so, I would encourage all of you to share your religion.

Zion is not just a topic. Zion has occupied the attention of every prophet from the days of Adam down to today. When I talked about covenants in Centerville—ultimately, many of the covenants that were made throughout history had, as their bedrock, the assurance that, in the last days, God would bring again Zion. That was a critical component of the covenant that was made in the days of Adam. That was part of the covenant that was made with Enoch. To understand Zion is to necessarily comprehend that there were covenants made by God which He intends to vindicate.

To understand Christ's Gospel, it requires you to understand Christ's Zion. Zion can not — can not—be brought through a 'Strongman.' The talk I gave about the Priesthood in Orem was given, in part, to inform you about what's necessary, as a Priesthood component, for the existence of Zion. But a Strongman will not work.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, beginning at 19, it says:

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof [and in the ordinances thereof], the power of godliness is manifest. [And I would note, as a parenthetical, that you have to have Priesthood in order to have the ordinances.] And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh...

And Zion is a fleshly endeavor. It is to involve living, breathing people. Therefore, as you read these verses, you oughta recognize that the power of godliness being manifest to men in the flesh through the ordinances, as a component, is talking about the rudiments that's required for Zion.

*For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought...to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, **which rest is the fullness of his glory...***

The glory of God is intelligence. The "rest of the Lord" is the fullness of His glory or, in other words, light and truth—or in other words, it requires a people that are competent in the things of God who have an understanding which will reach into Heaven.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the holy priesthood also... (D&C 84:19- 25; see also T&C 82:12-14, emphasis added)

Thus **ended** Zion—because Moses went up the mount, and Moses talked with God, and he spoke with Him face-to-face. He wanted to bring the people with him up there so

that they (like he) would speak with God and be in His presence face-to-face. That's what Moses sought after, at which point Moses' status as a leader ended because no one would need to say to another, "Know ye the Lord," for they all would, therefore, know Him—a prophecy about Zion in the last days. That is an accomplishment that requires people and not individual. When this event occurred, that ended it. **It did not end the Strongman**, 'cause they kept Moses for another 40 years—wandering about in the wilderness, as they did; wearing out their Adidas and their Nikes, as they did; eating manna from Heaven, and grouching and bitching about it, as they did. But they had a Strongman! So, what? **You can't get there through the Strongman model.**

Here's the incident—Exodus 20, *And all the people...* This is 20, beginning at verse 18:

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be [proved] before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21; see also Exodus 12:14 RE)

You can't have a model of Zion in which there is 'some big Strongman' leading you. Moses is the perfect example of one of the greatest Strongmen in history. And Zion failed in his day precisely because they wanted **him** to go speak to God for them, rather than **they** going to speak to God directly. Zion requires a people to rise up, and it cannot come otherwise.

It will require you to have faith, which was the subject that we addressed in Idaho Falls. And it was addressed in Idaho Falls precisely for the reason that it was necessary to get that on the table before we begin to introduce the topic today.

It will require that you repent to know God, which was the topic that we covered in Logan, which was required for an understanding of the subject today.

If you do not comprehend the foundation, you will not understand the subject. You're not just going to walk into Zion and take up residency there. You must have sufficient intelligence in order to be comfortable there. Its glory must be within you. As I read a minute ago, *which rest is the fullness of his glory*—in other words, **you**, you have to be the possessor of light and truth, which is the glory of God.

Moses saw Zion. If you go to Moses chapter 1, verse 8, it tells you that Moses—

*It came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; ...Moses beheld the world and the **ends** thereof, and all the children of*

men which are, and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. (See also Genesis 1:2 RE, emphasis added)

It's actually amusing to me when I encounter Moses dealing with what he just told you about in one verse. Nephi made a valiant effort to hint around it, and then he defaulted back to the words of Isaiah to try and convey what it was that he saw. Isaiah made an enormous effort to put into epic poetry what it was he saw. And Moses, when he's given that same opportunity, his response in his record is that—I just read it to you—*[he] beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created.* Well put, Moses. I **get** why you did it that way. Another one of the prophets: *[I] saw and [I] heard much* (1 Nephi 1:6; see also 1 Nephi 1:3 RE). [Laughter.] I get why they do that, and there's a reason for that. Therefore, Moses understood. Moses knew what it would take because he saw it.

If you go to Numbers, there's an incident that happens in chapter 11. Two of the men in the camp (Eldad and Medad), the Spirit rested upon them that they began to prophesy. They prophesied in the camp, and a couple of young men run and told Moses. And I'm beginning at verse 28:

Joshua...son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of [the] young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. ...Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and...the LORD would put his spirit upon them! (Numbers 11:28-29; see also Numbers 7:19 RE)

Moses was not jealous of someone having revelation. He welcomed it. He understood what it would take in order to create a people of God. And he was not jealous that there happened to be two of the people of God within the camp demonstrating the gifts that are given to the people of God.

The Strongman model will not work.

I'm reading from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. I want to draw a contrast. I want to draw a comparison between the attitude that we found at the beginning of the Restoration, and the attitude that subsequently took over.

President Joseph Smith read the 14th chapter of Ezekiel—said the Lord had declared by the Prophet, that the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption of the Jewish church—that righteous persons could only deliver their own souls—applied it to the present state of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall—that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves, envious towards the innocent, while they afflict[ed] the virtuous with their shafts of envy. (*TPJS* p. 237-238)

That's in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph*, pages 237-238. That was a call by Joseph Smith for the saints to rise up. That was a call by Joseph Smith for the saints to realize the prophecies that he had heard from Moroni (that we began talking about all the way back in Boise)—to rise up and to become something: a people of God, a people of holiness; those who could and would commune with God. This is Joseph, and late in the ministry, too.

I want you to contrast that with this statement: "We can accept nothing as authoritative but that which comes directly through the appointed channel, the constituted organizations of the priesthood, which is the channel that God has appointed, through which to make known His mind and will to the world." That's on page 42 of *Gospel Doctrine*.

Unlike every other dispensation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims **it cannot** lead you astray. This is again reading from the *Gospel Doctrine*:

If any man in that position [referring to the Church President], should become unfaithful, God would remove him out of his place. I testify in the name of Israel's God, that he will not suffer the head of the Church, whom he has chosen to stand at the head, to transgress His laws and apostasize. The moment he should take a course that would in time lead to it, God would take him away. [That's from page 44.]

I don't know... I get in trouble when I'm tempted to say things like what I'm going to say next. My wife has counseled me...

I've spoken with brother Joseph F. Smith, and he rues having taught that. I can tell you if he were here today with what he now knows, he would not declare that doctrine. And he would retract it and repent of having used the name of Israel's God in connection with a false doctrine.

The Strongman model constructs the **opposite** of Moses' desire for all men to be prophets. It constructs the **opposite** of Moroni's prophecy when he quoted from Joel. It is the **opposite** of Joel's prophecy, which says:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh [again, the flesh! Here! Now! You! Living! Breathing! In the flesh!]; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaid[ens] in those days will I pour out my spirit. ...I will shew wonders in the [heaven] and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and...terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. (Joel 2:28-32; see also Joel 1:12 RE)

The Strongman model is the opposite of that prophecy. It would **prevent** Zion precisely because God **must** dwell among the people. If He does not dwell among the people, it is impossible to have Zion—because Zion is a place where God comes to dwell among them. And if God is dwelling among a people, no one need say, "Know ye the Lord," for everyone shall know Him who is there. The false construct of 'the Strongman' has got to be replaced.

Zion will require a covenant. It will require authority from God for that covenant. And it will require a level of conduct that meets the requirements or honors the covenant.

There's this curious incident, and I want to point it out in Acts—because before you get too enthusiastic about signing up to join up for what the Lord is about to bring, I want to remind you of what happens when a covenant is established, and it is done authoritatively, and it is approved by the Lord and then people neglect to perform it.

If you turn to Acts chapter 5, beginning at verse 1:

But [there was] a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

And it was about the space of three hours after, that his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answer[ing] unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. (Acts 5:1-10; see also Acts 3:2-3 RE)

It's a good thing that we forfeit the power to make authoritative covenants from time to time. Because if we had everything that we claim we had, and if we lived under an obligation that God would honor, and if we chose to violate that—as will be the case when we have Zion. You cannot endure a Terrestrial glory in a Telestial state. Lying, and stealing, and deceiving, and adultery, and whoremongering (all of the abominations that people prize in this generation), your lusts, your ambitions, your desires to lord it over one another (the common affliction of the Gentile)—all of those things are a level below what Zion requires. And so, if one happily strolls into Zion while profaning the conditions

upon which it will be established, they subject themselves to the penalty of being where they should not be, in a condition in which they cannot endure.

The destruction that occurred at Christ's death on the Americas was the destruction of the wicked only. If you look at 3 Nephi chapter 10, verse 12 (see also 3 Nephi 4:8 RE), you find out that the more righteous were saved. Those who live a Telestial law will be destroyed.

Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 76. I wanna begin at—well, I may as well back up. I was gonna begin a little later on. I want you to remember the chant, "Follow the Prophet, Follow the Prophet," which we can drill in mindlessly to the youth with a drumbeat cadence that sounds rather like [Denver makes Native American chanting sounds]; you know, "Follow the Prophet, Follow the Prophet"—you do that. "Follow the Brethren, Follow the Brethren."

The glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so differs one from another in glory in the telestial world; For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ, ...some of John, ...some of Moses, ...some of Elias, ...some of Esaias, ...some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch; But received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant [yet to be established]. Last of all [and this is a general description of those who have Telestial behavior], these...are they who will not be gathered with the saints, to be caught up unto the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud. These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth. These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. (D&C 76:98-105; see also T&C 69:26-27)

That is a broad description of those who **can not** be in Zion. And, notably, it begins with a list of those who "**follow the prophets,**" almost as if the Lord (in the revelation to Joseph Smith) anticipated your day and warned you: "Do not go thither! Do not partake of that! Receive the testimony of Jesus! Prepare when He offers the Everlasting Covenant! Do that!" To the extent that a church or an organization worships or trusts a man in lieu of Christ, it will lead you to Telestial destruction. It will not... Those who believe in it will not survive the destruction of the wicked that **precedes** the Lord's return.

I'll tell you what you get from a Strongman model. What you get from a Strongman model is a multibillion-dollar shopping mall. What you get from a Strongman model is a red Cadillac Escalade stopped on a back road in Nevada with \$54,000 of cash in the back of the car when 'the prophet' is arrested for child abuse and child sexual exploitation (that's Warren Jeffs). I'll tell you what you get with a Strongman model: You get pretenders, and you get fools. You get people who hold onto their power (like the LeBaron's did) by murdering one another so that they can claim that they have 'the keys.' I'll tell you what you get with the Strongman model: You get Brigham Young who

~~takes a woman who was already~~ who takes **women** who were already married to another man (and not divorced), seals them to himself with keys,' and then proceeds to father children with them (and Brigham Young condemned Parley Pratt for doing exactly the same thing—and even observed at Parley's death that he probably deserved to be killed by the jealous husband because it was adultery for Parley to have done what he did). And what then is the distinction between the conduct of Brigham Young, on the one hand, and the exact same conduct by Parley Pratt, on the other hand? The difference lies in the fact that Brigham Young claimed to have the keys. If **keys** allow adultery, I want no such keys! If keys allow adultery, then I say, Damn me now, because I want nothing of it!

I don't think that the pretenders in the Strongman model have any clue what it would take to bring again Zion, because they do not kneel down to serve and elevate the least. The only way to bring again Zion is if **you—you**—rise up; is if **you** come to know the Lord! Not me! The only way is if **you** comprehend the Gospel of Christ, accept the invitation, prepare your heart, prepare your mind, prepare your soul, clean yourself up, leave behind your sins, and come and face the Lord.

Zion is a **level**. It is an absolute level. Here's a description of the level. This is Moses chapter 7, verse 18, *And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were **no poor among them*** (see also Genesis 4:14 RE, emphasis added). There were no poor among them because it's intolerable for your sister to suffer in want if you have enough and to spare. There were no poor among them because you cannot dwell in righteousness if you find a need, and you're unwilling to fulfill it.

Here's how you destroy Zion (we know, because there was an abortive attempt made during the time of Joseph Smith): Doctrine and Covenants 101:6. This is **after** it failed. This is the Lord explaining why. Here's why; this is how you avoid Zion. *Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances* (see also T&C 101:2). That's how you destroy Zion. It's a fairly simple thing to accomplish because we all jar one another. We all contend one with another. And if you've gotta Strongman, we all envy him. We have our lusts (which means 'ambitions' in this context). Lusts and ambitions are the same thing: "I really want to get ahead in the organization." Covetous desires—inequality. Inequality invites lusts. Inequality invites covetous desires. To be one, you must have... You must have equality. You can't have one heart, one mind, and no poor among us if you have a stratified group of people. There can't be any rich or poor. As a consequence of what it takes to have Zion, you cannot have a Strongman model. It will not work. As Gentiles, you are prone to this; you crave a Strongman. Therefore, you seek what cannot be in Zion.

If we go to Luke chapter 22, this is Christ making an observation. Luke chapter 22, verse 25:

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: [for] he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. (See also Luke 13:6 RE)

The Gentile affliction—with the desire to have someone rule over them and to call such nonsense a "benefactor"—is precisely the motivation (that stems from the souls of those who have inherited this land) that creates so many of our current political problems: "Take care of us. Rule over us. Rule with a strong hand. Take away things from us that we shouldn't have. Curtail our liberties, and show us the right way." And yet, many of you can look at the government and detect that something is very much amiss, but you look at your own religious structure and you're entirely oblivious to it. Governmental paternalism is "deeply offensive." Church paternalism is "good, and right, and righteous, and holy, and wonderful and I just thought it was so special, the things that they said." [Laughter.]

Turn to 2 Nephi chapter 10, beginning at verse 11:

And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no [king] upon the land, who shall [rise] up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith [the Lord]. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words. (2 Nephi 10:11-14; see also 2 Nephi 7:2 RE)

We (if we're gonna have Zion) must **reject** even the **idea** of a king. I know that embedded in the doctrine of the Restoration is the notion that we're gonna become Kings and Queens, Priests and Priestesses. I want to suggest to you, when Christ said, *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36; see also John 10:7 RE), and He gird Himself with a towel, and He knelt down, and He washed the feet of those that He was ministering to, that implicit within **that** is the kind of conduct that the real King (and those who are His kings and priests) put on display. If He said, *My kingdom is not of this world*, here He came merely to be a servant, how much more should we, **gratefully**, look at the opportunity to kneel and to serve rather than to say, "I want the chief seats," rather than to say, "I want to be upheld and sustained and lauded and praised—and if you can, would you mind throwing a big musical celebration at my next birthday?" [Laughter.]

Christ is our only King, and His kingdom is not of this world—John 18:36. He said, *If I...have washed your feet; ye [ought also] to wash one another's feet. For I have given unto you an example, ...the servant is not greater than his lord*—that is John 13, verses 14 and [to] 16 (see also John 9:3 RE).

The twin of kingship is priestcraft. In 2 Nephi chapter 26, verse 29 (by the way, the denunciation of kingship came from the same prophet who denounces priestcraft; he hit 'em both)—2 Nephi 26:29, *He command[ed] that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion* (see also 2 Nephi 11:17 RE).

Just so you know, no one is subsidizing anything that's going on in these series of talks. We lose money every time we offer one of these. We estimated what we thought the crowd would be in this venue, we paid for and rented (personally, out of our own pocket) this, as we've done the other venues, and we underestimated—but I thought we would be safe because there's always been extra room in other places. I don't charge anyone to attend these things. I don't ask anyone to help me pay for them. I don't charge you an admission fee. I don't try to sell you anything. Doug is recording this stuff. He comes here; he pays his own way. He does what he has to do in order to create a record, and then he sells the recordings that are made to defray his costs. All of the recordings are gonna be turned into a downloadable MP3. The only way I can get it into a form that preserves it so I can give it away is if Doug spends the money in order to make the record. He charges you, and he collects from you, and I don't see one penny of it. When there was enough and to spare, and he said there's some money for me, he used that money to help some missionaries. I got nothing. Just so you're clear on the concept, if anyone wants to go out and make themselves a big, popular speaker 'like me' [laughter], then you go waste tens of thousands of dollars out of your own pocket in order to accomplish what I'm doing to give away information—which ought to make you somewhat wary of anyone who is inviting you to come unto the Lord in exchange for an entrance fee.

The twin of kingship is priestcraft, and the purpose of priestcraft is to set themselves up **that they may get gain**. It's not that they set themselves up for a light unto the world, but *they set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain*.

Can't tell you not only the losses I suffer, but also the insults I endure. I mean, you people... You people have one attitude. I have to tell you, when I put up a comment about "Stop... Stop praising me; stop quoting me; go to the content; go to the scriptures; go to the doctrine. Leave me out of it; I'm not a big man. Don't use my name to make you credible," I got a bunch of comments and emails that said, "I would never use your name because everyone I know hates you [laughter]. Everyone I know thinks you're a lunatic; an exploiter; and that, sooner or later, you're gonna have your own church, and you're gonna be driving a red Escalade [laughter], and having \$54,000 in cash."

I want to be perfectly clear right now about something which has not and will not ever change about me. I am unwilling to give you commandments. (When have I ever commanded you?) I am unwilling to lead. (When have I ever said, "Follow me"?) I am unwilling to organize you. (When have I ever said, "I want to lead an organization"?) I am unwilling to accept money. (When have I ever said, "Pay me"?) We have enough Gentile leaders. We have a good-enough church or churches already. When those

churches err, they suffer the consequences of doing so. We do not need another church or churches. We do not need a king. We do not need more priestcraft.

I read you a little bit ago from Doctrine and Covenants section 76: *They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things— They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of His fullness, and of His glory* (D&C 76:54-56; see also T&C 69:11-13). If I could pray, if I could beg, if I could entreat for you to have one thing, it would be **His** fullness, it would be **His** glory—nothing from me, something from Him. He's the One who is mighty to save.

Changing the leader will not fix our problem. The problem is the **people**. The problem is that **we** need to rise up individually—and having risen up individually, then we have the potential for having a gathering. But changing the leader will not accomplish a thing. It's just another delay. It's just another stall. It's just another perversion.

The change that is coming at the Lord's return is going to alter the Terrestrial condition to a Terrestrial condition of the entire world. To the extent that any church tries to convert you to follow men (as I read you just a few moments ago), if you are of Paul, or if you are of Peter, or if you are of Cephas, or if you are of Spencer or Howard or... No, no, it was **Spencer**, and then it was **Ezra**, and then it was **Howard**, and then it was **Gordon**, and now it is **Thomas**. If you're of them, you will not survive the Lord's return.

You will not survive the Lord's return, period.

And a revelation was given to Joseph Smith that informs you of that. I am not... I am not, I never have been, and I never will be of Thomas, or of any of those who follow and sit in that same chair. I would recommend that you hesitate being so.

I have to tell you, though (and this is one of the ironies of the Second Coming—ironies, you know, the Lord's big on that sort of stuff), if you look at the description of... (Where is that? Alright.) This is a description of those in the Terrestrial condition, from Doctrine and Covenants section 76. It begins at verse 71, but that's just talking about the glory that they have. Verse 72 says,

Behold, these are they who died without law; And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto...that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; ...they...are the honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men, ...who receive ~~not~~ his glory of his glory, but not of his fullness. (D&C 76:72-76; see also T&C 69:23)

So, if you're in the world, and if you're blinded by the preaching of false ministers and you live honorably according to that—but you don't **follow** them; you don't **worship** them; you simply do the best you can—you will survive the Lord's coming. But if you are worshipping a man as your leader (to whom you look for your salvation, who holds 'keys' to take you away from death and hell and put you on a throne somewhere in heaven), that group of people have gotten too close to the truth to be excused for their

error. They are idolaters. Blinded by the craftiness of men, without idolatry—they're simply confused about the nature of God—is different from approaching nigh unto it and then following and idolizing a man. I don't know that you can create idolatry outside of a religion claiming keys: the Catholics, the Mormons. (Now I'm thinking about Joel Osteen. He seems affected to me, anyway.)

Zion cannot come with the minimum. Zion has to be at the forefront. Because Zion is required to be at the forefront, it must be the invitation for the Lord's return. Until that exists, the invitation on this earth does not exist for His return.

But here's a description given through the Joseph Smith Translation of Exodus chapter 33, verse 20. (And since it's the Joseph Smith Translation, you're gonna have to look there for it.) Here... Listen to this verse:

*And he said unto Moses [this is the Lord speaking], Thou canst not see my face at this time, lest mine anger be kindled against thee also, and I destroy thee, and thy people; for there shall no man among them see me at this time, and live, for they are exceeding[ly] sinful. And **no sinful man hath at any time**, neither shall there be any sinful man **at any time**, that shall see my face and live. (See also Exodus 18:3 RE, emphasis added)*

You might catch a glimpse: "Whoa! Just before I ignited, I think I saw Him!" [Laughter.] That's not Zion.

D&C 1, verse 31... Oh, here the Lord says it right to us again, right now in this dispensation. D&C section 1, verse 31: *For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance* (see also T&C 54:5). So, contrast that with "I cannot look at myself without the **enormous** latitude of allowance because I'm very forgiving of myself." You would be better off saying, "I will recognize, I will admit, and I will hold myself to every failing that I am prone to make. But as for all the rest of you, I don't see anything wrong with any of you. I can't detect a flaw in the least, because I'm gonna judge you with the standard by which I would like to be measured, which is: I take no offense; I freely forgive."

One of the greatest sins that the Lord says that we are culpable of, in a revelation that was given about the Law of Consecration (another notion that only rears its ugly head one time these days—and that's as you're making covenants in a temple)... But take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 70. This is about our failure to live the Law of Consecration, which brings us all under condemnation. Beginning at verse 14 of D&C 70:

Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld. Now, this commandment I give unto ~~my servant~~ my servants for their benefit while they remain, for a manifestation of my blessings upon their heads, and for a reward for their diligence and for their security; For food and for raiment; for an

inheritance; for houses and for lands, in whatsoever circumstances I, the Lord, shall place them, and whithersoever I, the Lord, shall send them. (D&C 70:14-16; see also T&C 61:4-5)

Here we have, separate and apart from the description of Zion (they're one heart; there are no poor among them; they're one people), a commandment that says, "In your temporal things, you're going to need to be equal. Otherwise, the abundance of the manifestation of the Spirit is going to be withheld."

In a section about Zion (this is Doctrine and Covenants section 59, beginning at verse 18), the Lord has this to say—beginning at verse 18:

*Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use [by] man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul. And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, **not to excess, neither by extortion.** (D&C 59:18-20, emphasis added)*

Or, in other words, *excess* meaning 'wealth'; *extortion* meaning 'to compel the poor.' "I am willing to give unto you some charitable thing **if** you will...." The poor are not to be extorted. I see little difference between the extortion that was exerted upon the heroine in *Les Miserables*, which sent her into prostitution—an exploitation that compels the single mother to do what she would rather not do, to take time away from her child in order to satisfy the demands of those who would extort.

It pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; ...unto this end [they were] made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion. And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments. (Ibid, vs. 20-21; see also T&C 46:4-5)

It's all His! And He gave it for **our** use, and **our** enjoyment, and **our** betterment, and **our** blessing. He did not give it to give me power over you! He did not give it so that I can say, "Well, now that I'm in charge, I like children if you cook 'em right!" [Laughter.]

Consecration was given to remove or end poverty, and it was given in 1832. Let's go to Doctrine and Covenants section 78 (this is 1832), beginning at verse 3:

For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion— For a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven; That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly

things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you. And now, verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient that all things be done unto my glory, by you who are joined together in this order. (D&C 78:3-8; see also T&C 70:2-3)

Moses 7:18, we read before—one heart, one mind, dwell in righteousness, no poor among you. 1832...? 2014...? Where? Where is your unity? Where is your equality? I know you're all very religious, or you wouldn't be here. "How can you say unto me, Lord, Lord, but do not the things that I say? Why call you me Lord?" It's almost like Christ anticipated the Gentiles making such a mess of what He gave us. Now, if we're going to crawl back out of the mess, the only way to do so is carefully, incrementally, and by small measures. The Lord has a way of bringing great things through small measures. Can you be one because you believe... Can you be one because you believe in the theory of equality? Can you be one because you believe in the theory of sharing with one another? Can you be one because you believe in the doctrine? Or must you act?

James chapter 2—James, the culprit of the Restoration—James chapter 2, beginning at verse 14:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and [have] not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, [and] be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. (James 2:14-18; see also Epistle of Jacob 1:11 RE)

Well, if he was good enough to prime the well to get the Restoration started, I would suggest that he's good enough to give us advice about the practicalities of the conundrum that we currently face. There is an enormous gulf between the content of the material that was revealed to us in the Restoration and the religion that you practice daily. That gulf is going to need to disappear. And you think... You think you're trapped because of the FLDS Church, or the Community of Christ, or the RLDS Church, or the Church of the Firstborn—

Now that was an interesting incorporation because that's just... There's some things that to me are like fingernails on a chalkboard (although I have to confess, fingernails on a chalkboard don't bother me, but I understand it bothers most other people, so I use that). There's some things that I find deeply grating and profoundly off-putting. Incorporating an institution and calling it the "Church of the Firstborn" to me is one of those profanities that's like, you know, "We're going to a Latter-day Saint nudist colony." [Laughter.] Just, they don't work. "Endowed members only." [Laughter.] See, that has a couple of [laugh] potential interpretations. [Laughter.]

So now, get your mind back with me here. [Laughter.] In order to get from where we are to where we need to be, you can't do it inside the institutions that have trapped your minds. I am not preaching against your faith—if you're some Fundamentalist, some RLDS member, some Latter-day Saint; honor your churches. But by degrees, you need to begin the process of *by your works*, showing what your faith is.

(And that's the topic we will turn to next. I understand we're changing the discs. I'm hot. I wanna go find something to drink. And we'll take 5 minutes.)

(You ready? Okay, we're recording.)

One of the things that happened as a substitute for the Law of Consecration was a replacement commandment that required the payment of tithes. Doctrine and Covenants section 64, beginning at verse 23 says:

Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming. [This is the statement from which that cliché that tithing is "fire insurance" is drawn from, because if you're tithed you won't be burned at His coming.] For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon. Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today. (D&C 64:23-25; see also T&C 51:7)

I want to, therefore, encourage you to pay tithing. And I want you—if you are satisfied in paying that tithing to whatever church or organization you belong to—to continue doing so. The act of giving that as an offering to the Lord I don't think requires you to supervise what happens with it once you give it to someone. I think **they** become accountable. For you, it is an act of faith. For them, it is a matter of accountability.

However, some of us are forbidden from paying tithing to our church of choice. Some of us simply refuse to pay tithing because they don't trust the church. Some refuse because they believe the church has neglected the poor. Some refuse to pay tithing because church leaders of the LDS Church treat the return that they get on the tithing as investment income and then use it to build shopping malls and buy landholdings. And, by the way, on that, I believe the Lord anticipated that notion in one of the parables that He taught. In Matthew chapter 25, He says,

The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, [and] to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded...the same, and made them other five talents. [The

one] that had...two, [he went and he traded; he got] two. [The one] that had...one, [he] went and [buried it] in the earth. (Matthew 25:14-18)

He tells this parable, and then His disciples want Him to explain it, but He says... He comes back. The one that turned the five into another five, He says,

Well done, thou good and faithful servant: [you've] been faithful over a few things, [I'll] make thee ruler over many things. (vs. 21)

The one that did two, he gained another two. He commended him:

Well done, [thou] good and faithful servant; [you've] been faithful over a few things, [I'll] make thee ruler over many things. (vs. 23)

And then the one that had the one that buried it and didn't do anything to get a return for the Lord, he said,

I knew thee that thou art [a] hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, [I] went and [I] hid [my] talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

...Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest...I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (vs. 24-27; see also Matthew 11:16-20 RE)

In other words, in this parable, He owns it. He owns **it**. He owns the **interest**; He owns the **investment**. He owns it. In this parable, there is no such thing as investment income. So far as I know, the purpose of the Lord is not well served by importing Tiffany's to Salt Lake City, or Porsche (or Porsche Design), or the Rolex outlet in the shopping mall. I can't even afford—

I guess if I took all the money I'm spending in doing these lectures and put it together [laughter], I could go shop an afternoon. That's about how long the burn rate at that place [City Creek Center] is.

There is no divine purpose in neglecting the poor. The purpose, primarily, of collecting the tithes and of the yield upon it, is to bless and to benefit the lives of those who are in need. So, given the fact that you are commanded to pay tithing (and some of you refuse to do so because of the particular circumstances you see out there), and given the fact that the Lord has said, "Organize yourselves," I would suggest that one small increment that **you** could begin is for **you** to collect your own tithing. **You** manage it yourselves, among yourselves. **You** assist the poor who are among you. **You**, as a group of common believers, pay your tithing into a common fund. And then, by the voice of your own group, dispose it by common consent so that everyone knows everything that

comes in and everything that goes out. And **you** begin to have no poor among **you**. **You** provide for those who need housing and food and clothing and healthcare and education and transportation. And **you** do it without a leader. Do it by the voice of your own common consent, by your unanimous approval. You do it by united agreement. If you do that, you will not be paying a qualified 501(c)3 or 501(c)4 institution to earn for yourself a tax deduction for doing so. Ohhh... 'Tis a terrible thing. You don't get a benefit. [Laughter.]

Tell us...what thinkest thou [Christ]. Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought...him a penny. And he said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he... Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesars; and unto God the things that are God's. (Matthew 22:17-21; see also Matthew 10:20 RE)

Christ had no problem paying the tribute. Don't think that the purpose in paying tithing is to earn for yourself a deduction on your itemized deduction schedule. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. (It's almost as if the Lord anticipated all of the latter-day circumstances in the teachings that He gave to us in His parables and His statements in the New Testament.) You might even have negative tax consequences because the benefit of your united group, using your tithing to benefit someone, may disqualify them from government eligibility. Do it anyway. Become independent.

Now, **if** some of you who hear this decide to begin to do this, you will learn firsthand in a pragmatic, lab experiment just how very difficult it is to become 'one.' You will learn how greatly this world opposes the idea of Zion. You will all learn how weak we all are. You will learn exactly what the Lord said was the problem with the first effort.

In D&C 101:6 (I read it to you before), I just want to refer to the words: *jarrings, ...contentions, ...envyings, ...strifes, ...lusts, ...covetous desires* (see also T&C 101:2). You wanna know why the early Saints failed? You wanna know how far you are at this moment, and you want an accurate barometer of 'what lack you yet?' Then organize yourselves; and **you**, unitedly, gather your tithings into the storehouse that you maintain; and you, by your common consent, take care of those who are poor among you. And **you** will receive an education like none other in the reasons why men fail. But the fact that men fail doesn't excuse you from your own failure. And unless you rise up...

And this is a very modest, little thing to begin with. You will learn so much, so quickly that it will astonish you. You don't need or want a Strongman. And the woman's voice should be equal with the man's. There should not be some 'ruler' among you Gentiles saying, "It's this way; it's gotta be this way! I prayed about it. Lord said I get the money. I prayed about it, and the Lord wanted me to have a new Porsche—and I got the down payment, but I don't have the monthlies. And therefore, 'Hear ye the word of the Lord, Give Fred a Porsche!'" [Laughter.] If that's the way in which you conduct it, you're no

better than the rest of the Gentiles. You may as well stay in whatever organization you have at present. You may as well pay to support red Cadillac Escalades and shopping malls. You may as well just do that. Dump your money where it does no good.

I know, I know, there are lots of people that get benefited in lots of ways. But that doesn't excuse the money that those Strongmen spend on themselves. The highest-paid clergies in the world manage the various denominations of the Latter-day Saint movements. It's just the way it is. I hate to break it to you.

Take the money that the Lord intended for the poor, and you administer it for the poor among you. **If** you try this experiment, and **if** there is someone among you who receives rather than gives because they have not, then let me remind those who receive of another statement made in the revelations of this dispensation in Doctrine and Covenants section 42:42 (you should be able to remember that, 42:42): *Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer* (see also T&C 26:10). If you're the beneficiary, not only should you be grateful, but do what you can in turn.

There is absolutely no reason to gather in order to fail again. We do not need another Jerusalem. We do not need another Rome. We do not need another Antioch. We do not need another Kirtland. We don't need another Jackson County. We don't need another Nauvoo. And we certainly don't need another Salt Lake. We need Zion. And there's no reason to gather if the gathering is going to be to fail again. Stay home, serve in your callings, and be happy. **But**—if you will rouse yourself to an experiment upon His words, you will find that it begins to grow within you. And you will find that it begins to be delicious to you.

It'd be wonderful if, at some point, out of the overwhelming majority of those who have been baptized and are regarded nominally as Latter-day Saints (members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)—if the roughly 9 to 11 million completely inactive Latter-day Saints found renewed life and vigor by practicing the religion in this manner, the day might come when the other active 3 to 4 million members of the Latter-day Saint Church would be able to have something good come of their organization as well.

I want to remind you however that throughout the scriptures, when it comes to the establishment of Zion, there is no such thing as 'hastening the work.' [Laughter.] It can't be done in haste. I'm just gonna lift a few out for you:

- 3 Nephi chapter 20, the Lord's speaking. 3 Nephi chapter 20, verse 42: *For ye shall not go out with haste nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the [Lord] God of Israel shall be your rearward* (see also 3 Nephi 9:10 RE). This is the Lord speaking. He's quoting Isaiah, but it is the Lord speaking.
- Doctrine and Covenants section 63—I've read that; I'm not gonna do that one again.
- Doctrine and Covenants section 101, verses 68 and 69: *Nevertheless, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, let not your gathering be in haste, nor by*

flight; but let all things be prepared before you. And in order that all things be prepared before you, observe the commandment which I have given concerning these things— Which saith, or teacheth, to purchase all the lands with money, which can be purchased for money (see also T&C 101:15). There's gonna be an excess, ultimately, from your gatherings if you will undertake it. And there will be a place prepared, but not in haste.

●Going back to 3 Nephi, in chapter 21, verse 29: *And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward (3 Nephi 10:1 RE).*

It cannot be done in haste. But look at what gets done if it is done in the way in which the Lord would have it be done. Doctrine and Covenants section 133, beginning at verse 25 is a description of the results **if there is a people who get prepared**. This will be the result (133, beginning at 25):

And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; ...they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory [in this context, it's an ordinance], even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows. (D&C 133:25-34; see also T&C 58:3)

Ephraim the proud. Ephraim the headstrong. Ephraim—the one who is constantly in rebellion. Ephraim must come back, must heel to, must at last allow the Lord to rule over him, because Ephraim has got to rise up in order for this to happen—not in haste; never in haste.

Crowned with glory or in other words "with intelligence" or in other words "light and truth" or the "knowledge of God" so that no one need tell you *Know ye the Lord*—because you're all going to know Him, from the least to the greatest.

Going back to 3 Nephi chapter 21:

But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this...remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance...

They are the Gentiles. They are Ephraim—you.

And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. ...then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, ...unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I [will also] be in [their] midst...

The word "Powers of Heaven" is talking about the angels. In this circumstance, the power is singular. Not only because they are one, but because among them will be our Lord Himself. And where He is, there is the Power of Heaven, and it is singular.

And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people...

Because when you gather to hear what you're going to hear there, this is the final stage in the Father's work. This is the work that requires holiness to accompany even its **teaching**.

Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward. (3 Nephi 21:22-29; see also 3 Nephi 10:1 RE)

Again and again, the notion that this work can be hastened is denounced. Again and again, it's to be a place in which the preparations are done first. Again and again, it suggests that before we can gather together, we must have that heart/that mind which can make us one.

Turn back and look at the results—Doctrine and Covenants 45, beginning at verse 65:

And with one heart and with one mind, gather [you] up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you. And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion...

They won't come unto it because to go there is like Acts chapter 5. You cannot endure that environment if you're abiding a Telesstial law. You'd be consumed.

And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy. (D&C 45:65-67; see also T&C 31:14-15)

Think about what it would take to transplant various populations, from various locations (not in haste), with everything having been prepared in advance. And in our currently fragmented society, unless you're willing to experiment with your own effort to live the Law of Tithing by organizing yourselves and governing yourself... Miscellaneous groups will never make it—but people of God will.

Doctrine and Covenants section 65, verse 5:

Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen. (D&C 65:5-6; see also T&C 53:2-3)

If you read that and you know that the Lord is going to come to that, you realize that He cannot come unless it exists. If it doesn't exist, He cannot come to it. If He cannot come to it, then He delays the day of His coming. And generation after generation may come and go, never having accomplished what the Lord invites us to do, what the Lord invites us to **be**.

Moses chapter 7—This is the Lord speaking to Enoch in a vision (recorded subsequently by Moses, by revelation), but it is a restoration of the book of Enoch, and the conversation and the speaker is the Lord. Beginning in Moses chapter 7, verse 60:

And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah...

This is the Lord's oath to Enoch. He's going to come. He's going to come in the last days.

And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be [had] among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood [a thing that is possible now by you sitting at a keyboard anywhere in the world—you can cause the truth to flood the earth], to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle [in this context, the tabernacle to be built is His house], and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other [this is the second return of Enoch, as well—first, His house; then Enoch]; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years. (Moses 7:60-65; see also Genesis 4:22-23 RE)

Zion exists before these things can happen. If Zion does not exist, these things will be delayed. They will not be prevented, because the Lord has, by a covenant, insured that they will happen. But the fact that the Lord has, by a covenant, insured that it will happen, is no guarantee that **we** will see it. Because **we** will only see it if **we** undertake to abide the conditions by which He can accomplish His work.

This is a Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 9:

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the first-born shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch. (JST Genesis 9:21-23; see also Genesis 5:22 RE)

...the covenant that God made again with Noah; the covenant that He made originally with Adam; the covenant which **some** generation will rise up to receive. Whether that's you or whether you go to the grave without realizing it or not is entirely up to you.

Now, I need to read you something. This is Ezekiel, beginning in chapter 33 at verse 25 [heavy exhale]:

Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and [ye] lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the [mountain] of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak[ing] one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, ...say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be [un]to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the [flock]? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty ye have ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my

shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

*For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I, even I**, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will **I** seek out my sheep, ...where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And **I** will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and...all the inhabited places of the country. **I** will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie [down] in the good fold, and in a fat pasture [and they shall] feed upon the mountains of Israel. **I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down**, saith the Lord GOD. **I** will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed **them** with judgment.*

And as for [thou], O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [will] judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk [from] the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; ...they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with [the] side and with [the] shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; [for] I the LORD have spoken it.

*And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them...the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing[s]. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that **I am the LORD**, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of*

the hand[s] of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I [am] the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 33:25-34:31; see also Ezekiel 17:2-11 RE, emphasis added)

I was required to read that, but I am not required and, therefore, will not comment on that.

Zion has been the promise of the Lord since the beginning:

- Adam foretold it at the great meeting in Adam-ondi-Ahman. I've spoken of that previously. I referred to that in a talk I gave in Centerville. I won't read it again. You can find it in Doctrine and Covenants section 107, verse 56.
- Enoch foresaw it; he prophesied concerning it. I've read that to you again today, even though I read it previously.
- Noah had it revealed to him **by covenant**. I read that to you today from the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 9.
- Moses was shown that it would be accomplished. I read that to you earlier today.

Now I want to change your view of one scripture, if I might. I want to take you to Luke chapter 9. You all think that the Mount of Transfiguration had a whole lot to do with Elijah, Moses, and keys, and the Kirtland Temple, and so on. And it didn't have anything to do with that. It had to do with the head of the dispensation—Moses—and the one who brought that dispensation to a close—John the Baptist—appearing to Christ on the Mount to hand off for the new dispensation. But it also had... It had the purpose of fulfilling the covenant, the promise, the word of the Lord—Christ—who spoke concerning Zion. The Mount of Transfiguration is about Zion, as it turns out. And I can prove it from your scriptures.

Christ, in Luke chapter 9, beginning at verse 27—Christ prophesies:

But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God...

That's the latter-day kingdom. That's the one that Christ said was not of this world that He's going to come and inherit at the end. So, He says, "Some of you who are alive today will not die until you see Zion." (The gymnastics that have gone into trying to explain that by both Christian and Catholic and even Mormon commentators is rather amusing.)

Keep reading though:

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:27-31; see also Luke 7:4 RE)

So, He says, "Some are living; they're not gonna die until they see the Kingdom of Heaven." And then He takes those three up on the Mount, and they see some things.

Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 63, beginning at (this is talking about Zion), beginning at verse 20 of section 63:

Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received. (See also T&C 50:5)

He promised them that they would get to see the latter-day triumph. He took three of them up on the mountain, and He showed them the latter-day triumph. Therefore, there were those that were standing in that generation who did not die until they had seen the latter-day triumph of the Kingdom of God. He fulfilled His own word. And it was put into the gospel in that fashion for that reason.

It will happen! But it requires an awakening, and it requires an arising. It does not require a leader—a servant, maybe; not a leader. It does not require a president. It requires your common consent by your deeds—not only to say, but to do. It will not be achieved by control. It will not be achieved by coercion. It will not be achieved by force. It will not be achieved because there's some big Strongman among you. It will only happen if each of you are strengthened in your faith and **know the Lord**. It **will** be achieved by humility. It **will** be achieved through meekness. It **will** be achieved by love which is unfeigned—the real thing.

One of the things I do some evenings (though I haven't done it for awhile)—one of the things I've done in the evenings is to teach a graduate class on leadership. It's a well-studied, well-documented, well-understood phenomenon: leadership, as distinguished from mere managerial behavior. Leaders have a set of things that they do. And the purpose behind teaching the leadership class is to equip those who are not leaders with the ability to mimic leadership behavior in such a way as to inspire the misapprehension that what they're looking at is, in fact, a leader—rather than someone merely skilled in the art. I teach this class as a complete obscenity to me. It grieves my spirit as I teach this stuff. And I try (although they won't pass the course if I don't give them the material), I try to give a little bit of my own view about how repugnant this stuff is. Because really what we're talking about is the ability (having used studies and social sciences to figure out what appeals to people)—how you can mislead them into thinking that something

that is not authentic is in fact authentic. It's really using behavioral conduct as a form of sheep's clothing in order to conceal what is either altogether missing (it's sheep's clothing on the empty suit) or, alternatively, it's sheep's clothing on the wolf. Today we manufacture leaders. Today we produce them as a result of a skill set. And they will mimic it, and they will appear as though they are something that they are not.

So, when I say, "love unfeigned," it cannot be feigned. There cannot be anything about the establishment of Zion that is inauthentic, illegitimate, or insincere. You have to be your own judge about who you are and what you're about. But to the extent that you think you can behave and imitate and get in, all you would do is jeopardize your life. You have to **be** it; you can't feign it. Because if it is feigned, it will not satisfy you.

(Now there's a big topic that I want to cover, but I want to cover it on the last tape. Tell me where we are—how many minutes do we have? Okay, I wanna talk about one thing, and then we'll save the... It's a big topic, and it needs to be addressed, and I don't want someone getting that break in the middle of it.)

Some of you read my blog and saw that post I put up about a talk that was just given in General Conference. And it's important... It's important, because of the dynamic that is on display, to talk about that for just a moment. When Joseph Smith established the Relief Society, he established an independently-functioning woman's organization that the women controlled and ran. They were an auxiliary to the church, to be sure, but it was a women's organization. Today, we like to say that it is the longest-lived, oldest women's organization on the earth. And that was true at one point, but it is no longer true. Through the process of correlation, the Relief Society (which once had its own budget; it once had its own checkbook; it once had its own control; it once had its own magazine; it once had its own lessons—it was a women's run organization)—what happened was through correlation, the women's organization was brought into the correlated authority of the local priesthood that's gonna run everything. As a result of which, the women lost their budget. The women lost their magazine. The women lost control over their curriculum. The women lost their Relief Society. And what it became was an appendage to the correlated priestly control.

As a result of it being an appendage to the correlated priestly control, it's just a matter of time... Just, I mean, start the watch... Start... You can measure it. It's just a matter of time. Sooner or later, some woman, as a Relief Society President, knowing what needs to be done, will want to do what needs to be done, and some priesthood local authority (Bishop or Stake level/Stake President) is going to say "no." And he's gonna say "no" for not a very good reason. And before long there will be an accumulation of incident after incident, problem after problem, disappointment and frustration after disappointment and frustration, to the point where, in the natural chain of events, there will be women who say, "We've got a problem." And the solution to the problem in the correlated church consists in obtaining possession of the right to be the one with the thumb; to be the one who is asserting the thumb, not the one that is under the thumb. So, the solution to the problem is, "We can't govern ourselves because it's now a man's organization populated by women." It's no longer a women's organization; it is man's organization populated by women. So, what do the women say? The women are

saying, "The problem here is that we want control back, and the way we get control back is (since it's a correlated deal and that means priesthood)—we want to fetch for ourselves priesthood so that we can get control back."

And the oblivious correlators, not recognizing that the problem is correlation **itself**, have determined that "We have a solution! The solution to the problem is that we have key holders. We have Thomas Monson; he's chief key-holder—belt is completely full of those things [laughter]. And then we got the Twelve, and then we got Seventy, and we got Area Seventies, and we got Stakes, and we got Bishops. And when we get down to Bishop, he's got like four or five keys left on his key chain." But they got key-holders, and with that key... And it's on a retractable... [laughter], I mean, you can't drop it. You can hop on your Harley, and you can go to Sturgis, but you're not gonna... Every time you drop it, it's retracting right back on. You're gonna hold on to them keys. I can take that key—I can take it out, and I can touch, touch the little lady, "There you go, little lady, now you have the authority from the key-holder! Voilà, I have brilliantly... I have solved the problem! The women agitating for ordained women are now empowered by the **authority** of the Priesthood."

That was what Elder Oaks' talk was all about: giving them the **authority** of the Priesthood so that they can go out, and they can perform a function like as if they were a priesthood holder. Misses the point! Swoosh, went right over! I would say gave him a haircut [laughter], but he's like my friend Jon here; he's follical-challenged. Went right over the head of the one who was given the responsibility of announcing the new program that will allow women to exercise the authority of the priesthood, because that's not what they want! They would like to get back their organization. And I don't blame 'em.

And therefore, if you decide to experiment upon the words we have found in scripture today, and if you decide that you're going to try and together collect your own tithes and administer to your own poor among you, I would suggest that not only should women have an equal voice, but that Joseph Smith was really on to something. Long before the notion of a Bishop controlling a storehouse, and even after the existence of a storehouse, the Relief Society was a lively partner in the process. I would suggest when you are 'one,' and when there is relief that is needed, and when as a result of what the Lords needs to have happen is for people to gather with love unfeigned, forget the nonsense about who is greater and who is less. Look among whatever group you participate in and ask yourself, "Who's more compassionate, and who loves more?" And listen to **her** [laughter]. And listen to all of the 'hers,' because when it comes to the home and the hearth and the needs of children, there is a competency among the women that is innate. And love can be feigned by the presiding authorities. But women generally have a difficult time pulling that kind of nonsense off. Men can pretend to many things—

I saw Bill Clinton at a funeral, laughing and carrying on until he saw the camera, and then he was right back to grieving. [Impersonating Bill Clinton's voice] "Oh, I feel so bad." I think he feigns so well; that's why women like him. "I care, I care a lot... Is that a

D-cup?" [laughter] (I... I'm gonna face this way [laughter]. Yeah, we're gonna have to edit this [laughter].)

One or two other little trifling matters that I wanted to mention, and then we'll close for this part of it. In my view, the word and the title of "Prophet" to me is something that is hallowed and sacred and, like the name of the Son of God, probably ought not to be repeated too often. And I don't think you can take the measure of a man until he finally lays his life down. And I think how he lays his life down matters in the aggregate as well. I don't think that someone who fares sumptuously and receives accolades during his lifetime is ever much in a position to understand the rigors of obeying God and the difficulties of being thought a wild man, or preposterous, or everything that you are not. And so, when we use the name "Prophet"—and we use it casually—to me that seems to take something that ought to be spoken with a great deal of care and turn it into more or less a calling card. I find it offensive. I find it cheapens something, and it grieves... It troubles me.

When I think of the word "Beloved," I think of the word "Beloved" exclusively in the context only of the Savior: *This is my Beloved Son*. And the One who is doing the loving in that context is the Father, making that all the more a term that oughta be used with extraordinary delicacy and reserve.

When you take those two words and you couple them together—"Beloved Prophet"... My sensibilities are such, at this point in my life, that when you say, "Beloved Prophet," you are not appealing to me; you are repulsing me. You are not persuading me; you are offending me. You are not converting me; you are driving me away.

I don't say this to be critical of anyone. I say this because despite everything I would like to be able to tolerate, despite my best efforts to try and make allowances, there are some things which, when I hear, I simply cannot control. My repugnance at the notion that there is one that walks among us who oughta be called "Beloved Prophet" is something I simply cannot control. I don't invite you to join me in that, but I want you to understand that in some respects, we talk across a gulf.

I think I understand who our Lord is and why He was *Beloved*. I think I understand what it is that He requires of someone when they will hear His voice and do what He says. And I can think of nothing more superfluous or offensive than praise. I can think of nothing that would offend the Lord more than a mere man inviting adoration of himself. It is wrong.

I don't want anything but your criticism. Don't think you've got to defend me. I would rather hear what they have to say—not because what they say is true, but because it gives me an opportunity to understand what their fears are. Much of the criticism that gets leveled at me is leveled at me because they fear I'm something that I'm not.

We've got so many pretenders. There's some guy out in some new iteration of some form of Zion that is on YouTube giving School of the Prophet lectures, and he's a faux

General Authority. You look at him, and he looks like a General Authority. He dresses like a General Authority. I've had enough General Authorities for a lifetime. I've seen enough Strongmen come and go for a lifetime. **I'm not anyone's Strongman!** I will never be anyone's Strongman—period! It is repulsive to me! It is morally corrupt. And in this world, as soon as you create an institution, as soon as you have anything other than people voluntarily (together) working towards an end, as soon as you have anything other than an idea, you have corruption.

I will leave no seat for another man to occupy. I will leave no institution for another man to compromise. You will not have another person that says, "I sit in **his** seat." I won't even explain to you what seat it is I occupy. I want **you** to occupy, not as my equal, but as my better.

I think there are many people here (and there have been at every one of these) who are, literally, better people than I am. And I don't say that to feign something. There are some of you people that have lived lives of devotion and goodness and honesty. I came to the missionary discussions drunk. I mean, I grew up in Idaho, and we were bored [laughter]. And the stuff you do when you're a bored, young man, you know—there it is. It required the Atlantic Ocean for my baptism and not a drop less [laughter].

So, when I preach these things, it does not mean I model these things. There is so much about this that is for me an aspiration and not a reality. I live in constant fear of my own failure. I don't think I belong up here talking to you about this stuff, because I don't think I'm the most worthy in the room. I can tell you that the Lord forgives sins and, therefore, makes allowances for those who are inadequate to fulfill what He would like to have done. It is perhaps because I recognize (#1) I am not well qualified, and (#2) I fear my own failure more than everything else that perhaps He trusts me. Because He knows I'm not going to go out and freelance—and I have not, and I do not, and I will not.

Therefore, I don't need or want or even welcome your admiration or your praise. You're probably more admirable than am I. I'm not telling you these things because I can do these things. I'm telling you these things because this is what the Lord would have us do. He's told us what's on His mind and here it is; it's laid out for us. The question is not, "Who's great and noble and gonna stroll in there?" The question is, "Who's meek? Who's humble? Who's appreciative of their inadequacies? Who's willing to say, 'When I count up all my foibles and failings and I look at them, I don't think I have any ground upon which to criticize anyone else.'"

And I hope none of you think I'm criticizing Elder Oaks; I am not. I'm explaining the dilemma that the church has put itself into. I've corresponded with... He's Professor Oaks—I mean, he was the Trust Professor while I was in law school. He was the President of Brigham Young University, but when he crossed the street to the law school, he became 'Professor Oaks.' And the Dean was Dean Lee—Rex Lee; he was our Dean. Dallin Oaks was a Trust Professor—Professor Oaks. I've been taught by him. I've sat in a moot courtroom with him. I heard him at a number of occasions. I've been invited up during General... They still invite me up during General Conference to attend

a reception on the Saturday afternoon because I'm a graduate of Law School. I don't go; I can imagine the horror. I went down to the Marriott Center, and one of the Seventy were down there and introduced himself. And I shook his hand and told him how glad I was to be there. I didn't want to put him to any discomfort by telling him my name [laughter].

But I do think that if we're going to have Zion that someone (inadequate though they may be) needs to point out that if you're hoping some Strongman's gonna come along and take you by the hand and lead you to the Promised Land, watch your wallet—and if you're a lady, watch your zipper or buttons. Because I'm telling you, Strongmen have an insatiable appetite for self-aggrandizement, and that's not me. I don't want that. I don't welcome that. I don't advocate that, and I warn you against it. If someone came up and hit me in the head with a hammer, and six months from now I'm organizing a church, and I'm asking you to give me women for multiple wives and pay me your tithing, you remember what I said today before they hit me in the head with a hammer. Because I'm intact mentally today. I may be crazy then. But it's wrong to do the things that have been done, and it's wrong to preach and practice the things that get preached and practiced in the name of the Lord.

It is right to expect Zion, but it is right to expect Zion upon the conditions that are laid out for Zion and on no other basis. It is right to expect Zion on the terms the Lord has ordained and none other. You won't be able to cheat your way in there, and a group of people will not be able to accomplish it apart from the conditions the Lord has ordained.

So, this brings us then to the subject I'm going to talk about for the final third of this talk, which is "**Where** is Zion?" 'Cause I imagine lots of you think you're gonna go back to Independence, Missouri and find yourself a location there and build yourself a Zion. And I'm gonna talk about the 'wheres' of it all when we wrap this up in the next third. Thanks.

(Are we good? Okay, we're gonna start this last part, and the tape is rolling. It's like a wall of heat when you step in this room. It's cooler out in the hallway than it is in here).

You know, the subject of where Zion will be is something that there's a lot of eagerness about and a lot of confusion concerning. And I wanna talk about the topic of the location of Zion just generally.

The last days' Zion is connected with the rights of the Fathers. And I talked about covenants. And I talked about the preliminaries. And in Centerville there was some material that is relevant to this topic. From Adam to Noah and then to Melchizedek there was an unbroken chain of both priesthood, on the one hand, and father-to-son descent, on the other hand. There was literally "a family of God" that began with Adam as the son of God, and it descended then, generation after generation, until Melchizedek in an unbroken chain. But then there was an apostasy from that Order. As a result of the apostasy from that Order, the chain got broken. And because the chain got broken (like we looked at in Centerville), it was the hope of Abraham to reconnect that chain.

*I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same [that is, the rights of the fathers]; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge and [possess a greater knowledge, be a greater follower] and to be a [and this doesn't make much sense unless you comprehend what it was that he was looking at, and you are convinced that what he was looking at is exactly that Order that began with Adam; he was desiring to be a] *father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or the first father, through the fathers unto me.* (Abraham 1:2-3; see also Abraham 1:1 RE)*

This is what Abraham sought. And the reason Abraham sought that was because he understood that once that connection had been broken that he needed to turn his heart to the fathers so that he, Abraham, would not be smitten with the curse of apostasy. Therefore, he sought for the "blessings of the fathers."

Now, in this late moment in time—in this late period of the generations of humanity—I don't think we can much aspire to being one of the Fathers because, well, they were established long ago. But we ought to be turning our hearts to the Fathers. And we ought to be seeking also for what it was Abraham was seeking for... Not to become, ourselves, but to become connected—not as a Father but as a descendant, as a son or daughter.

When Abraham reconnected into the Fathers, Abraham was again able to perpetuate an unbroken chain from himself to Isaac, and Isaac in turn to Jacob, and Jacob in turn to Joseph, and Joseph in turn to Ephraim, to whom passed the right of the Fathers or the right of the firstborn—even though Isaac wasn't firstborn; Jacob wasn't firstborn; Joseph wasn't firstborn; and Ephraim wasn't firstborn. And yet they were all the firstborn because they received the inheritance by right, and it was conferred upon them by right. Therefore, they were the firstborn. Five generations in which the ancient pattern, through the faith of Father Abraham, returned and "took"—it actually endured for five more generations.

Well, Jacob gave a blessing to Joseph that we find in the book of Genesis chapter 49, verse 26: *The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren* (see also Genesis 12:29 RE). As a consequence of that, the latter-day Zion must be brought through Joseph. He's the one upon whom the blessing devolved, and interestingly enough, he passed that on to Ephraim, not to Manasseh. And interestingly enough, though Manasseh was the lineage through which Lehi's family descended, the prophecy I read you about the blessings being conferred in the last days are to come through the

hand of Ephraim. (There's something afoot.) And it's going to come through Joseph at "the utmost bound of the everlasting hills."

I don't know how many of you've spent much time in Missouri, but the hills there aren't "everlasting." They're almost so diminutive as to be undetectable. And if you happen to be in a cornfield or around some trees, they're altogether gone. Because that terrain was never the terrain prophesied as being the location when the blessing was given by Father Jacob to Father Joseph.

Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah chapter 2, verses 2 and 3:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it...

In this context, in this prophecy, "all nations" is not Russia and China and Ethiopia and Uzbekistan and Turk-crap-istan and I'm-a-nut-istan [laughter]. "All nations," in this context, means all the 12 tribes of Israel. The "nations" are the 12 tribes of Israel, period. That's it. That's who's gonna flow unto it. So, you won't need an international airport. Nor will you need to host the Olympics.

The mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, ...let us go up to the...house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths...

The paths of God lie in the heavens. So, if you're going to learn to walk in His paths, you're going to have to learn how to walk in the heavens.

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
(Isaiah 2:2-3; see also Isaiah 1:5 RE)

The "ensign" that is prophesied to be established—in the context, in the meaning of that day—had reference to a zodiacal, a constellation, a depiction of the heavens themselves. So, when an ensign is going to be reared and it's going to tell you about how to walk in the paths of God, this is talking about something very, very different than what most of us today would envision. Zion is going to be a connection between heaven and earth. And at that place, you will learn of the God of Jacob's *ways*, and you will walk in His *paths*—because Heaven and earth will be connected, and the stairway connecting the two will be open. And the heavens and the earth will be reunited again. And this is going to happen in the top of the mountains.

In March of 1831, there was a revelation given that we can read in D&C 49, verses 24 and 25: *But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place*

which I have appointed (see also T&C 35:8)—the **mountains**. These were the prophecies at the beginning, as the Restoration was starting to roll forth.

Joseph Smith said this: "Our Western tribe of Indians are descendants from that Joseph that was sold into Egypt, and that the land of America is a promised land unto them. And unto it, all the tribes of Israel will come with as many of the Gentiles as shall comply with the requirements of the new covenant." That's a letter that Joseph Smith wrote to N.C. Saxton that can be found in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, compiled by Dean C. Jesse, at page 273. But he's talking about the Western tribes of Indians in that comment, which will make more sense as we get further into this material. He really did mean "out West."

Doctrine and Covenants section 133, verses 26-34 talks about Zion in the Western mountains, the descendants of Joseph being responsible to build it, and there being crowning by Ephraim. And we read that a little while ago. I don't think I'm going to read it to you again, but you can read it—D&C 133:26-34.

Now, there was a revelation that was given in which the first group of missionaries were sent out. And this is a nearly preposterous proposition to consider unless Joseph Smith was called to do something very, very different than what ultimately wound up happening in the Restoration. Because when the church got founded, when the Book of Mormon came forth, and when there were a small band of believers and there was going to be a mission, the first mission to be sent out... The first mission to be sent out was called to be sent to go "among the Lamanites." Didn't have anything to do with finding more Gentiles. It didn't have anything to do with going to England. It didn't have anything to do with going to Europe or the Eastern seaboard. It was sent out among the Lamanites.

Doctrine and Covenants section 28, beginning at verse 8:

And now, behold, I say unto you...you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them; and inasmuch as they receive thy teachings thou shalt cause my church to be established among them; and thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment. And now, behold, I say unto you that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the city of Zion shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you that it shall be [in your current version, it says] on the borders by the Lamanites. (D&C 28:8-9; see also T&C 10:2)

If you go to the *Joseph Smith Papers* and you look at the original revelation, and you look at the revision that was made to the revelation, you find that what Joseph Smith received as a revelation says, "it shall be **among** the Lamanites." And in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon, "among" is eliminated and "on the borders by" is inserted. And so, the first missionaries were sent out to be "among" the Lamanites. An odd priority, indeed, for a fledgling church that Joseph Smith presided over in upstate New York.

Unhappily along the way, they managed to convert an entire congregation in Kirtland, Ohio that already knew that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel were faith, repentance, baptism, and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost—and that you needed to have a New Testament Church, and that God was all about restoring the New Testament church, and 'Restorationism' was the key of the day. And they had everything they needed except for one missing ingredient, and that one missing ingredient was they needed priesthood. And now, here's a character, Joseph Smith, that could furnish them that. And so, if they go and they get Joseph Smith to sidle up with them, they could turn this Restorationist movement into a priestly congregation. And so, one of their ministers, Sidney Rigdon, came aboard as one of the earliest converts. He first went up to upstate New York and inspected Joseph Smith, in person, to make sure he was a suitable sort of prophet for Sidney to tolerate. And he was. And he came aboard. And sooner or later, an organization began to emerge, and as it did, Sidney Rigdon became "Number Two"—Counselor in the First Presidency, number two to Joseph. First Counselor in the Presidency and Second Elder of the Church—Oliver Cowdrey—became less and less. And so we're off to the races with Kirtland, and strange things happen.

On their way out, however, and before they managed to get to the congregations that already existed in Kirtland, Ohio... The first missionaries did not set out for Independence, Missouri. There's a report in the *Painesville Telegraph* on December the 7th of 1830. The missionaries said they were headed for (and this is a quote from that group Oliver Cowdrey was leading as they went out) "some unknown region, where God will provide a place of refuge for his people called the New Jerusalem." The missionaries said that they were "bound for the regions beyond the Mississippi, where he contemplates founding a city of refuge for his followers in converting the Indians under his prophetic authority." The "he" that they're referring to in the interview is Oliver Cowdrey, Second Elder of the Church. Another edition of the *Painesville Telegraph* reported, "The four persons who were here, have proceeded on their mission to the Indians, or Lamanites as they term them, in the far West, where they say a Prophet is to be raised up whom the tribes will believe." That's a report on November the 30th of 1830.

Well, now, I wanna back up a little bit and set the stage for what was going on in 1830. Because when you look at the micro history of what was happening in the Restoration against the macro history of what was happening inside the boundaries of the United States (continental—it was beyond the borders, but the continent that the United States would be formed upon in its current form), there's a lot going on.

Joseph Smith was born in 1805, but in 1803 there was the Louisiana Purchase, "Loozana." So, Louisiana was purchased in 1803. We fought a war in 1812, and those dirty rascals from Great Britain managed to co-opt the Indian tribes as their ally in the War of 1812. I mean, we fought those guys back in 1776. Now we're fighting them again in 1812, but this time they managed to persuade the Indian tribes to come aboard. So, we're fighting Indians, in addition to the Brits (we can't have that).

On September the 21st of 1823, through the night, to September 22nd, the angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith—September. By June of the next year—June of 1824—the Reverend Isaac McCoy was in Washington D.C. lobbying for a new law to be adopted. He would stay. He would lobby. He would irritate. He would agitate. He would persuade. He would convince that there needed to be something done to prevent anything like the Indian alliance with a foreign power from ever threatening the United States again. We've learned by sad experience that when Indians get a foreign power, as they are pleased to call it, they will immediately begin to excise Americans.

And so, Isaac McCoy made his case. In April of 1830, the church was organized—April of 1830. Six weeks later, after the organization of the church, the Indian Removal Act was passed in May of 1830. The work that the Reverend McCoy had been undertaking had borne fruit. With the adoption of the Indian Removal Act, all Indians—all Indians—inside the borders of the United States (as it was then configured) were forcibly removed from the Eastern United States and placed into part of the property that had been purchased in the Louisiana Purchase, which assumed the name "the Indian Territory." All Indians were relocated west of Missouri on a north/south line that divided the United States from Indian Territory.

Just as the mission among the Lamanites began, President Andrew Jackson (on the basis of the law that had been adopted in 1830)—by 1831, he was forcibly moving all of the Indians—the Trail of Tears, all the rest of that. Now, why are the Delawares in the Louisiana Purchase? President Andrew Jackson was relocating all Indians to just beyond the western border of the Missouri line. Therefore, at that moment in time, when you send the first four missionaries out on their mission, at that moment in time, if they were going to locate any of the American Indians, they had to go to Missouri—because that is the first moment at which you would encounter them. There was no other choice; you had to go there.

And as it turns out, the location of the town Independence, Missouri was exactly in the middle of the various areas that had been allocated to the various tribes. The center of the land adjacent to the place where the Indians were then located (the center spot) was Independence, Missouri. It would also happen to be the trailhead for the only trail that came out West, which was the Santa Fe Trail. They embarked from Independence, Missouri to come out West. At that moment in time, when the first missionaries went out, it was the center place.

The Delawares (we have a state on the East Coast named after their tribe) were sitting out there on the other side of Missouri in the Louisiana Purchase property, and Parley Pratt (as one of the first missionaries) went and preached to the Delawares. Have you ever scratched your head and wondered what the heck is the Delaware tribe doing sitting on the other side of Missouri's Western boundary for Parley Pratt to go minister to? Chief Anderson (that was his American name)... Parley Pratt taught Chief Anderson of the Delaware tribe and gave him a Book of Mormon. You've read about that in *The Autobiography of Parley Pratt*.

Well, the Indian agent was Richard W. Cummins, and the Indian agent forced the missionaries to leave the Indian territory. In fact, he threatened to take them to Fort Leavenworth and incarcerate them if they didn't leave the Indian territory.

Delilah McCoy Likens, who was the daughter of the Reverend Isaac McCoy (Isaac McCoy being the one who was responsible for the adoption of the Indian Relocation Act), was happy to inform her father in a letter she wrote on July 31st of 1831 the following: "The Mormonites are about to take the country. They are preaching and baptizing through the country; are trying to proceed West to find the new Jerusalem, which they say is towards the Rocky Mountains. The agent has driven them off this side of the line and forbids their crossing it."

K, it's impossible because of the law, because of the agents, because of the circumstances, because of the threat of arrest for "Mormonite" (as they were called then) missionaries to get any closer to the Indians than Independence, Missouri. If you stepped beyond that boundary, you will be arrested—you'll go to Fort Leavenworth.

Reverend Isaac McCoy is quoted in the daily *Missouri Republican* on November 28th of 1833 as saying,

The Mormons as I suppose from information, came here so ignorant of laws regulating intercourse with the Indian tribes, that they expected to pass on into the Indian Territory, procure lands of the Indians, aid them in adopting habits of civilization, and attach them to their party. At the western line of Missouri they were arrested by the proper authorities of government.

It becomes increasingly clear that the target of the first missionary effort had nothing to do with stopping at Independence, Missouri. It had a great deal to do with going into the Western mountains (the Rocky Mountains) and establishing Zion. But the good Reverend Isaac McCoy (the father of the Indian Relocation Act)—whose daughter was there on the scene, who was married to a minister—who had a grievance motivated by false religious ideals (and the best way to oppose Zion is always to have false religious ideas) were right on the spot at the very moment when, at its incipient stage, under the guidance of Joseph Smith, some effort could've been made to establish the New Jerusalem, but they couldn't.

If you take a look at Doctrine & Covenants section 124... Joseph was told that when they had located in Kirtland that it would be temporary. And the location in Kirtland was temporary. When they went out and they found the center place—and that was found not by Joseph Smith; that was found by the four missionaries (five, because another guy joined 'em as a result of proselytizing in Kirtland, so they had five when they got there)—they said, "We can go so far and no further, and at this spot we are in the center." And so, that spot, given all of the legal entanglements and prohibitions, that spot became as close as you could get. They established a trading post where they would trade with the Indians. And the idea was that since they couldn't go into the Indian Territories to proselytize them, that if they established a trading post and they traded

with them fairly, that the Indians would cross the border (which they were not prohibited from doing), and they could come to their trading post and get a fair price. And so, if the Mormon missionaries established a trading post and dealt with the Indians fairly, they'd have a chance to proselytize when they came to them. These are not ideal circumstances, and as it turns out, not much was able to be done.

Later (and this is during 1841; this is in Nauvoo, and a temple is being required of the saints in Nauvoo), there's this interesting statement within the revelation about constructing the temple in Nauvoo:

And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it. If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place. (D&C 124:43; see also T&C 141:13)

So, what this opportunity in the Nauvoo temple represents is... We'd lost Kirtland; we'd been forcibly expelled from Missouri; we had attached the idea of a center temple where God would come to dwell with His people at a place that would be a refuge that would be preserved by the power of God to that location, but we got kicked out of there; and we went back across the Mississippi to Nauvoo, and the Lord said, "You gonna build a temple in Nauvoo, I'll command you to do that. You build it; I'll give you sufficient time within which to do it. And if you go to and you do it, I'm gonna consecrate *that spot*. And I will make *that spot* holy to you. And I will make it so that you cannot be moved out of that spot by your enemies. And I will come there, and I will restore to you what has been lost: the fullness. I will give that to you, and I will do it in Nauvoo." And it didn't happen. And the flow of events took over.

I wanna read you from Joseph Smith's History. At the very end of his life—on Saturday, June 22nd, five days before he would be slain—June 22nd of 1844 (you can read this in *The Documentary History of the Church* at volume 6, page 547)—Saturday, June 22nd 1844 about 9 PM:

Hyrum came out of the mansion and gave his hand to Reynolds Cahoon, at the same time saying, "The company of men are seeking to kill my brother Joseph, and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. Goodbye brother Cahoon, we shall see you again." In a few minutes afterwards Joseph came from his family, his tears were flowing fast. He held a handkerchief to his face, followed after Brother Hyrum without uttering a word.

So, Joseph received a revelation on June the 22nd of 1844, telling him, "Now, now go to the Rocky Mountains."

When we have an opportunity to accomplish something with the approval of the Lord, the Lord is going to be the one who ultimately decides where the actual accomplishment

will take place. When it takes place, it's going to be in the mountains, and you needn't guess which mountains. The mountains are gonna be out here in the West, exactly where the first missionaries were sent to try and find it but were hedged up by the confluence of what was happening in the law and in society and in the management of the Indian tribes in 1831, when they tried to cross and go out West and were told they can't. Well, if we can't go out there and find that New Jerusalem city, if we can't go out there, then we'll settle here and we'll take these local Indians, these relocated Indians, and we'll fetch ourselves a Zion right here in this spot. And the Lord gave a series of revelations in which He said, "If you can do that, you do that. And that is acceptable to me, and that will be Zion. Go to! Have at it!" And then He says, "Here's why you didn't pull it off: your jarrings, your envies, your lusts, your contentions. That's why you didn't pull it off." And He has said repeatedly in one of those extraordinarily clever things that the Lord has done throughout history: "Zion will not be moved out of its place."

Oh I know, I know! I got the answer! The answer is: What is Independence, Missouri? That's a daily double, and Alex is telling me I'm wrong [laughter]. I just lost everything I bet.

Oh, oh, I know! It's Nauvoo, and it's Nauvoo because the Lord changed His mind and said He would accept Nauvoo as a substitute Zion and not move the Saints out of **that** place if they would do what He said. Wrong again! Wrong again!

"Zion will not be moved out of its place," which place you know not yet. But Joseph knew it was in the Rocky Mountains, and he intended to go there. And the Lord knew it was in the Rocky Mountains when He revealed that to Isaiah in his prophecy. And Father Jacob knew it when he was prophesying and blessing his son, Joseph.

Now let me give the Lord the latitude that the Lord is entitled to have because of a statement that Joseph Smith made. Joseph said, "Oh, you know nothing more than a baby in a cradle, because the whole of North and South America are Zion."

K, so if the Lord says, "Yeah, you can build it in Missouri; that's copacetic. Go for it! Go for it my son!... Oh, big boobo, my son."

"How 'bout here?"

"Ok, Ok. Go for it, my son, there!... Oh, big mess, big mess!" Plagues, locusts, starvation; yeah, that's not good, not good. [laughter]

Time and time again, the location of Zion is approved by the Lord in different spots, precisely because the entirety of North and South America would be an acceptable place to found Zion. But within those general, geographic parameters:

- it must be in the mountains;
- it must be **among** the natives who were originally here;

- it must be established under the guidance of someone who hails from both the tribe of Ephraim and is a descendant of Jesse (you can read that in the Doctrine and Covenants);
- and it **will** surely come.

There is absolutely no reason for the Lord to tell you another place to go and pollute if you don't rise up to bring with you the worthiness necessary to turn, at last, a place into the New Jerusalem:

- where the Lord can come and dwell among you,
- where you can be of one heart,
- where you can be of one mind,
- where there are no poor among you,
- and where you have all things in common;
- where you meet the requirements.

And there's no reason to assemble you together at any spot. You can do everything that needs to be done preliminarily from wherever it is you dwell at present. And you can prepare your hearts, and you can prepare your minds, and you can begin to understand the difficulties. And instead of judging our failure that went on before, you can rather empathize with the failures that went on before and come to some appreciation for the fact that it's not gonna be any easier for you than it was for them. It's not gonna be any less filled with the temptation to be envious and filled with lust and have jarrings and contentions for you than it has been for those that went and attempted before.

The fact of the matter is that we tend to want that Strongman. We tend to want that ruler, that presiding authority. We tend to want someone to take control, precisely because we don't want to go through the effort that's involved in the common consent and the common sense of governing ourselves. It is just so much easier to pay and pray and obey than it is to go and to do and to rise up and to be one with our Lord and our God.

Now, we're out of time. There was one other thing I was going to do, but we can do that happily at any moment. I wanna end this by bearing testimony to you that I use the scriptures because the scriptures are the standard by which you should judge the truth. I use the scriptures because they say the things the Lord would want to have said right now today. I don't need to appeal to having any authority, because I can read you the scriptures and point you to the things that have already been revealed. **I know these things are true. You would not believe me if I told you all I know.** And it is not necessary for you to do so. If the words I speak do not convince you, let the scriptures convince you. And if the words in the scriptures don't convince you, then get on your knees and pray and ask God, who giveth to all men liberally. Do the same thing Joseph did at the beginning to start the ball rolling, because Zion will come. And whether it comes in your day or not is entirely dependent upon you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2014.06.28 Lecture 7: Christ: Prototype of the Saved Man

June 28, 2014

Ephraim, Utah

The topic that we're going to discuss in this get-together is Christ. In the next talk, we'll be addressing the subject of coming to Christ, but in this talk today, it is about... it is about Christ Himself. You know, very often it is easy to have confidence in a subject—in circumstances where something has happened, and you have evidence of His existence, and you feel a closeness to Him. But as soon as the cares and troubles of this world interfere and the moment passes, you wind up wondering, "Is it all true? Am I believing a myth?"

Jesus Christ came into the world unexpected and unannounced by men—unanticipated by men—but fully expected by the Heavens themselves. There were signs in the heavens, but men were oblivious, largely. And when the shepherds keeping watch over the flocks by night were interrupted, it was not by an earthly herald; it was by those from beyond the veil. The Savior crept into the world with Heaven taking notice, but precious few paying attention to what it was that was afoot in His day.

It's so easy to overlook Him in the cares of this world. I want to assure you that He's real. He exists. He was a man, every bit a man as any of us. He had flesh. He had blood. He dwelt among us. Don't doubt that. For purposes of the talk I'm going to give today, trust in Him, believe in Him, have confidence in His existence.

If I can help you envision our Lord a little more, let me describe Him in terms of His characteristics. Our Lord was and is affable, but He is not gregarious. He was approachable, and He is approachable, and He's not aloof. He's patient. He's willing to guide, and He's willing to teach. He's intelligent, but He is not overbearing. He's humble in His demeanor, even though the power that He possessed and possesses is undeniable. He is, therefore, both a Lamb and a Lion.

I want you to entertain three truths about Him in your mind as we begin the subject today. Those three truths are:

- He is quick to forgive sin.
- He allows all to come unto Him, and
- He is no respecter of persons.

In some respects, our own respect for (or our disrespect for) ourselves is the impediment in coming to Him, because we tend to think that we aren't good enough. Because He is quick to forgive sins, it really doesn't matter if you're not good enough, because one of the first orders of business when you come into His presence is He forgives you. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but He has the capacity and the ability to forgive sin. Therefore, although your sins may be as scarlet, He can, He will, and He does make you white as snow, no longer accountable. Therefore, you needn't fear, but you can approach—boldly—our Lord.

So with that prelude, it was a little over 40 years ago when I finally began to take seriously the offering that the missionaries were making to convert me to this religion of Mormonism that I'd grown up near in Idaho and knew was populated by 'nut jobs.' When I finally got around to taking it seriously and I finally got around to hesitatingly praying about whether or not this stuff I had been hearing was true... And you need to understand, I had been visited and pamphlet and filmstripped back in those days for about nine months before this. So I'd heard a lot of the message that the missionaries wanted to deliver. It didn't "take." I wasn't particularly interested. I was merely polite, but I'd heard a lot.

So, when I finally got around to praying about it, the fellow who had originally... I'd made the mistake of complimenting, loaned me his journal. And he wanted me to read about his conversion, because in his journal he had his testimony of how he had come to realize that it was the truth.

I was in the military at the time, and Steve (whose journal had been loaned to me) was converted while he was serving in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. I don't think he was in Vietnam-proper; I think he was in Cambodia. But he was in an outpost, and it was under fire. And he was converted on the night of a firefight, while he's on the perimeter, praying to know if the Book of Mormon was true.

And I had this journal, and I was alone. I was in a military barracks at night and reading the journal and felt again inclined to pray and ask if this stuff was true. And so I knelt, I prayed, and then I got up from the prayer, and there was no pillar of fire, and there was no, you know, conduit into heaven. In fact, it was rather uneventful at the moment. And I sat on the bed and just thought about what the missionaries had been saying and what they'd been asserting and the verses that they'd encouraged me to read.

Back in those days, there were quite a few Biblical sources used by the missionaries. If you haven't read, you should read the book *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* by LeGrand Richards. He was the Presiding Bishop of the Church, and then he was the a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. And his book, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, was really written while he was a mission pres... Well, it was developed while he was a mission president as a way to introduce and discuss, systematically, Mormonism. And the missionary discussions in those days were really based upon *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, the title of which is taken from a verse in Isaiah. And so, if you read *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, you essentially get the program of the Church back in those days, and you'll see the missionary format that I was taught.

So, after praying with nothing happening, I sat down, and I contemplated what it was the missionaries had been saying. And I first concluded that Joseph Smith couldn't be a prophet, because there weren't gonna be any more prophets. I mean, that's Bible stuff. That's not today. That doesn't happen.

As I thought about that, a verse and a question came to mind—the verse being, *By [your] fruits ye shall know them* (Matthew 7:20; see also Matthew 3:46 RE), from the

New Testament, and the question was, "Well, **if** there is a test to ~~imply~~ to apply in order to determine whether or not this is a prophet, the presence of the test suggests **the possibility of** a prophet." I mean, why would you give a test if there is not going to be another prophet? So, *by their fruits ye shall know them* suggests the possibility that there will, in fact, be someone you better apply that test to, someone about whom that test will become both relevant and important. So I couldn't categorically dismiss... Okay, I can't say Joseph's not a prophet because there's not going to be another one. Therefore, what is "his fruits"?

Now, I had... I had no universe to draw from to apply the test of Joseph Smith's fruits other than the missionaries that had been teaching me and those families whose houses I had been taught in, K? Now, you have to understand, I'm young; I'm still a teenager. I'm sitting in a barracks, and I'm trying to figure this stuff out. And I apply the "fruits" test to what little sampling I had. And you know, those missionaries were so earnest, and they were my age. And they were giving up two years of their lives. I was serving in the military, but they were serving in a church organization without being paid.

They had the same military haircut I had. They had a disciplined life. They didn't smoke, and they didn't drink—and I couldn't say that, at the time, about myself or about the people I associated with. But I could tell the difference between the lives of these young men and the lives of those that I served with (and myself). I also could see a difference between the families whose houses I'd been taught in and the families I knew from my background, although I had a wonderful family that I grew up in. I'm the son of a man whom I regard as heroic. My father was really the exception and not the rule among my friends. My father's families were populated by abusers and alcoholics and a variety of other shortcomings, none of which I saw in any of the families whose houses I had been taught in.

So, my conclusion was, well, there's some fruit. I don't know what the standard is by which you measure fruit, but there's some fruit that suggests that Joseph Smith had a rather positive influence on these people's lives.

Well, then I went on to think, "Wait a minute! The last verse of the New Testament says you can't add to the Bible. So, Joseph Smith added a whole lot to the Bible. I mean when they carry their Scriptures, the Mormons bring the Bible, and then they bring this other thing that's almost the same size! And Joseph did **that**, so you know, that can't... There's something wrong with that."

So, I got the verse out. I looked at the verse. I thought about it. And what became apparent to me was that the verse doesn't say that **God** can't add more scripture whenever **God** chooses to do so. It says **man** is not supposed to do this. And so, if God, through Joseph, chose to add, then He certainly has the ability to do that.

Well, to make a long story short (and I give an account of this in the little vignettes in the book *The Second Comforter*), after about a little over two hours of sitting on the bed and going through doubt and question after doubt and question, and each time being able to

come up with an answer to or a solution... a solution from the scriptures themselves to every doubt, to every apprehension, to every question that I had, my final question sitting alone that night was, "How do I even know there is a God? I could be spending this whole wasted effort, and there isn't even anyone up there!" And that quick [Denver snaps], as soon as I finished the thought, the thought came to me: "Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two hours?" It was a startling thought—

And I need to confess a weakness to you. The account that appears in the book *The Second Comforter* misquotes God. Because the statement that was made (and I can still remember it distinctly) was, "Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two and a half hours?" I was so apprehensive and weak-willed when I submitted the first book I'd ever written to a publisher for a publication that they wanted to correct the English and change... Because it's not "to." The correct word was "with." So, when you read the account in *The Second Comforter*, the question that comes into my mind is: "Who do you think you've been talking **with**?"—which just goes to show you that God speaks to us in our own language, in our own tongue, according to our understanding. And He doesn't use an editor. He talks to us the way **we** talk. So, if I ever do a third edition of *The Second Comforter*, I now have the confidence and the resignation to just tell the truth. And I don't care if there's a modern Simons Ryder who says, "Well, God uses incorrect grammar." I don't care about that anymore. I'm past the point where I fear what men think. I'm past the point where I worry about your own doubts. I'm simply willing to declare to you what I **know** to be true, and then I leave it up to you. And frankly, you become accountable for your reaction to it.

But having confessed that weakness (and correcting the record of what you will read in *The Second Comforter* account in those little vignettes), let me tell you, the thought that I had been talking with and had received an answer from God was a startling moment to me. It was startling, first of all, because it suggested that God was willing to talk to even some guy sitting in a barracks in New Hampshire, long away from where they grew up, on the topic of whether or not Mormonism was true.

It was followed immediately by the realization that what this answer was going to cost me was every childhood friend I had grown up with, every associate that I was associating with at that time (because about the only thing we had in common was beer and pizza); it was gonna require my life to change. If I had not acted on that answer on that occasion, I don't think that anything that followed thereafter could have happened.

At that moment, the thinnest of threads existed for me to believe in the Restoration of the Gospel, in the Book of Mormon, and in God's willingness to speak. It had all of the substance of a spider web, easily broken. The only way to hold onto that was to have **faith** and to trust it. And so I did.

But having faith and trusting that required me to act. I was gonna have to follow through. I was gonna have to be baptized. I was gonna have to join this group of eccentric people. I was gonna have to become one of them, with all of the absolute insecurity about whether I could ever measure up to being one of that, with all of the self-doubt

about my own personal strength and vitality as a convert to some religion. I, nevertheless, had faith that God had spoken, and that imposed upon me an obligation—and so I acted. And when I acted and when I was baptized, it was as if a light had been turned on in the room. Everything changed. From that moment 'til now, everything has been different.

It has not been a struggle to live the life of a Latter-day Saint. It has not been a struggle to be a disciple of Christ. My life has been easier as a Latter-day Saint than it was as a godless Gentile. It's been more fun to live a life of faith than it was to hang around with a bunch of schlocks, getting drunk and doing stupid stuff. I laugh as much now as I did then, except what I'm laughing at isn't someone else's pain; it's funny stuff. (I do have a perverse sense of humor, I have to tell you that.)

So, two hours—my first encounter getting an answer from God, and the two hours was spent going through answers from God found in the Scriptures. You keep that in mind.

On the day that the Lord was resurrected, there's an account we find in the book of Luke. It begins at verse 13 of chapter 24 of the book of Luke, talking about two people that went walking to the village of Emmaus from Jerusalem. And they were talking about the things that they had seen happen in the preceding days.

[And] Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? (Luke 24:15-17)

This is the Lord, and although they didn't recognize or know Him, He surely knew them. But He didn't want them to recognize Him, and so they did not. This is our Lord. He sidles up beside them, walks with them, and says, "What are you talking about?" as if He didn't know. You see how gently He inserts Himself into the conversation. You see how unwilling He is to come and pontificate. You see how amenable and how approachable and how utterly unpretentious the Lord is.

What manner of communications are these...? And that produces almost a rebuke from Cleopas:

Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass in these days? (Ibid, vs. 18)

Are you utterly ignorant of what's been happening here? Are you inattentive? Are you just a new stranger? He may have even bristled a little when He asked the question, as if **this** guy who had been in **this** area during these few days had been so inattentive to the significance of the man who had just died that he took some umbrage. And look at the Lord's reply. He says, *What things?* (Ibid, vs. 19), as if He hadn't lived them, as if He hadn't accomplished them.

And they [now it's the plural—it's no longer Cleopas; it's both of them—start talking to] him [about this] Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. (Ibid, vs. 19)

So essentially, they are acknowledging Him as at least a prophet.

And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: [besides] all this, today is the third day since these things were done. ...and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; ...when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. (Ibid, vs. 20-24)

So, they trusted that it should have been Him who would redeem Israel. This is the day of His resurrection, and they've heard **rumors** from **women** that He was risen. But these were, first of all, merely rumors, and second of all, they were rumors attributable to women—and we all know that women are hysterical and, therefore, require hysterectomies in order to rein them in and turn them into something credible and believable. (I put a comment up on this a few days ago about women as witnesses, and this is a reflection of that same phenomenon. Doubt is easier when the source of the information is the testimony of a woman, even though it ought not be so.)

If you trusted this was Him who should have redeemed Israel, **did He?** Did He redeem Israel? He came. He taught. He submitted. He was killed. It's three days since. There are rumors. **Did He redeem Israel?** If you're part of **that** population, in **that** group, on **that** day, sitting in **that** environment, did He redeem Israel? The Romans are still there. Annas and Caiaphas are still faring sumptuously. Christ is dead. The disciples have been scattered; they even go to return to their work even after they see Him. **Did He redeem Israel?** You can get together on Sunday, and you can sing hymns about "Redeemer of Israel," with all of the confidence that you know what you're talking about, as if it were so apparent! It is no more apparent in this account in Luke that the redemption of Israel had been accomplished than it is apparent to you what God is doing now, today, sounding in your own ears!

He came, and He redeemed Israel, and all the world ignored it. It would be hundreds of years before the world would come around to acknowledging Him. And by the time the world would come around to acknowledging Him, what He left behind would be inadequate to redeem.

The day of salvation appears tenuously, almost as gossamer as a spider web. And if you don't lay hold of it, it is lost. And generations can come and go and sing hymns to the pride of their ancestry and the greatness of their religion—and go to Hell. Because when the Lord sets His hand, He sets it exactly the same way every time. And it requires faith to come aboard, and it requires faith to believe.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe. [Slow of heart to believe] all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? (Ibid, vs. 25-26)

You don't understand. You don't understand, because the prophets have said this is exactly what our Lord would do. Shouldn't He have suffered? Shouldn't He have come in apparent weakness and vulnerability? Shouldn't He have come in the very manner in which He appeared and to have suffered?

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Ibid, vs. 27)

Right here—right here—is how the New Testament got framed. When you go to Matthew, when you go to Mark, Luke, and John, you are seeing an echo in each of them what the Lord did on the road to Emmaus with these disciples. He proved that Christ came and suffered as He ought to have done, because all that the prophets have spoken were fulfilled in Him. Therefore, He opened unto them the scriptures that they might understand.

Our Lord, who could've borne testimony of Himself, revealing 10,000 new truths—our Lord, who could've disclosed and preached and delivered practically any new content He chose to deliver—our Lord expounded the scriptures concerning Himself. That should tell you something.

When the Lord first spoke to me, He expounded the scriptures concerning the Restoration. When He appears on the day of His resurrection, His visit with everyone that day was brief, was perfunctory, included a small amount of information—and here we have the Lord taking **hours**, walking and talking, opening up: *he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*. They don't recognize who He was. He came in; they asked Him to stay (and you can read the rest of it there). But at the end of all this, after everything that had gone on that day,

...they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? (Ibid, vs. 32; see also Luke 14:2-3 RE)

I don't believe it is necessary to reveal any new thing in order to be able to teach in a manner that opens eyes to everything the Lord has and is doing, other than to expound the scriptures. **He** didn't think it was necessary.

If you go to verse 19 of the Joseph Smith History and you read the words that come out of the Lord's mouth when He speaks to Joseph, He quotes or paraphrases Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul. In just one short, run-on sentence, the Lord talks about the doctrines that they teach for commandments the doctrines of men, *they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof, they draw near to me with their lips but their*

hearts are far from me (JS-H 1:19; see also JSH 2:5 RE). Once again, when He appears to Joseph in the First Vision, our Lord is expounding the scriptures. He picks and puts it together and says, "This is the condition in which you find yourself." **This** is what the prophets were speaking about. **This** is that day about which mankind would search the earth and not find the word of God.

When Moroni comes to visit with Joseph Smith, what does Moroni do in order to qualify Joseph for the ministry that he's about to embark upon? Moroni quotes prophecies from Malachi, from Isaiah, from Peter, from Joel.

And so, it took a long time for me to be able to see the pattern. But the pattern in which the Lord reveals and discusses new truth is the same in every generation. And so, when He came in answer to prayer and spoke to me sitting in a barracks—despite the fact that there were no fireworks, no pillar of fire, no shining man in a robe—He used the scriptures and expounded them to increase my understanding.

So, today I wanna use the scriptures in order to bear testimony of who our Lord is and how significant His example is for us. And I told you before in Idaho Falls that in my view the Lectures on Faith are scripture—they were adopted as such, and I'm gonna read from the Seventh Lecture on Faith, paragraph 9, about Christ:

Where shall we find a saved being? for if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved.... We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved, for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved. We ask, then: Where is the prototype? Or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that it is Christ. All will agree [with] this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, ...he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how [is it] that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for him to change in the least degree, so sure he would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority, and glory, which constitutes salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else, and no being can possess it but himself and one like him.

We read this, and then we immediately gloss over it as if what salvation consists of is Him and "fairy dust," which He can distribute to make us like Him. This teaching that appears... This was what Joseph Smith worked on editing for the months prior to the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. He doesn't say in his diaries that he spent any time on the revelations—that was trusted to a committee, and the committee

was responsible for getting those ready for publication. And they did a bunch of freelancing and embellishing and expanding; and some of the stuff they added to the revelations was **remarkably** more expansive than what Joseph had received revealed to him. That's not where Joseph spent his time. He spent his time on the Lectures on Faith. And this is early in his ministry—this is when he wanted to make sure that the doctrine was correct. And this is the doctrine that came rolling out in that first publication. And yet, despite that, we tend to read this and not take it seriously. **If you are going to be saved, you must be exactly, you must be precisely what Christ is and nothing else.** K? You! At that moment, that is when **you** are saved.

As a consequence of that, to speak of Christ is necessarily to speak of salvation. To understand Christ is to understand salvation. Despite how plainly this has been put, we still stop short of comprehending the doctrine. Joseph Smith's mind returned to this topic again, all the way down at the end of his ministry in April of 1844—the last General Conference of the Church that Joseph Smith would be alive for. And in April—April 7th of 1844—Joseph gave a talk. I'm gonna first read to you the version that appears in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. But then, to make sure that you realize how important the point was, I'm gonna go back to the talk as recorded by various of those who were present that day, because one matter in this is picked up by every one of those who was present in recording what was said in their diaries. Joseph says,

I wish I was in a suitable place to tell it, and that I had the trump of an archangel, so that I could tell the story in such a manner that persecution would cease forever. What did Jesus say? (Mark it, Elder Rigdon!) The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do you believe it? If you do not believe it, you do not believe the Bible. The Scriptures say it, and I defy all the learning and wisdom and all the combined powers of earth and hell together to refute it. Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and **you [you]** have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as **all** Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead... (*TPJS*, pg. 346-347, emphasis added)

"Exaltation to exaltation"; "grace to grace"; "until you attain to the resurrection of the dead." Christ said, *I am the resurrection and the life* (John 11:25; see also John 7:3 RE and Testimony of St. John 8:3). You must be precisely what He is and nothing else.

You hear those who say, "The Church has all the keys." But we do not yet have the keys of the resurrection. That's because even when **you** are resurrected, you will not have the keys of resurrection until you, like Christ, have gone from exaltation to exaltation, until you likewise attain to the power to resurrect all that depends upon you.

John 5:19, *The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise* (see also John 5:4 RE). And the Father went before, and the Son follows after. And if you think that you can, at some point, like Him, attain to the status of godhood, then you're going to have to do **precisely** what it is that the Gods do. Therefore, to understand Christ is to understand the challenging destiny about which Joseph Smith is speaking in this last Conference talk given in 1844.

Until you attain to the resurrection of the dead and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. (TPJS, pg. 347)

Even what we envision as the highest heaven is a condescension for those who sit enthroned, able to dwell in everlasting burnings. Else why in section 132 [130] would you be given a white stone that reveals things pertaining to *a higher order of kingdoms* (D&C 130:10) when you are **in** the Celestial Kingdom! It's because where you are now (at this moment, in this meeting, hearing my voice in this room today) is about halfway to where you need to grow (and it's been almost infinite in getting you here—today) in order to arrive at the point that you might be able to be as Christ. And where Christ arises to, in everlasting burnings, is about halfway to where things ultimately **can** go. You say it's necessary in this condition to have a physical body in order to come down here and perform, and you say that rightly. But there are other places beyond.

I want you to know that God, in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming his name, is not trifling with you or me. (TPJS, pg. 347)

That's Joseph talking. We preach, and we exhort; and largely we do so vainly, having not power—not having been asked and not teaching what ought to be.

But "to attain to the resurrection of the dead" means you have the power to resurrect—and not yourself, but those who are dependent upon you. It's a ways off yet.

Now Joseph says something in 1844 that's remarkable:

These are the first principles of consolation. How consoling to the mourners when they are called to part with a husband, wife, [daughter], mother, child, or dear relative, to know that, although the earthly tabernacle is laid down and dissolved, they shall rise again to dwell in everlasting burnings in immortal glory, not to sorrow, suffer, or die anymore; but they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. What did Jesus do? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when the worlds come rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall also present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will

then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children. It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn **some of the first principles of the Gospel...** (TPJS, pg. 347-348, emphasis added)

You heard that right.

It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. (Ibid)

Now, the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We know that, because Joseph wrote that in *The Wentworth Letter*. We lifted it out of there, we put it in the back of The Pearl of Great Price, and it's now The Articles of Faith, right? The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel. Now he's talking about "about which so much [has] been said." That's because in the Restorationist environment in which the Gospel was restored, everyone was talking about the first principles of the Gospel. "The first principles of the Gospel are..."—and you could've gone to Sidney Rigdon long before Sidney was baptized a member of the Church of Christ (when that was what it was called in Joseph's beginning era), and Sidney Rigdon would've told you that the Restorationist movement all believed that the first principles of the Gospel are faith, repentance, and baptism. That was a mantra. Parley Pratt, who was also one of the Restorationist Campbellite ministers, would've told you the same thing. That was a rallying cry for people that said that "the New Testament needs to be restored; the New Testament church needs to be returned; it needs to be revitalized; it needs to be restored and reconstituted. And the first principles, as we find in the New Testament church, are these..." And so Mormons, largely, were drawn out of the same environment, and they're talking about it, and Joseph conceded the point, and he used that. That's what he put into *The Wentworth Letter* when he sent *The Wentworth Letter* off.

But now, we're far along in the process. Now, we're in 1844, and Joseph will be dead about 60 or 90 days after this talk is given. This is the **end** of his ministry. This is not the beginning of his ministry. And so, now, he's talking to people that had been aboard for awhile. They've heard him preach. They know something more about what God intended. They had the Book of Mormon—they'd been converted through it. They had more revelations that had rolled forth. They'd been taught for awhile. And so, he returns now, and he says that... that "first principles about which so much has been said," now let me tell you what they really are. They really are this:

- Resurrection from the dead.
- Becoming Gods.
- Walking in the same path as our Lord walked.

This is the **first** principles of the Gospel! That's why he wished he had the trumpet of an archangel with which to declare it. He didn't have that. But I read his words as if they came from an archangel.

You thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. When **you** climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you've learned them [all]. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it'll be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave. (*TPJS*, pg. 348, emphasis added)

Wilford Woodruff recorded the same talk. And in the Wilford Woodruff account:

You've got to learn how to make yourselves God, king and priest by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, to the resurrection of the dead, to dwelling in everlasting burnings. I want you to know the first principle of this law, how consoling to the mourner when they part with a friend to know that though they lay down this [he misspells "body"], it will rise and dwell with everlasting burnings to be an heir with God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ and join the same rise, exaltation, [and] glory until you arrive at the station of a God. What did Jesus Christ do? The same thing as I see the Father do. See the Father do what? Work out a kingdom. When I do so too, I will give the Father which will add to His glory, He will take a higher exaltation, I will take His place, and am also exalted. These are the first principles of the Gospel. It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole. If I should say anything but what was in the Bible, the cry of treason will be heard.

Thomas Bullock Report—he also says:

This is eternal life to know the only wise and true God. You've got to learn how to be Gods yourself, and to be king and priest to God, the same as all have done by going from a small capacity to another, from grace to grace until the resurrection and sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before. And God in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming His name is not trifling with us. All earthly tabernacles should be dissolved, that they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ to inherit the same power and exaltation until you ascend the throne of eternal power the same as those who have gone before. You thus learn the first principles of the Gospel. When you climb a ladder you must begin at the bottom.

This is the basics of the Gospel. This is the foundation upon which salvation itself rests. This is the way through which **you** must tread in order for **you** to be like Him. If you understand Christ, you understand salvation. He's the prototype, and therefore, **you must be like that prototype** in order for **you** to be saved.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 93, and you'll encounter some language there that sounds familiar because of what Joseph just chose to say in that General Conference talk. Doctrine and Covenants section 93, beginning at verse 7—

And this is a restoration of a part of John's record. The fullness of the record is yet to be revealed. Despite the fact that this reads very much like John the Beloved, somehow the position got taken by a number of Church leaders (and then ultimately declared to be so by Bruce R. McConkie) that what you're reading in section 93 is really the testimony of John the Baptist, and that ~~John the Baptist~~ was a disciple of... oh, excuse me: John **the Beloved** was a disciple of John the Baptist. So, when John the Beloved wrote his testimony, he began his testimony rather like the person who had mentored him, John the Baptist. And so, when you read John the Baptist's testimony here, you're getting second-hand, warmed-over John the Baptist through John the Beloved, and that's why it looks similar. I did not take issue with Bruce R. McConkie in one of the things that I've written along the way. And I simply accepted that this was a testimony of John the Baptist. Once again, it's one of those things that you do, and then you later say, "I wish I hadn't done that." I really—at that time and today—I don't believe that this is the testimony of John the Baptist. I think it's the testimony of John the Beloved and a restoration of part of John the Beloved's record. But be that as it may, it's the testimony of John.

*He bore record, saying [this is verse 7 of 93]: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was; Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us. And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at first, but received **grace for grace**; And [that] he received not...the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; And thus he was **called the Son of God**, because he received not...the fulness at...first. (D&C 93:7-14, emphasis added)*

John bearing record of what he saw concerning our Lord before He entered into this world. This is what He did **before** He came into the flesh to dwell among us. This is who He was **before** the world was. He went *from grace to grace until...He was called the Son of God.*

(Now, because of the way we do these tape recordings, we take breaks in order to change/move CDs over. We're gonna pick it up right there with that thought and continue in section 93.)

But I want you to remember that Christ went from grace to grace (before this world and before He entered into the flesh here) through a long enough period of development

that He had sufficient grace to be **called the Son of God**. And **this** is the prototype of the saved man! This is what you must be or else not be saved. This is the first principles of the Gospel, about which we're going to spend some time today so that you might understand who it is you worship and **how** it is you're called upon **to worship** Him. Because as long as you're down here in **this** veil, clothed in **this** flesh, with the capacity to make sacrifices and the ability to exercise faith in Him, you will be amazed at the grace you can acquire, if you will only do so while in **this** dark place. You're here to accomplish a great deal. And I hope by the time we finish today, you're more fortified against accomplishing it.

(So, we'll take a break while they change over discs, and we'll start again in a few minutes.)

There was a great question asked by one of the women who came up and said, "Prototype of the saved **man**, saved **man**—I mean you're sort of Y-chromosome oriented. What about the prototype of the saved **woman**, saved **woman**?" The best way to explain it without saying something inappropriate would be this: Christ could not—**could not**—have done what He did if He had not had a woman who fulfilled a role in relation to Him. **She** anointed Him preliminary to His death and His burial. **She** was the first one to encounter Him in the resurrection. You do not get **Him** through what He needed to go through without the presence of the woman taking care of some needful things in connection with that. If it was important for the details of those kinds of things to be available to us, then the scriptures would be talking about 'em. But because that is not germane to what the challenge is that we confront (and the terrible burdens that we have to bear in order to get from where we are to where we need to be), I think the scriptures wisely allude to (but do not elaborate upon) those kinds of things. And so far, those who have been in a position to talk about it have never felt they had any right to do so.

So, our Lord (and we're talking about Him in the beginning, before the world was), *received not the fulness at first but received grace for grace*. And we think *grace for grace* consists of, "I'm going to now obey a principle, and as a result of obeying that principle, I will receive the benefit of the grace that flows from doing so." And that is true enough. That is a true enough principle. But it is also truer and more accurate to say: in connection with the long preparation that preceded the **call** of Christ to be *the Son of God*, that *grace to grace* is also something that involves the upward scale of a ladder, as Joseph alludes to it.

He was *called the Son of God because He received not of the fulness at...first*. He was **called** to be the Son of God because **that wasn't His status before**. Therefore, He had to be **called** to be the Son of God. And that was true because He *received not of the fulness at...first*.

And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were [open], and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that

*he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for **he dwelt in him**. And it shall come to pass, that if [you're] faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John. I give unto you these sayings that [ye] may understand and know **how to** worship, and know **what** you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace. (Ibid, vs. 15-20; see also T&C 93:2-7, emphasis added)*

Long before the Lord assumed the role and the responsibility of descending here and being the Redeemer of this world, He qualified by grace, doing things that proved—while He was behind the veil, as you presently find yourselves situated—that demonstrated graciousness and faith by obedience to the commandments of God. Even though it would be a great while yet before He (and now you) would rise up to that level, **still** He lived His life with such grace that He qualified to receive more and to develop and to move up. Now, in the next talk, it's gonna be necessary to spend more time on this. But today we're simply alluding to this.

And I wanna move to Alma chapter 13—because in Alma chapter 13, we run up against some of the other suggestions in the scriptures about what it takes to move from grace to grace. Beginning in chapter 13 of Alma, verse 1:

*...I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of **his Son**, to teach these things unto the people. And those priests were ordained after the order of **his Son**, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward **to his Son** for redemption. And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world... (Alma 13:1-3, emphasis added)*

Did you get that? We're talking about priests. And look, *his Son...his Son...his Son*. So that you can understand who **His Son** is, there are gonna be some people who qualified *before the foundation of the world* that will be qualified to come and to teach about some things. And they're gonna be called before the foundation of the world (**like His Son was called** before the foundation of the world) to be pointing *to his Son* who will come into the world. And this qualification occurs before the world is. But it's done so that you can understand and have faith in His Son.

Being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God... (Ibid)

Why does God have foreknowledge about these things? Why does God know that, given the trust, they will be true to it? Why does God know that these are the kinds of people to whom trust can be given, and it will not be broken? Why does God have such foreknowledge? It's not based upon conjecture. It's based upon proof. It's not based

upon merely hope. It's based upon the knowledge of God because He's not asking lead to do what He knows only iron can accomplish. Therefore, He chooses a suitable instrument, based upon His foreknowledge, *prepared from the foundation of the world*.

And what is God's foreknowledge known?

*...on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place [that is, before the foundation of this world; in the first place, long ago on some other rung of this ladder; long ago, a great while in the past. In the first place they were] ...left to choose good or evil; therefore they having **chosen good**, and exercising [exceeding] great **faith, are called** with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption **for such**. (Ibid)*

You have to redeem **them** in order to have **them** reclaim so that they can come back and perform what they need to do. There has been a *preparatory redemption*. They **have** chosen what's right. And the game's afoot, and you're in it, and you're here, and this is now. And you have the opportunity, on account of your own—being left to choose between good and evil, having the opportunity to choose good. And at this moment, you have the opportunity to exercise—exceedingly—faith. And you have the opportunity, at this moment, to be identified and proven by God so that His foreknowledge of you **hereafter** includes within it a record of your exceeding faith and good works.

And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and [the] blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great [a] privilege as their brethren. (Ibid, vs. 4)

Don't have a hard heart. **Don't** be blinded by the lies, the half-truths, and the incomplete things that you are taught.

You may disagree with me, and you're entitled to do so. But I declare the things that He's declared to me. There are arguments that have been made; there are reviews that have been written about the things that I say. There is no criticism that has been offered against me, no scriptural exegesis that an orthodox member of the Church cannot advance that **I did not advance in argument with the Lord!** I made **better** scriptural arguments than those that have been leveled at me. I had **more** scriptural proof to discourage the Lord from asking that I do **any** of this stuff. I argued with Him! And the Lord has explained to me, using the scriptures, the things which I declare to you.

I'm not here on my own errand. If I were doing what I wanted to do today, it wouldn't include any of you—well, her [indicating his wife], but [laughter]... I mean, the weather's nice. I have a Harley sitting in the garage that's on a recharger that needs to be ridden, and here I am doing this. And I'm not doing this because **I** think it oughta be done. And I'm not explaining these scriptures to you because I think this **might** be the way it fits together. Like Paul, I can declare, "He whom ye ignorantly serve declare I unto you." I've read all of the accounts that Joseph has left behind of his visits with the Lord. Add

them all together, and He's spent more time with me than He did with Joseph. I attribute that to the pooriness of my learning, my inadequacy as a pupil, my stubbornness, and my stupidity. I was a bigger defender of the Church **to the Lord**, a bigger defen.... I was a Pharisee, explaining why He needed to honor the Church and... And let me do so too! And so, when people shake their head and say, "What a shame! What a shame! He fell off the rails. He went his own way. He's filled with pride...."

Look, growing up in Idaho, I would have said that's utter bullshit. Here, I will say it's bovine feces. There's nothing to that [laughter]. That's not who I am! That's not what's in my heart. It has never been what's in my heart. And I know what I'm talking about. And I don't care about your theories to the contrary. Because He who is more intelligent than them all has declared to me what the truth of these things is. Resist it, if you want. Reject it, if you want. But you can read right here what the consequences are, though—

*...others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and [the] blindness of their minds, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren. Or in fine, in the first place [that is, before they ever got **here**, in the first place, long ago, far away] **they** were on the same standing with their brethren [exactly the same place]. This holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would **not** harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared— ...thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto [this] high priesthood of the holy order of God, to **teach his commandments** unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest—This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things [this has been underway a long time; **this** has been underway a **long** time]— Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end— (Ibid, vs. 4-8, emphasis added)*

You say a man must be ordained by someone here in the flesh, and I say that may be true enough. But if he is not ordained, at some point, in eternity that is *without [a] beginning*, you might as well ordain a sack of flour. Because if it does not reckon from some place in eternity, it is inadequate to compensate or deal with eternal things.

You say you want to create an "expectation" into the next life; and I say, if it did not exist and the authority by which to declare it was not handed down from **before** in eternity, then it will not last after. Joseph held up a ring and said, "There is no beginning, and there is no end, it is one eternal round." I'm telling ya, you are only on part of the cycle here. But **you are on** part of the cycle, **here**. Therefore, what you do here matters—infinitely, eternally, everlastingly. It matters! You have your doubts; weigh them in the balance.

The Gospel is delicious. Get rid of that stale, wretched stuff that you consume, and go on to find the Life, the Light, and the vigor that is contained in the words that we have in scripture. This stuff is delicious! If you'll partake of it and prepare yourself, you can improve this estate in a way that will reflect credit in the next estate. Don't forfeit the opportunity.

Thus they become high priests forever. (Ibid, vs. 9)

They become high priests forever. They had it before the foundation of the world. They come here. They have authority here. And that authority began there, and it will continue into the next life. Therefore, they **can** bless, and you're blessed indeed.

Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, [of] the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen. Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish; Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb. (Ibid, vs. 9-11; see also Alma 9:10-Alma 10:1 RE)

You say you want to be baptized and to be cleansed from all sin? I say have at it! But in addition, this "prototype of the saved man" requires that you do something in addition. You may only achieve a limited amount of grace in this life, but that limited amount of grace you must hold fast to. You cannot receive more if you will not receive what's offered now. And if you'll receive what's offered now, [long pause] you'll be added upon.

Oh, E.B. Grandin had an employee; he was a teenager when he did the typesetting for the Book of Mormon. His first name was John; I don't remember the last name. But I was looking at his picture the other day—they had a picture of him in 1890. He wasn't a teenager anymore in 1890. He was holding one of those poses like they did back then with the photography, and he looked dreadfully uncomfortable. I showed the picture to my wife, and she said, "Man, he looks like he's never recovered from the trauma of typesetting the Book of Mormon." [Laughter] Just this severe...with wild white hair (it's in the Joseph Smith papers), this big gray, white beard. John... Anyone remember the name? What is it? Anyone remember the name of the guy who set the type on the Book of Mormon? Anyway, whoever that guy John was that worked in E.B. Grandin's bookstore printing press, he got the printer's manuscript to the Book of Mormon, and he punctuated it. And we still live with his punctuation. The commas that you got in your text? They're all derived from this guy, the trauma of punctuating the Book of Mormon lasting with him some 60 years after the fact and making him look like a fretting chap because he knows, oh, he may have screwed up a comma or two. And I'm gonna suggest another way to read a bunch of verses. And I'm gonna lift out his commas and throw 'em on the floor. I'm not gonna use them anymore.

I'm gonna read you a description of Christ in 2 Nephi 25:12. And this is the way I would read it with my punctuation: "The Only Begotten of the Father yea even the Father of heaven and of earth."

The way it's punctuated today is: *The Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and of [the] earth* (see also 2 Nephi 11:5 RE). The way it's punctuated, it reads that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father, and Jesus Christ is the Father of heaven and of earth. The way I would punctuate it is that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father who is the Father of heaven and of earth. Mess around with the commas and, all of a sudden, a bunch of Trinitarian theology (which was in the mind and heart of John as he typeset) suddenly becomes a whole lot less Trinitarian in the Book of Mormon. (\$&!!**#!) Really screws up a bunch of people who wanna argue about theology among the Mormons. Throw out the commas. 2 Nephi 25:12, Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father. He's the Only Begotten of the Father, who is the Father of heaven and of the earth. That's who His Father is.

Mosiah 3:8, *And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary* (see also Mosiah 1:14 RE).

What if we move the commas around, and we say: "He shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary."

We've looked at language in the Lectures on Faith. We've looked at the statement that was made in the April General Conference. In them... And we've looked at D&C section 93, and in them they're talking about how the Father came and *dwelt in Him*, K? And every week you hear a sacrament prayer in which it's petitioned that you, *O God, the Eternal Father* (Moroni 4:3; see also Moroni 4:1 RE), will send Christ to have His Spirit come and dwell in you. And the Spirit that comes and dwells in Christ is the Spirit of the Father, and Christ's Spirit is going to come and dwell in you. And whose Spirit is it that dwells in Christ? And so, they all become one.

(I think that phone call I got a few moments ago was my daughter, 'cause my wife's out there talking on a cell phone. I don't know if any of you heard my bag buzzing, but now she's talking. So I can talk about her for a minute, and she'll never hear it [laughter], 'cause she doesn't listen to these recordings. Well... Although, she does read the transcripts. Well, I better... [laughter].)

So, if you go to Helaman 14:12, you see the same thing: *And also that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name.* Helaman 14:12 (see also Helaman 5:11 RE).

Again, what if we change the commas? "That ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; that ye might know of the signs of his coming." K?

I tend to view things in a way that makes sense. And I really like what happens with Abinadi. Because Abinadi gives us an explanation of Christ in which he... I think he nails it. This is in Mosiah chapter 15, verses 2-5—

Now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. (Mosiah 15:1-5; see also Mosiah 8:5 RE)

Abinadi knew these things. And he testified of these things to a wicked group of men that would ultimately kill him. But he declared what it was and how it was.

If you read the Lectures on Faith and the definition of the Holy Ghost, what you read is that the Holy Ghost represents the mind of the Father and the Son, and They together are one. And this mind of God—this Spirit that emanates from Them—fills the immensity of space; it is part of God too. And that is as accessible to you, **if you will receive it**, as it was accessible to Christ—which is **how** you can become one with Them. *Father, I pray...for [these] whom thou hast given me...that [they] may be one [as thou and I art one]* (3 Nephi 19:29; see also 3 Nephi 19:23 and 3 Nephi 9:3-4 RE). "They may be 'one,' like us because They share the same mind." And you likewise can do so.

Christ said of Himself (and I'm reading from Ether chapter 3, verse 14)—Christ said of Himself:

*Behold, **I am** he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, **I am** Jesus Christ. **I am** the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and...daughters... (see also Ether 1:13 RE)*

...so that you also might become a son of God, as the One who redeems you becomes your Father, so that He who is the Only Begotten of the Father might in turn beget many sons and daughters Himself.

If you will receive it, faith in Him comes by hearing the word of God—not by a pretender, not by someone guessing, not by someone offering up their theory of how this stuff ought to be understood, not by someone citing you a bibliography—but hearing the word of God delivered as He would have it delivered, by **whomever** it is that He may choose to deliver it.

If you receive it, **then** you might have faith and that, too, in the Son of God that **you** might receive Him. But if you will not, if you will harden your hearts, if you will blind your minds, if you will not receive what **He** offers from **His** mouth in **your** day, then **you don't have faith in Him**. And **you** will fall short of that faith which **will** bring you to become His son and His daughter. It is that way; it has always been that way; it will always be that way. There is no other test.

Therefore, either I am a liar, and you oughta forget everything I've said, or I have been sent by someone who is greater than I, and you reject and you quibble over the things I declare to you at your peril!

And it oughta be that way. And I oughta be damned if I'm a pretender. And I ought to be damned and rejected by God if I'm saying things about which I do not know anything. But I bear testimony to you, I know what I'm talking about.

He (Christ) was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. And why did the world not know Him? The world did not know Him because—the same reason why people would not know a messenger if one were sent today—because our Lord was so very ordinary. For all the world he was just another itinerant preacher. There had been so many pretenders in the days before then. The Maccabean rebellion... The family of David had fallen into great disrepute by the time the Lord arrived. When the census was taken and everyone had to go to their own city and he went to the city of David to be enumerated, there was no room for **them** in the inn. It was... It was in His day as it is in ours.

The Lord Omnipotent who [reigns], who was, and is from all eternity...shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay... (Mosiah 3:5; see also Mosiah 1:14 RE). Father is a tabernacle of Spirit and Glory. The Son descended to be among us in a tabernacle of clay. To the extent that you can receive our Lord (though He was here, like you are), the only way you could tell the difference was He declared things that were filled with light.

How was the Lord able to accomplish all that He did? Abraham 3:19, the Lord tells you. He says, *I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all* (see also Abraham 5:4 RE). Why is the Lord able to say that He is more intelligent than they all? Because our Lord went from grace to grace to the point in which He **understood** all things because He had been **through** all things; He had **descended below** all things, and He had **risen above** all things—therefore, He **comprehends** all things. He's more **intelligent** than us all, because He's more **experienced** than us all. He has arrived at a state in which He is worthy, holy, sanctified. Having been left to choose between good

and evil, He has chosen good. He declared who He was when He introduced Himself to the Nephites, and He said He suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

From what beginning? For **you**, why can that not be a beginning that starts now? For **you**, why can you not, from this beginning—at this moment, in this place—go forward saying that you will follow the will of the Father in all things, from this beginning? Why will you refuse to rise up and to receive grace for grace?

This is **how** you worship **who** you worship, because He was the Word of God, the embodiment of what the Father's will was. The Father declares what is true, and the Son does it. And thus the Son became the Word of God because He did what the Father bid Him do. Would you be a son or daughter of God? Do what He bids you do. This is **how** the Son worshipped. This is what you must do if you will worship Him also.

I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all (Ibid). D&C 93:36, The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth (see also T&C 93:11).

*The light [shines] in darkness and the darkness [comprehends] it not (D&C 88:49; see also T&C 86:8) because in the darkness, there are things that are forgotten; but in the light, there are things that are exposed and seen. Light and Truth: because you see things as they really are, because you judge things as they really are (not after the manner of men but according to the light that God shines upon it)—so that you can see and you can feel that the heart that is speaking to you is pure; that the words that are being spoken are given by the grace of God; that it doesn't matter how flawed a vessel the Lord chooses, He can cleanse any of you, every whit; that He has such power as that—so that He can take what is broken and mend it; and He can take what is unclean, even scarlet in color, and make it white as snow **by His word**, which is the word of the Father—because the two of Them are One.*

And so comes this sobering verse two verses in D&C 130, verses 18 and 19: *Whatever principle of intelligence...*

Remember, I'm the Lord thy God, [I'm] more intelligent than the[m] all (Abraham 3:19). The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth (D&C 93:36).

*So now you: Whatever principle of intelligence **we** attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come (D&C 130:18-19, emphasis added)*

How will you gain intelligence? How will you gain knowledge? It says right here: you gain knowledge and you gain intelligence by your *diligence and obedience*. The words that are spoken are intended to cause action. When that answer came to me in the barracks, if I'd done nothing, my life would've continued as it began. And there would've

been no difference the next day. And today I would be in a far different place than I am at this moment.

Hearing without heed and diligence, obedience to the things that God asks you... I mean, what good does it do you to know more about the scriptures than another person if it does not affect your behavior? What good does your knowledge give you if your knowledge is not employed to bring you and others who hear you closer to the Lord? Knowledge can be used as a point of vanity. It can be used to make you seem bigger, better, brighter. It can be a point of pride. It is power. And wielded in the wrong hands, it abuses; it subjugates; it humiliates.

The Lord is not like that. He lifts. He raises. He elevates. He endows you. He blesses your lives. If you will receive it and act upon it, if you will soften your heart, if you will allow His Spirit to enter in, if you will receive the light that comes from Him, you will receive grace, and you will be more like Him, and you will be more gracious and patient with others—and you'll view them in their fallen state, and you'll hope for them better. And to the extent that you're able to do so, you will offer them better.

Joseph Smith, *The Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*:

Knowledge saves a man; ...in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge... So it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on [until] you learn all the principles of exaltation... A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power.

I read those to you on the very first day that we began these series of talks in Boise, Idaho. Now that we've come to the subject of our Lord, we get back to the topic of intelligence: "A man is saved no quicker than he gains knowledge," but knowledge requires you to act because it doesn't become part of you until you have lived it. Therefore, unless you're willing to live it, you can't receive it.

Our religion is centered in Christ. Therefore, our religion is centered in intelligence. It is not enough to know what Christ knows; we must also be loving or charitable as He is. He not only created this world, He also suffered to save it.

Turn to Isaiah chapter 53, and let's look at some old familiar verses. This is Isaiah writing long before the event, but the context is almost an echo of the quizzical nature of Christ on the road to Emmaus saying, "What are you talking about?" And they're saying, "Are you dumb? Are you ignorant? Are you oblivious to what's been happening?" Isaiah in 53: *Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* (Isaiah 53:1).

See, it always gets delivered in a manner that it is possible to absolutely dismiss it. There needs to be an entire chorus of people who are yelling in opposition. There needs

to be smooth arguments. There needs to be opponents who are standing there. There needs to be institutional opposition. There needs to be rejection. There needs to be an entire augmented army of skepticism opposed to whenever the Lord is doing anything so that it can always be equal.

Who's gonna believe the report? And who's gonna see the arm of the Lord? For Christ is gonna *grow up before [God] as a tender plant, ...as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there's] no beauty that we should desire him* (Ibid, vs. 2). I really dislike the way in which that's been translated—because those meanings **are** possible with those words, but that is absolutely not how I would render them.

Chamad [חָמַד, Strong's Concordance 2530]... All Hebrew is based on... Well, almost the entirety of the Hebrew vocabulary is based upon a three-letter root. And the root of the word that gets used for "beauty" really is talking about something to be coveted, desired; some kind of precious thing that you want. *Hadar* [הָדָר, Strong's Concordance 1926]: ornament, honor, splendor, majesty. If I were rendering a translation on this...

I went and I looked this morning to see how Gileadi rendered this in his *Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah*. And Gileadi rendered it: "He had no distinguished appearance that we should notice him, no pleasing aspect that we should find him attractive." I would render it differently still. I would say, "He had no bona fide authority that we should submit to; He had no standing, credibility, bona fides. He had no position that we should acknowledge Him."

Because you can throw around the words, and you can go to the third and the fourth and the fifth and the sixth definition, and you can mess with it. But when you miss the fact that we're talking about Christ; we're talking about Him growing up in a place that is essentially barren, devoid of the knowledge of God; and we're talking about Him coming along, and those that are in this barren wasteland looking at Him and saying, "Why should we believe you!?" Then you have to go to the definitions that let you say, "authority, majesty." I mean, "majesty" or "a desirable thing"? What do men covet more than a position of rank and authority? And Christ didn't come that way. He came "beneath all things." He came as someone that was considered renegade, an outsider; someone that was easy to dismiss; someone that it was easy to look at and say, "For that, I'm having none of it. It's too great a risk to believe this stuff."

This is the seventh of ten talks I'm going to give. I'm bearing testimony of the truth. There's no reason to think that this endeavor is anything other than some person trying to call attention to themselves, **unless** what I'm declaring to you is truth and is light. And if I am, then how you respond to that...

You do not need to respond to me. You don't need to like me, and you don't ever need to mention my name again. But what I'm saying, you need to respond to—between you and God, between how you live your life from this day forward and the Lord who is

going to come to judge the quick and the dead. You need to get right with Him. I'm not going to be your leader. I'm not going to form a church. I'm not gonna do that. It wouldn't work anyway. But **you** can be healed. And **you** can come to the Lord. And **you** can live your life differently. And you can look at these same scriptures in a new light, and let His Spirit to fill you. And you can make a difference in the lives of others.

I don't trust myself to do anything other than to say what I've been told. I fear my weakness, my inadequacy. I fear offering up my own ideas. I don't wanna rely on me; don't **you** do that, when I'm asking you not to. You rely on Him.

But just remember, when He speaks, **this** is how He came! He's not gonna do it differently. He's not gonna make it easy for you. He's not gonna tell you: "I'm gonna put my thumb print on this, and here's the hall pass. Who wants the hall pass? That guys got the hall pass! Follow him! He can never lead you astray. And if he were to do so, I will remove him! I am the great and powerful" [laughter]. Now I'm borrowing both from Cecil B. DeMille and *The Ten Commandments* and *The Wizard of Oz*, and I'm mingling those to present to you false doctrine offered by institutions who claim they possess keys of salvation that will redeem you.

I offer you no such keys. I offer you a Lord, and I would have you give heed to Him. And I'll tell that **no man** can be trusted. Even Peter (the night of the Lord's trial) was a broken reed. If you put your weight on that, it would pierce your hand. That's what **men** are—but not our Lord.

[He's] despised and rejected of men... (Isaiah 53:3), and that will be true. That will be true of whomever; they will be despised and rejected of men.

He was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...* (ibid). It's necessary for Him to be so, so that He might know how to understand us. He grieved because of the things He knew He had to offer, and none would receive it. It was necessary for Him to experience sorrow and be acquainted with grief.

We hid as it were our faces from Him... (ibid); that is, we turned from Him. We would not give heed to what it was He offered.

He was despised, ...we esteemed Him not (ibid)—the only person who's ever lived who deserved to have respect given to Him, and *we esteemed Him not*.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted (ibid, vs. 4). See, *smitten of God*, smitten of God—He was cast out of the synagogue. They were looking to stone Him. I mean, why would you expect that God would honor a man who'd been cast out of the synagogue? Smitten of God; afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; ...with his stripes we are healed (ibid, vs. 5).

You know, don't think you're going to follow that Master and then be spared. He's gonna let you understand what it means to follow Him. And that understanding is gonna come by the experiences that help you relate to and understand our Lord in a way that you don't understand Him at present. If you're comfortable, He will make you uncomfortable. If you're certain, He will make you uncertain. If you think you've got it all figured out, He will offer up a contradiction, and then He'll leave you to struggle with it. And then when you can bear the contradiction no more, and in the agony and anguish of your uncertainty, He'll delay the answer a little further still, until your heart is finally soft enough to come to Him in meekness. And then He'll speak to you the words that you need to hear. Sometimes only just in time.

All we like sheep have gone astray; [we've] turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (ibid, vs. 6). All of those variances from the path, He bore **that**.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: [he's] brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ...he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.... (ibid, vs. 7-10)

You know, that statement, *it **pleased** the Lord to bruise him*. Can you imagine?

In the Enoch account (I wasn't going to do this, but I think it's an appropriate juxtaposition), Enoch is in heaven, and he's being shown in vision this last days' event. And Enoch is talking in the bitterness of his heart as he's looking at it. This is Moses chapter 7, verses 44,

*...Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, ...wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look. And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life? And the Lord said: It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance. And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and **his soul rejoiced**, saying: **The Righteous is lifted up, ...the Lamb is slain**. (emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:19 RE)*

Weeping in the bitterness of his heart: *I will refuse to be comforted*. All this loss, all this waste, all this death, all this wickedness! So much reason to mourn: *I will refuse to be comforted*.

And the Lord says, "No, no, no! Be happy! Be happy!" (That song, you know.) "Be happy! See? The Lamb is slaughtered!"

It pleased the Lord to bruise him. Is there no other way? No, there's no other way.

He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see...the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53:10-11; see also Isaiah 19:2-3 RE).

He gains the knowledge by which redemption comes through the things that He suffers. Because in suffering for sin, He overcomes and finds the path **back** from sin. So far as He is cast out, that is how far He knows the path back, to return. There is no burden you bear that He does not know how to solve. There is no dilemma that you confront that He has not already found the way to resolve and come back to peace with God.

Read the chapter on "Gethsemane" in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*, and you'll read an eyewitness account of how our Lord was smitten and afflicted, even beyond what man can endure. And each time, He was able to find peace and reconciliation and love, despite what He was put through.

This is the One about whom the scriptures are speaking. This is the Lord who's asking you to come to Him. He's not aloof, and He's not distant. If He'll speak to someone in a military barracks, He'll speak to you—every one of you. And what He has to say to you is far more important than anything I can say. But I can bear testimony of Him. And I can assure you that He will not leave your petitions unanswered. And I can also assure you that today is once again **a day of salvation**. And He has set His hand again—no matter how unlikely it may appear, no matter how much reason there is to be skeptical, no matter how many more signs you think may need to be fulfilled, I'm telling you, He has set His hand again. The heavens are open for business, and the question is whether you're interested in becoming a customer or not.

(We're at the end of another CD. We'll take a short break and then, hopefully, finish this.)

I got a question during the break about the punctuation in the Book of Mormon, and what I'll do (instead of backing up and talking about that) is in the ~~transcript~~ [paper], I will elaborate on that. It was John Gilbert; I just remembered his name. John Gilbert was the one that did the punctuation. When I do the ~~transcript~~ [paper], I'll just add additional explanations, cite you to some places where you can go read more about that. But the punctuation of the Book of Mormon was not put there by Joseph, Oliver, or anyone else. It was one long sentence. There weren't paragraphs; there weren't verses; just words. And when they brought in the printer's manuscript, that got typeset; and John Gilbert was the one who did the typesetting, and John Gilbert provided us with the punctuation to the Book of Mormon. So every comma, semicolon, period, verse in the Book of

Mormon, you can rearrange; no one did that. I mean, the next guy to mess with it would've been Orsen Hyde and Pratt in the 1878 or... You know, I have to... Dates are not one of those things I keep on the top of my head.

Christ's suffering was redemptive. It lifted the Creation as a result of what He was able to do. And if you think about it in physical terms, if you're going to use a fulcrum to lift an object, it's necessary to put the fulcrum underneath the whole thing. You can't lift it unless you put the fulcrum beneath. Christ is, in effect, the fulcrum which lifted the entirety of Creation. So, in lifting the entirety of the Creation, it's necessary for you to appreciate the extent to which Christ is bonded to all of this and, therefore, all of you. Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 88. This is a **marvelous** transcript. This is a description that you need to keep in mind when you're trying to understand who our Lord is. Beginning in verse 6:

*He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth **you** light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it. (D&C 88:6-17, emphasis added; see also T&C 86:1-2)*

Between verse 6 and verse 13, rather like bookends, the connection of Christ to *all things* appears seven times. It appears at the beginning and appears again at the end. Christ is in all things. Everything that you're acquainted with in this creation is sustained by the light of Christ. He occupies, He brings the light into, He is more intelligent than it all, and He keeps its organization together by the light that emanates from Him. This is why it is possible for redemption to come through Him. Because when He descended below it all, including death, He has the power then to bring it all with Him back into life. He is the fulcrum. He is the one which must permeate all things, in order for Him to be able to lay hold upon all things and in order, therefore, to bring you back from the grave—which means, at this very moment, **you are in contact with Him** through His Spirit. **He** is giving **you** the life which you are presently living.

He is not a distant God. He is an immediate and an intimate God. You say He knows your thoughts, and that is true enough! Because He is giving you the ability and the freedom to entertain the thoughts. Therefore, He knows how to judge you—because everything that you have done, you have done using the power and the light He lends to you. You have the **illusion** of privacy. You have the **actuality** of agency, but that agency is being employed by you, using an instrumentality that belongs to **Him**.

And the scriptures make it abundantly apparent that that is in fact the case. Mosiah chapter 2, verse 21:

I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say [unto you] if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants...

...because the energy being used at present to power this life that you're living is borrowed from Him; it is His light. It is His light; it is His truth; it is His intelligence. He is sustaining you from moment to moment.

Verse 25:

Now I ask [you], can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you. (See also Mosiah 1:8-9 RE)

So, this mortal frame that you're walking about in temporarily, belongs to Him. And ultimately, He's gonna take it back, and reduce it back to dust, and re-form it in something else, and do something else with it. And someday He will resurrect you, but when He does that, that's Him also—because it will be a long time before you "attain to the resurrection of the dead" (*TPJS*, pg. 346). You're gonna borrow this from Him for yet some time.

Look in Alma chapter 7, beginning at verse 11. This is Him descending below all things. Alma 7:11,

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. ...he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; ...he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his

deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if [you're] not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. (Alma 7:11-14; see also Alma 5:3-4 RE)

He did this stuff precisely so that whatever it is that is infirm in you, He can blot it out. Whatever it is that you need to have "succor" to remedy, He has the knowledge required to do that. He is not experimenting when He deals with us. He knows what He is doing. He has descended below it all in order to acquire the capacity to lift it all. And the things that He intends to lift back include all of you. He intends to save everything—and by saving everything, allow it to continue on in its course.

Those who will receive less, will continue on in a lesser course. Those who will receive more, will continue on in a greater course. But all will continue on, freely using what God freely gives to both the righteous and the wicked. He makes the sun to shine on the righteous and the wicked. He makes the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. And He does so while merely asking you to repent and turn to Him. He does not demand obedience. He offers you, if you will obey, grace for grace, that you too might receive more **of Him in you**, and that you might be **better** animated by a **higher** source than the one that animates you at the moment. No matter where you are situated, He continuously offers you more.

Now we go back to Abinadi. And I said a few moments ago that he knows what he's talking about. Let me read you just how very much Abinadi knows. This is Mosiah chapter 15, beginning at verse 8:

*And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion toward the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice. ...now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. Now what say ye? And who [are] **his seed**? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words **of the prophets**, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that **these are his seed**, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 15:8-11, emphasis added; see also Mosiah 8:6-7 RE)*

A while ago we read a quote from Joseph [Smith] in Orem about where the kingdom of God is. And Joseph said, "If you can find anyone sent by God, there is the kingdom of God." It was good doctrine when Joseph declared it. It was good doctrine when Mōsiah [Abinadi] declared it. It's good doctrine when I declare it. Because any of you who will hear and then who will hearken unto their words, you become His seed. You have to hear it. You have to hear it from someone who has been sent. But it does you no good at all if you will not hearken to it. Because it is in the hearkening that **you** will meet God. **You** will find redemption. **You** will hear His voice, and **you** will become a holy vessel because His word will be animated in you. And you will have no doubts about your salvation, because **you** will hear Him declare it in His own voice. And **you** will know that He's no respecter of persons. And you'll know that **you**, like any other person, can come unto Him, and look to Him (and Him alone) for your salvation, and not be dependent upon any other person or system. And you too can join in singing the song of redeeming love.

We will get to more of this as we move along. But today it's only necessary that we begin to introduce the fact that Christ is the redemption of all. When His religion is here, then His religion, when it appears, is the same in every day.

Turn to Mormon chapter 9, beginning at verse 7:

And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healings, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues; Behold I say unto you, that he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the [scripture]; if so, he does not understand them. For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing? ...now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is [a] shadow of changing, then [you have] imagined...unto your[self] a god who is not a God of miracles. But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is [the] same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man. And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord. (Mormon 9:7-13; see also Mormon 4:7 RE)

It's true that that will happen in the resurrection, but I wanna pause on that. *Because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are bought back into the presence of the Lord, yea this is wherein all men are redeemed....* If I were punctuating it, I'd put a period there, and I'd start a new thought in a new verse.

Now is the day of redemption. *Because of the redemption of man which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord, yea **this** is wherein all men are redeemed.*

What is the fall of man? It's to be cast out from the presence of God. What is the redemption of man? It's to be brought back into the presence of God. Today is the day of redemption. Today is the day of salvation. Come back into His presence.

Ether chapter 3, beginning at verse 13: *When he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you* (see also Ether 1:13 RE).

This is the gospel of Christ. What is it that you know? You know Him. *And this is life eternal that you might know [Him]* (John 17:3; see also John 9:19 RE). "Because you know these things, I'm coming to see you. I return you to my presence. I redeem you from the Fall—*because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall.*" This is Christ speaking in the first person. He's defining redemption. Who better is able to define what it means to be redeemed than the Redeemer? Reconciliation comes **through** Christ. Reconciliation comes **with** Christ. Reconciliation is **by** Christ. And Christ has the power to redeem you all.

I wanna pay attention to the coming again of the Lord, and if you read about His return in the Doctrine and Covenants.... Maybe we oughta pick a couple of these just to look at. D&C 45, verse 16; let's look at that one. He says, *I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood...* This is verse 16 of D&C 45. I'm sorry—verse 16. *I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, ...spake unto them, saying: As ye have asked...me concerning the signs of my coming, in the day when I shall come in my glory in the clouds of heaven, to fulfill the promises that [I've] made unto your fathers...*(emphasis added; see also T&C 31:4). This is a description of how He intends to return.

If you go to 49, D&C 49, beginning at verse 22, He says:

Verily I say unto you, the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither...a man traveling on the earth. Wherefore, be not deceived, but continue in steadfastness, looking forth for the heavens to be shaken, and the earth to tremble and...reel to and fro as a drunken man, ...for the valleys to be exalted, and for the mountains to be made low, and for the rough places to become smooth—and...this when the angel shall sound his [trump]. (See also T&C 35:7)

And this is how He intends to come. He may send people who are messengers. He may send people who have things to say from Him. But when He returns, He's going to return in glory.

Section 133, if you go there and you read, beginning at verse 46:

And it shall be said: Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments; yea, from the regions which are not known, clothed in his glorious

apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save. And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine—vat. (D&C 133:46-48)

I just add, parenthetically, that His apparel is red, period. Period. He will be clothed in red. And if someone offers you a vision in which they vary from this, I'll add my voice to Joseph's and bear testimony that when He appears, His apparel—apparel—will be red.

And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places (ibid, vs. 49; see also T&C 58:6).

Doesn't sound to me like an event that is going to take place in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah [laughter].

But as I've said, hearken to whatever voice you wanna hearken to. Chase every tempting tattletale that you hear from someone. The Lord has expounded to me the scriptures. I have no interest in telling you all the things I've been shown. I'm interested in you going and being shown them by Him. He's the Keeper of the Gate. He's the One who's mighty to save. He can tell you what He thinks **you** need to know, as He has told me what **I** need to know.

But there will always be 10,000 voices that rise up in opposition to say, Lo here, lo there; come and hearken to my precept (see JS-H 1:5; see also JSH 1:11 RE). I don't ask you to hearken to anything other than what we find in the scriptures. But you should ask yourself the same question that Malachi posed, *Who may abide the day of his coming? ...who shall stand when he appeareth? for [he's] like a refiner's fire, and like [a] fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver (Malachi 3:2-3; see also Malachi 1:6 RE). Yeah, who shall stand? The day [comes] that shall burn them up [so] that it shall leave them neither root nor branch (3 Nephi 25:1; see also 3 Nephi 11:4 RE). And who shall abide that day?*

Well, we have an answer to that, I guess, in Third Nephi chapter 9—which the Book of Mormon was designed as the scripture, as the foundation, as the keystone for our day. Go to chapter 9 of Third Nephi, and read what is said there. And this is the Lord speaking. Third Nephi chapter 9, verse 12 and 13:

Many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations. O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? (See also 3 Nephi 4:6-7 RE)

These people were *more righteous* not because they were sin-free. They were more righteous because they hearkened to what the Lord was telling them to hearken to. It didn't mean that they weren't a project, that they weren't a work-in-process. It simply

meant they did, in fact, hear His voice and, therefore, responded to it. These were the people who were spared.

Go to chapter 10 and verse 12: *And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared* (3 Nephi 10:12; see also 3 Nephi 4:10 RE). Did you notice that? It's the definition. This is how you get spared. This is how you become His seed. ***They who received the prophets and stoned them not.***

Understand, this is Christ speaking. And put it in the timeframe in which He is speaking by looking at Third Nephi chapter 9, verse 22: *Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved* (see also 3 Nephi 4:7 RE). The Lord has achieved the triumph of the resurrection from the dead at the time that He's saying these words. And in that state, in that condition, He has destroyed the wicked. I read it a little while ago. Look, let's read those words again: "I want you to know that God, in the[se] last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming his name, is not trifling with you or me" (TPJS, pg. 347). K? He is going to come. He's going to come in judgment. There are gonna be those who pay the price. He told them how they could be the more righteous and be spared.

Do not think for one moment that Christ's coming judgment will not be terrible. Do not think its scope will not be cosmic. Do not think that all things are going to continue as they always have been. Do not be misled by thinking that you can hearken to just any principle and listen to any false, unredemptive gospel proclaimed by any pretender and survive the day of His coming. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. And the word of God comes only when **He** is the author of it.

Well, remember that you should not look for a Messiah to come which has already come, and *the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither a man traveling on the earth*. He is going to *come down in heaven from the presence of [God] and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire*. That's D&C section 63, verse 34 (see also T&C 50:8).

Listen. Religion is, or ought to be, deeply personal. Religion is not something that... At its most intimate level, it's not even something that can be shared.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 76. There's some closing verses in the vision in 76. Beginning at verse 114:

Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make

*them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; **To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.** (D&C 76:114-118, emphasis added; see also T&C 69:29)*

I have been in that world of glory. I have abided in His presence. I know things not lawful to be uttered. But everything I've uttered today is lawful to be said, is contained in scripture, is the Lord's invitation to you.

And you need to realize that this language is your invitation. Because God did not say, "There's some folks I don't love." He says He bestows it on any who love **Him**. The question isn't His love of **us**; that is a given. Those few of you who are sitting in this room with a hard heart, rejecting what I have to say, He loves every bit as much as those of you whose hearts are soft and are open and are willing. It is not that God loves one more than another; it is that some of you love Him, and others do not. And by this He knows whether you love Him: it's whether your heart is soft and willing to receive, or you deliberately choose to be blinded by the false traditions that you've studied through and hold fast to because you have not faith.

Religion is intended to be between you and God, deeply personal, individually redemptive. Christ is as accessible to you as He was to Moses on the mount. And what was Moses' ambition? It was to bring everyone up on the mount to see God too. And what did the children of Israel say? "No, you go talk to Him. We don't want to." And why don't we want to? "Because I can study about God, and I can develop a set of authorities, and I can expound upon the history of the church, and I can parse through the vocabulary of the Restoration, and I can **prove**, I can **prove** what God is going to do next and that what's going on right now today in Ephraim, Utah isn't it." And in the pride of your heart, and in the blindness of your mind, and in the hardness of your soul, you will not receive God saying, "Ignore the man with the microphone, and come to Me." You will not say, "Perhaps the words of scripture mean something different and more intensely personal than I have ever taken them to mean before."

I'm not the best messenger. I wish I had the voice of an archangel. I wish I could do something to soften the heart. Christ is, in fact, holy. And I'm deeply aware of the fact that I am not. I can't redeem any of you, but He can. I can testify of Him, but when it comes down to it, at the end of the day, you can feel faith, and you can feel that something important is being communicated by God to you.

But if you read in the Doctrine and Covenants, look at the process: the wicked one comes, and he takes away the light from you, and he does this through your disobedience. And what is your disobedience? *That wicked one cometh and take away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, **and** because of the tradition of their fathers* (D&C 93:9; see also T&C 93:11). My voice is gonna fall silent in your ears in a few moments. And you're gonna leave here, and you're gonna go on, and

there are gonna be a thousand voices and traditions that intervene. And come the morrow, you're going to attend meetings in which you're gonna hear a lot of things expounded that just aren't true. And their traditions will take over, and your families are gonna impose upon you the traditions that they have handed down, and you're going to sing about "blessed, noble pioneer." And the cacophony of voices will rise. And the critics will chirp up. And the wicked one will come and take away light and truth.

And I cannot be with you always. And if I were, it would only cripple you. And I'm not here to cripple you. I hate the fact that these are ten talks given by me. I wish they were ten talks given by ten different people. That way you wouldn't say, "Well, he's, you know, something." I'm nothing. I'm keenly aware of my own limitations. But I am keenly aware of our Lord. When I have had discussions with Him, they have invariably been parsing through the scriptures, explaining things. When I have inquired and gotten answers, it has been because of things that are in the scriptures that I do not understand.

I bear witness of Christ. I have seen Him! I know He lives! I know He is coming in judgment. And I know that before His coming, He has wanted some things to be declared. I have been as faithful as I can be in declaring the things that I've been asked to declare. I sense keenly my own inadequacy. I beg you to overlook all that. Look at the scriptures. Look at the words of Christ. Look at the explanations we got from Joseph. Look at the things that are true, and go to Him in faith believing.

When I started out, I gave you a description of Him. I wanna repeat that:

The Lord is affable, but He is not gregarious. He is approachable. He is not aloof. He is patient, and He is willing to guide, and He's willing to teach. He is intelligent, but He is not overbearing. He is humble and approachable in His demeanor, even though His power is absolutely undeniable. Therefore, He is both a Lamb and a Lion. And if you come to Him in the day that He offers redemption, you will be coming to the Lamb. But if you wait for His coming in judgment, you are waiting on the Lion, and you will not like what it is that you will see.

I asked you to remember: He is quick to forgive sin. He allows all to come to Him. He is no respecter of persons. I said that when I began; I'm saying it again as we end today.

He is real! He lives! His work of redemption continues right now, just as it continued throughout His mortal life, just as it continued as He hung on the cross, just as it continued in His resurrection in Palestine and as He came to visit with the Nephites. He ministered to other sheep. And for the life of me I can't understand why the Nephites didn't ask Him about those other sheep. It's one of the things about which mankind has had absolutely no curiosity, for some reason. He's ministered to other sheep. He's called other people. And there are, in fact, *holy men [whom] ye know not of* (D&C 49:8; see also T&C 35:3) that still remain.

If there was anything more I could do or say that I thought would convince or persuade you to believe in Him, I would do it, or I would say it. But despite it all, I realize some of

you are gonna walk out of here thinking that I'm just another one of these latter-day blowhards. And that's all good and well. Please, however, give heed to the scriptures I've read, the words of Joseph I've quoted, and the fact that I do have a witness that He's approachable, and that He's every bit as much alive today as He was when He walked on the road to Emmaus. And He's every bit as much willing to come and redeem you from the Fall as He is willing to redeem anyone. His work and His glory is culminated in **you**. His success is redeeming **you**.

If you think that, "Well, He's aloof; He's distant; and this is an impossibly high thing to achieve," the fact of the matter is, it is a greater achievement on **His** end to redeem you than it is at your end to be redeemed. There's more anxiety, there's more desire, there's more **rejoicing in heaven** when He redeems someone from the Fall than there is here.

He came. He suffered. He lived. He died. He did what He did in order to lift all of Creation, and you are inextricably connected to Him. Therefore, trust that. Receive Him. It may start very slow, very small, very distant. Act on that! Hearken to that! It gets louder. You will never wind up in the company of Gods and angels, if you're not willing to have faith in those preliminary things that you receive that ask you to go and to do.

When I first got an answer to prayer sitting in a barracks in New Hampshire, if I hadn't acted on that, if I hadn'ta gone and done, I would never have beheld the Lord, much less been taught by Him. But I did—and I do. And whatever He asks of me, that's what I do now. And it doesn't matter how unpleasant I may find it or how reluctant in my heart I may be to go and do. I go, and I do.

You need to do that. May not even make much sense to you when you're going and you're doing. You may think you're giving offenses where you absolutely do not intend to do so. You may find the people that you love rejecting you, finding a new family and then having that family reject you again. I've laid it all on the line for the Lord, and I've done it twice now in a single lifetime. I can't tell you what sacrifices He may ask of you. But whatever He asks of you, that do you.

Let me end by bearing testimony and witness to you, that the things I've been saying (beginning in Boise and going on through Phoenix), the beginning date, the ending date, the content, the fact that there are ten of them, the timeframe in which they're being delivered, the fact that He wanted this to begin on the "first day of the 40th year," and He wanted this to end on the "last day of the 40th year"—those things are not my doing.

Hearken to the word of the Lord.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2014.07.25 Lecture 8: A Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit

July 25, 2014

Las Vegas, Nevada

All right, so, let's begin. I wanna remind you that when we were in Orem, we talked about priesthood, and I'd like you to keep in mind some of the material that was addressed in Orem as we proceed today.

Doctrine and Covenants section 84 has a description of events at the time of Moses, beginning at verse 19 of section 84:

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. (D&C 84:19-20)

And by the way, I should add (as a parenthetical thought), *the ordinances thereof* is far more expansive than simply a set of rites or rituals—because when the higher priesthood is present on the earth, everything that that higher priesthood does is done as an ordinance—because once it has been ordained by God to take place (and God's hand is behind what takes place), those events, under the direction of that priesthood, is **all** an ordinance, and therefore, within them you find the power of godliness.

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fullness of his glory. (ibid, vs. 21-24)

I remind you (we've talked about this before), *the glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth* (D&C 93:36; see also T&C 93:11), therefore, the "rest" is to be filled with His glory or, in other words, filled with Light and Truth—or to comprehend things that you do not at present comprehend without the **benefit** of the glory of God.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also. (ibid, vs. 25; see also T&C 82:12-14)

And thus, at that point ended the expectation anciently that there might be Zion.

Now, I want you to think about (because this is a topic that's going to recur throughout today) what the words mean: *...his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness.* And He did this in *His wrath*. We tend to think of God as very loving and benign after the sacrifice of Christ. And these words seem to be "Old Testament-like" and not "New Testament-like." But

understanding, hopefully (when we get through today), more about the nature of God's ire and God's approval... Disapproval from God feels terrible.

When we were looking at the reaction that people have (in the last day of judgment) to standing in the presence of a just and holy being and feeling awful, I pointed out to you that in that passage, God was doing nothing other than existing. But the disappointment in the mind of man is so exquisite that it is likened by Joseph Smith to a *lake of fire and brimstone*.

Therefore, God *in His wrath* has simply withdrawn. He's taken a step back because we're not suited to be in His presence. Therefore, having God withdraw is a matter of feeling **keenly** that absence, that rejection.

This incident is being described in modern revelation (in section 84), but the incident itself occurred back in the book of Exodus. This is Exodus chapter 20, beginning at verse 18:

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21; see also Exodus 12:14 RE)

They did not want to encounter Him, not because the presence of God is so terrible that it drives men from Him—because Moses approached Him—but because the evidence of His presence makes us internally evaluate **who** and **what** we are. And although we can lie to ourselves about how good we really are, when the measuring stick against which you compare yourself is God, all of us come short. Even when the Lord Himself testifies to you that your sins are forgiven, you still recognize that you fall short. To the extent that you have confidence in the presence of the Lord, it is wholly derivative from Him. He **has** to strengthen you because if He does not, all of us would retire in shame.

Doctrine and Covenants section 124 has a revelation given in January of 1841 to the saints (at that point in Nauvoo), offering something to the saints in that day that is relevant to the history that unfolded thereafter. Beginning at verse 28, the Lord says through Joseph:

For there is not a place...on earth that he ["He" here being the Lord, God—that he] may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. (see also T&C 141:10)

Skipping to verse 31:

But I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me... (D&C 124:31)
See, this commandment was unto everyone who at that point claimed to be a saint. All of them—every one of them—was put under the equal burden *to build a house unto me*.

...and I grant unto you [all of "you"] a sufficient time to build a house unto me; and during this time your baptisms shall be acceptable unto me. But behold, at the end of this appointment your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God. (ibid, vs. 31-32)

It's interesting that in verse 31, it says *your baptisms*, and in verse 32, it says *your baptisms for your dead*—which suggests that after verse 31, if we fail in verse 32, that our baptisms will continue to be acceptable, but our vicarious work would not, and the Church would then be rejected.

If you skip to 34, talking about this proposed temple to be constructed:

For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory... (ibid, vs. 34; see also T&C 141:11)

...*honor* being the promise from God into the afterlife, respecting what you can expect to receive from God as an oath and as a covenant; *glory* being intelligence—or knowledge and understanding, Light and Truth—things that were not comprehended but which God hoped to have the Saints, at that point, comprehend.

Well, He gives to us (in this same revelation) a measuring stick by which we can determine if we satisfy the requirements that the Lord has set forth. And the measuring stick is this, beginning in verse 44—well, verse 43, probably, we should begin:

And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it. (ibid, vs. 43)

So, they contemplated it, the Lord approved it, and this would become a spot where the Nauvoo temple was to be constructed.

If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place... (ibid, vs. 44-45, emphasis added; see also T&C 141:13)

...**they** being the people; **they** being those that He had chosen to lead them; **they** being, in this instance, the Prophet Joseph Smith and the one who would be appointed to receive priesthood and be appointed to hold the sealing power in this revelation, Hyrum Smith—the one who was designated to be the successor to Joseph Smith in the event

of Joseph's death, and the one whom the Lord would take first: Hyrum. Joseph died knowing that his successor had first fallen.

*If...then they shall not be moved out of their place. **But if** they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them. And it shall come to pass that **if** you build a house unto my name, and do not do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfill the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practice before me, saith the Lord. (ibid, vs. 45-58, emphasis added; see also T&C 141:14)*

So, if you get out the history and you look at the events that occurred between 1841 and the death of Joseph on June 27th of 1844—and you ask yourself whether or not the Saints went to and built the House that had been commanded and did it with the kind of dispatch and the timeframe that was allowed that allowed the House of the Lord to be constructed—and **if** you look at the history to find where it was that the Lord **came into that House** (because it was **Him** that was required in order to restore what had been lost; because it was **Him** that was required to be there in order to return the glory to the House of the Lord; because it was **Him** that would bestow upon the saints the fullness of the priesthood; because it was the **Lord, Himself**, that required a place at which He could meet with His people)—and then once Joseph and Hyrum were dead, if you look at the history of what occurred in Nauvoo and ask yourself, Were they blessed? Were they protected? Or did they experience (in the ordeals that drove them out of Nauvoo and into the wilderness, and the suffering that ensued there)... If, instead, you see *cursings, wrath, indignations, and judgments* upon the head of the saints, then **you** can reach a considered conclusion about whether or not we, in our day, mirror what happened at the time of Moses, and we, in our day (just as in the day of Moses) elected to say, "You—Joseph, Hyrum—**you** go talk to the Lord for us"—because when we consider the glory of the House of the Lord, it is no more desirable to us to go and ascend there as it was for those ancient Israelites to climb up the mountain (where there was thundering and lightnings and earthquakes underway).

Well, I'm going to make some assumptions for purposes of trying to get us back—back, able, and open—to consider some things about our present plight. I know that you think (some of you) that we **never** denied the idea of "continuing revelation" for even the members of the Church—and that there is some... There is some reason to draw a contrast between the ancient Israelites and ourselves, because we believe that **we** can receive revelation. But let me read you a quote (a quote that has been used in criticism of me with some regularity). Here's the quote; it's from Joseph Fielding Smith:

When revelation comes for the guidance of this people, you may be sure that it will not be presented in some mysterious manner, contrary to the order of the Church. It will go forth in such form that the people will understand that it comes from those who are **in authority**... It will not spring up in some distant part of the

Church and be in the hands of some obscure individual without authority.
(*Conference Report*, October 1918)

And so it is, that that quote is used to challenge **my** authority, to preach, teach, exhort, and expound. **If you want to lawyer this** (as some of those even who preside over the Church want to do), then I would remind all of those who hear or read this that: In the Church, the First Presidency has a quorum which is equal in authority with the First Presidency—and that is the Quorum of the Twelve. And there is a Quorum of Seventy, and that Quorum of Seventy forms a quorum equal in authority with the Twelve. And then there is the High Council that is established as a group equal in authority with the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency. And that all of those are considered to be equal in holding the "keys of the kingdom," to the extent that such a thing is claimed. And God, in His wisdom, saw fit (before I was thrown out) to call me into a quorum equal in authority with the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventy. But unlike them, I did not exercise control, dominion, and authority over another person so that the priesthood I hold could be regarded as having come to an end. "Amen" to the priesthood or the authority of those that exercise unrighteous dominion. And so, if you want to lawyer this, I can tell you, I hold the keys of the kingdom. But I don't lawyer it. And I make no such claim. You, on the other hand, get subjected to this kind of criticism and this kind of nonsense on a regular basis.

I have one and only one desire: to try to persuade you to believe in the Restoration through Joseph Smith. It is not and has never been completed. It is a work yet before us. It is a work largely neglected since the time Joseph and Hyrum breathed their last breath. The prophecies that were delivered to Joseph Smith, both by Christ in the First Vision and by Moroni on the night of the first visit (which we began this with in Boise, Idaho), are a rallying cry for us to rise up and lay hold upon things. It's a rallying cry—a prophecy—that does not fulfill itself. It gets fulfilled by what **you** do. Whether or not you **fulfill** those prophecies is dependent upon whether you will, like the ancient Israelites, elect not to go up. Or whether you—like Moses, like Joseph, like Hyrum—choose instead to forsake your sins and to move forward, even in the face of your own weakness and unworthiness. There isn't one of us in this room that should not kneel before the presence of a just and holy being. There isn't one of us who, if instructed to stand before Him, would not keenly feel the inadequacy of doing so—not one of us. But there are some here who have been in His presence, myself included.

You don't read my email (...it's probably a good thing, because if you did, you'd be overwhelmed at the insults that come in). But among all those emails, I can tell you that there are a number who have borne testimony that since reading the book *The Second Comforter* and since taking seriously the promises that are made through Joseph and in the Scriptures, there are a number who, like me, have a witness of our resurrected Lord. It can and it does happen. And hopefully, as we get through this material today, you'll have confidence in your own ability to rise up.

Let's make some assumptions for purposes of what's going to be said. Let's assume that we are like ancient Israel. Let's assume that we too were left outside of God's

presence when He offered to come and dwell generally among the Saints back in Nauvoo. Let's assume that this was not what God wanted for us.

Let's assume that these things have, just like they did anciently, kindled God's anger, like we read in D&C 84:24. Let's assume that we have now—as a body, generally—been left with something lesser, which is like what was described in D&C 84, verse 26; that is, only the lesser priesthood, which includes within it the ministering of angels.

Well, assuming all of that, what shall we do? Well, turn to Alma chapter 12 (a great chapter, by the way). And since this is already taking longer than I had hoped, I'm gonna insert in the ~~transcript~~ [paper] the verses in Alma chapter 12, between 9 and 11, that talks about, "if you harden your hearts, you get less; but if your heart is soft and open, you get more" (see also Alma 9:3 RE).

You're the regulator that determines whether, on the one hand, you get more or whether, on the other, you get less. And some of those who have come today with a hard heart are gonna find themselves being condemned in the day of judgment, because you were given an opportunity to have a soft heart, and you elected knowingly not to do so. Can you imagine your shame when you, in a council that includes those who are present today, come back from this experience and say, "Yes, I was there, but I didn't believe. Yes, I was there, but I wouldn't accept it." None of us would vote to sustain you in the coming years, in the coming eons, in the coming experience to be a minister, to bring salvation to pass to others. None of us will have confidence in you. Soften your heart now. Today is the day of salvation. This is the moment you came down here to face. The test is on; the challenge is in front of you. You better have ears to hear. God will judge you, but more importantly, you will judge yourself.

Well, skipping then over verses 9 to 11, I'm gonna go to... Beginning at verse 28:

*And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should **know** concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto **them**. (Alma 12:28, emphasis added)*

He **wants** us to know! The glory of God is intelligence or, in other words, Light and Truth, which is knowledge of things. He wants us to know these things.

*Therefore [because **this is God's desire**] he sent angels to converse with them, who [this is the angels] caused men to behold...his [God's] glory. (ibid, vs. 29, emphasis added)*

So, the office of the angels is to educate and to prepare—and then to cause man, who receive and entertain the angels, to then behold the glory of God (the glory of God being intelligence or, in other words, Light and Truth).

Ultimately, the greatest truth **is** God Himself. And if you entertain angels (and if the angels instruct you and if you have been in their presence), you acquire from them the

strength, the fortification, the knowledge—or in other words, the ordination—by which you're able to go on and pass by them (because they surely are sentinels) and enter into the Glory of the Lord. And so, if you will give heed to the process, it really should not matter that you are left in a dispensation in which the only authority gives you the ministering of angels. Because the ministering of angels is sufficient to bring you into the glory of God—if you will receive them, **if** you will give heed to them. That's the office of **their** ministry; that's what they're responsible to do.

*And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore **God conversed with men.*** (ibid, vs. 30, emphasis added; see also Alma 9:7 RE)

It's part of the title to the first book I wrote, [*The Second Comforter:*] *Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil.* That's the object; that's what the "lesser priesthood" can equip you to accomplish—left behind with nothing but a relic...

And what did Joseph say about all the prophets of the Old Testament? He said they **all** held Melchizedek Priesthood, and they were **all** ordained by God Himself because they functioned inside a society that was defective, limited, excluded from the presence of God. But **not those who received and entertained angels.** They were brought up to where they need to be, and **God Himself ordained them.** Should you not have hope? Should you not rise up above the level of those who are content to have less? Should you not be willing to mount up on that fiery mountain, despite the thunderings and lightnings, despite the earthquakes, despite the fact you do not believe yourself to be worthy? You're still capable of coming aboard.

Look at Moroni chapter 7, beginning at verse 29:

*Because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, **Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.** For behold, they [the angels] are subject unto **him**, to minister according to the word of **his command**, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men [to] repentance [repentance], ...to fulfill and to do the work of the **covenants of the Father...*** (Moroni 7:29-31, emphasis added)

...because when you move **from** repentance, you move **into** covenants (which is why we needed to speak about that in Centerville; which is why **this** process has been undergoing for the last year, unfolding **how you get back into the presence of God**—because it surely is necessary for there to be a rescue mission, and the rescue mission is designed to raise **you**, to elevate **you**, to redeem **you**).

*...the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in **their** hearts,*

*according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the **covenants** which he hath made unto the children of men. (ibid, vs. 31-32, emphasis added; see also Moroni 7:6 RE)*

In a word, those who receive and entertain angels have an obligation, then, to declare the words so that others might likewise have faith in Him. That word, having been declared unto you, gives you the hope, the faith, the confidence that you likewise can do so—so that the covenants that are made by the Father can be brought to pass. Fortunately—fortunately... Aaronic Priesthood is exceptionally durable, fortunately, unlike Melchizedek Priesthood (which can only be exercised with extraordinary care and delicacy—the purpose of Melchizedek Priesthood being, as I talked about in Orem, to bless; the purpose of Aaronic Priesthood being to condemn, and to judge, and to set a law by which men can condemn themselves). Having the authority to do **that** to yourself is remarkably durable and used with great regularity. And those that have it generally abide by so lesser a law that they wind up judging and condemning one another and parading before God as a... as a... a march of fools, yelling and yammering, pointing and blaming, complaining and bitching about what everyone else's inadequacies are. The purpose of Melchizedek Priesthood is to sound the signal: "Know ye the Lord." And eventually, that sermon will be heard by enough that there will be none left who need to be told, "Know ye the Lord," for they shall **all** know Him. And **everyone** will take up with Him their concerns and not with one another.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 93, and look at verse 1. I've treated this at some length in what I've written, but I just wanna read it because it outlines what's required:

*VERILY, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know [**know**] that I am. (See also T&C 93:1)*

Knowing the Lord! *This is life eternal to **know** thee, the only wise and true God and...Christ, whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3, emphasis added; see also John 9:19 RE). Knowledge; knowledge of the things of God—and in this context, this knowledge **is** salvation; this knowledge **is** the fullness of the Gospel. Forsake your sins; come to Christ; call on His name; obey His voice; keep His commandments. "Obey His voice," in your instance, may be very different than "obeying His voice" in my life, because your circumstances are entirely peculiar to you. You're living your life, and I'm living mine. You're asked to minister in **your** family, to minister in **your** neighborhood, to function among **your** friends, to deal with people that **you** know. And I, on the other hand, am required not only to do **that** but also to come and talk to you good people (which, whether you believe me sincere or not, I would much rather not have been asked to do—but apparently, in the economy of God, no one else is willing to do it).

Go to Ether chapter 3. I wanna define what the promise of *know[ing] that I am...* (And by the way, those are the words that He uses in section 93: *know that I am*. You need to know "the I am.") Verse 13 of Ether chapter 3:

*And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall [there's the definition; that's what redemption is]; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you. Behold, **I am** he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, **I am** Jesus Christ. **I am** the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters. (Ether 3:13-14, emphasis added)*

This is the definition. This is what the promise means. And then, look what happens. In verse 18:

*And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might **know** that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord...showed unto him. (ibid, vs. 18, emphasis added)*

This is the definition of the glory of God. This is the definition of Light and Truth: to know these things... to know these things about God.

*And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had **faith** no longer, for he **knew**, nothing doubting. (ibid, vs. 19, emphasis added; see also Ether 1:13-14 RE)*

He had faith yet in things he was commanded to do because they had not yet happened. But he no longer had faith in the existence of Christ—that had been replaced by knowledge of Him. Knowledge supplants faith.

We looked at John's testimony in Doctrine and Covenants section 93, and we need to look at that again, just to remind you—because this is an important reminder before we get to the next point. Between section 93, verse 7 and verse 20, he describes the process by which Christ was called to be the Son of God. I wanna skip to verse 12.

*I, John, saw that he received not...the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace; And he received not...the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; And thus he was **called** the Son of God, because he received not...the fulness at the first. And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, ...sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; ...he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was **with** him, for he **dwelt** in him. And it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John. I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know **how** to worship,*

*and [to] know **what** you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, [that] **you shall receive grace for grace.*** (D&C 93:12-20, emphasis added; see also T&C 93:4-7)

That's what **you** do to worship! That is how **you** are to worship! We grow in grace as we exhibit the grace that has been given unto us. And we do so in order for us to obtain, likewise, the fullness.

Now, here's a sober moment that I want to remind **you** about, which **need not continue**. Go to Ether chapter 12. This is Moroni as he's completing the translation of the record that his father said would be included within his father's book, the Book of Mormon, but his father did not translate—and so Moroni translated and included it within the Book of Mormon. And as he's wrapping up his translation, he includes a dialogue. It's a very sobering dialogue in Ether chapter 12, beginning at verse 36:

And it came to pass that I prayed [this is I, Moroni, the translator; this isn't Ether. This is Moroni's interlude—I prayed] unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles. (Ether 12:36-38)

Did you see what just happened? Moroni begged the Lord to give unto the Gentiles grace. And the Lord says, "It doesn't matter to you." He **did not** give Moroni what he asked for! He **did not** promise the Gentiles would receive grace! The Lord **could not** do that, because it would abrogate both the law (grace for grace) and our agency (because we are free to choose). Therefore, the Gentiles inherited the Restoration with no promise from Christ to Moroni that those who would receive this record would be given the grace of God. That is dependent upon you.

And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment—seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. ...then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he ha[s] talked with me face to face, and that [he's] told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things. (ibid, vs.38-39)

This is that Lord who, when you get past the thunderings and the lightnings, you will speak with. He talks in plain humility. It is not His position to cause fear in your heart but to bring to you comfort. His purpose is not to leave you comfortless but to come and to comfort you. It's **you** that presents the barrier. It's **you** that presents the fear—and that

rightly so, because we ought to fear. But what we should fear is our own weakness and our own sins. Because our greatest sin is our ignorance.

And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. And now, I would commend you [this is Moroni commending you, the Gentiles, who are gonna receive this book. I would commend you] to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also...Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. (ibid, vs. 40-41; see also Ether 5:7-8 RE)

He asked for grace to be given. God cannot give it. Then he turns, and he says, "You Gentiles, please, seek for His grace; it cannot otherwise be given you." The Book of Mormon's assessment of us is sober indeed. And the arrogance with which we read that book blinds us to the predicament in which we find ourselves.

The plea: "seek for grace." It is through grace that we obtain charity. It is through charity we're able to bless others. Because the fact of the matter is you can't bless anyone (nor hold that priesthood that is primarily designed to administer blessings and not cursings) unless you have charity for others, unless you are willing to do things you would rather not do, unless you are willing to subordinate your will to the will of the Father. Because it is the purpose of the Father to bless all of His offspring. Therefore, it is only through grace you acquire what you need to be of use to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

God will make a general appearance to judge the world. You need to seek Him **beforehand** so that you can rejoice at His appearing. Look at Doctrine and Covenants section 38. Here's where He promises His general appearing: *But behold, verily, verily...* This is verse 7 and 8 of D&C section 38:

But behold, verily, verily, I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and ye cannot see me; But the day soon cometh that ye shall see me, and know that I am; for the veil of darkness shall soon be rent, and he that is not purified shall not abide the day. (See also T&C 22:3)

We all will see Him—and some will survive, but some others will not abide the day. But all will know Him. He is coming. You will see Him, but you must be prepared in order to do so.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 67, beginning at verse 10:

And again, verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears...

See, on the one hand, *jealousies*—because we just hate it when someone has anything more than we have. And we ought not be envious; we ought to rejoice in whatever it is that someone else has been given by the Spirit. We tend to be contentious, even in the

blessings that we get. We have to strip ourselves from that. And *fears*, because fear... There really are, in the end, only two emotions: one is love, and the other is fear. And everything that derives from fear is negative, ultimately devolving into hatred. But its foundation is fear. And on the other hand, there is love. If you look at the Plan and the squabble in the pre-existence, it was fear that motivated the rebellion. It was fear that motivated the adversary to become the accuser of the brethren and to shout this whole thing down. And it is jealousy that motivates the success that anyone achieves in this life if they happen to repent. Because he seeks the misery of all mankind, that they might be like unto him (see 2 Nephi 2:18; see also 2 Nephi 1:9 RE). Strip yourselves of jealousies and fears. (Here in the greater Las Vegas city, they do strip themselves, but it's not jealousies and fears.)

...and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble [ooh... we're going to have to look at this very carefully in the verses that we consider after this, you're not sufficiently humble], the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am [God]—not with the carnal neither [the] natural mind, but with the spiritual. For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit... Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God, neither after the carnal mind. Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected. Let not your minds turn back; and when ye are worthy, in mine own due time, ye shall see and know that which was conferred upon you by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith. (D&C 67:10-14, emphasis added; see also T&C 56:3)

Joseph Smith may have left, and he may have taken authority with him, but he laid hands upon people, and he conferred upon them the blessings of the priesthood. He could not give to them the priesthood itself, but he could confer upon them the blessings of the priesthood, and that persisted for some considerable time.

The Aaronic Priesthood got passed along. The Aaronic Priesthood functions. The Aaronic Priesthood is around (at least until rebellion ends it). But Melchizedek Priesthood is something by order of magnitude that is much greater.

No man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit (ibid) is further elaborated upon in the Book of Moses chapter 1, verses 14 and 15. (I'm not gonna go there. I'll put it into the transcript [paper].) But the fact of the matter is: One of the keys for being able to distinguish between an appearance of the Lord and the appearance of the adversary is that the adversary may come clothed in white and the adversary may appear to be an angel, but it does not require your transfiguration in order to be in his presence. But on the other hand, in order to be in the presence of God, it requires an alteration in the natural man. Which is why when Paul comes back, he says, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I don't know" (see 2 Corinthians 12:2; see also 2 Corinthians 1:41 RE). It is as real, it is as physical, it is as tangible as the podium. However, the alteration of the man makes what **was** physical cease to be the same as it was before. I'll elaborate on that in the transcript [paper]. Look...

- *Strip yourselves [of] jealousies and fears.*
- *Humble yourselves before me.*
- *[You're] not sufficiently humble.*

Let's learn from their failure! Let's not repeat it! Why do we need to keep plowing the same line over and over, through the same rocky soil, when no fruit has ever yielded from that particular furrow? Strip yourselves! Don't envy those who sit in the chief seats. They're rather to be pitied. Gain your own grace with God as Moroni asked you to do. God alone decides when, where, and how He will reveal Himself to you.

Look at D&C 88, verse 68:

Therefore, sanctify yourselves...

You have to rise up to accomplish that. Sanctify yourselves by your stripping of jealousies and envies, by your humility before Him. That "sanctifies yourself" because you become disconnected from this place.

...that your minds become single to God...

...single to God, meaning that He occupies a place of priority in which He is central to you. Not that you neglect your family; you can't do that. Not that you neglect your labors; you cannot do that. When we talk about families and marriage tomorrow in St. George, you find out just how central **that** is to all of this. But we needed to lay all **this** out before we finally get to the topic of family and marriage. If you've not noticed, these lectures come in incremental levels of holiness. Therefore, marriage gets left until we get further down. Coming to know the Lord and becoming a suitable spouse are interrelated.

*Sanctify yourselves that your [mind] become single to God, and the days **will** come [when] you **shall** see him; for he **will** unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.* (emphasis added; see also T&C 86:12)

He is in charge. We don't dictate this. We prepare, and then we wait. We prepare, and we do everything we know to get ready for it, but He surely will come. And when He comes, He comes **suddenly** to His temple, which temple ye are. He will come to you. Have faith! Be believing! Seek for Him! This is that day in which these things need to happen.

So that we touch everything, we need to go to the book of John chapter 14—two verses. Chapter 14, verse 18, the Lord says: *I will not leave you comfortless: **I will come to you.*** This is Christ talking to the Apostles about what He intends to do on the other side of his death, burial, and resurrection. He's saying, "I'm not gonna leave you comfortless; I will come to you!" And then verse 23: *Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will*****

come unto him, and make our abode with him (emphasis added; see also John 9:8 RE). Christ is saying that's the intention.

And so that we can have the definition given through Joseph, go to Doctrine and Covenants section 130 discussing this verse. D&C 130, verse 3:

John 14:23—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false.

The promise was designed to have this actually happen. This is why Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verse 1 says what it says. This is what the fullness of the Gospel consists of. You can take all your rights and ordinances, you can take all your abidingly deep mysteries—Adam God and the topography of Kolob and...

And by the way, that whole thing about Kolob is so mangled! Kolob was a star. Kolob was a star within sight. From the vantage point of the earth, which is the entire astronomy revealed to father Abraham... It's entirely earth-based, looking upward. From the vantage point of the earth, looking up at that day—because the precession of the equinoxes changes the alignment of the stars, okay?—Kolob was a star. Abraham knew the name of the star. God said to Abraham, "You see that star? From where you sit, looking there..." It's like saying, "Okay, from where my thumb is, looking that way, Shay is sitting by my thumb." That doesn't mean Shay is on my thumb! He's some considerable distance from my thumb! K? "Tim is in the direction of my index finger." He's not on my index finger! He's some considerable distance there away from. **That's** the direction. So, if you know the typography of Kolob, you still don't know where God resides. Because where He resides is in a place hidden in the North. If I were telling you where the throne of God is today... I could tell you that, but I would use a different star. Because in our day, it has a different name. And in our day, it has a slightly different alignment because of the precession of the equinoxes. He's out there, but He's in a place that is hidden in the North. And it will require the heavens to be rolled to like a scroll before you finally see past the veils that prevent us from seeing it.

But by that time, if you're unprepared, it's too late. Because the glory will be such that you cannot abide it. And when the Lord appears, preliminary to the rolling together of the scrolls, He will appear in a hole that is unveiled, in which the glory of God in His return is behind Him, along with concourses of angels.

(I hate this, because I'm just getting ready to change subjects. And so, now, here we are....)

Now, if you can discover what that alignment is and you can figure out where the Throne of God, that's up to you. I've been given no such either obligation or permission. But I can tell you, there is a location. God exists. And Abraham was walked through the geography of heaven, reckoned from the vantage point or viewpoint of the earth. And when you leave here, one of the obligations that you have is to find your way back. And in finding your way back, you need to be able to avoid those who seek to bring you back

into captivity. Because if you're brought back into captivity, you may find yourself, oh, in a Telesstial kingdom or "the world in which you presently reside," as the [LDS] temple endowment puts it. And that's a rather unpleasant thing to think about. You may find yourself in a casino in Las Vegas, talking about things that **really** matter, in the presence of a place in which such things are not at all treasured.

But I have to tell you, some of the people that are driven—in desperation—to try and improve their circumstances (that are sitting downstairs), if ministered to in a kindly way, some of those people have a heart that is better prepared for receiving the truth, more tender and poignant because of the circumstances of their life, than are the hearts of many of us—who, in our plenty and in our conceit about our own goodness, think ourselves better than them, when the truth of the matter is, more than anything else, it is our humility that qualifies us. More than anything else, it is our sincere apprehension of just how weak, how vulnerable, how easily distracted we are.

(I need to have them change the disks. Like I said before, we're only gonna take a short break; so, if you have business to do, go conduct it. Thank you.)

In this next increment, I wanna remind you that the account that we're reading (in the record of Ether) occurred **before** Christ came. Christ was an expectancy in the future; He was not a historical figure from the past. Okay? The faith that is being exhibited by the brother of Jared in this account is faith in an unfulfilled future-expectancy. If you think that you have a thin basis for faith in Christ because you didn't live at the time He did, think about how difficult it would be to have confidence in this Redeemer whose life was still future. The details of the date and time of His birth were unknown. The circumstances of Him coming into mortality, the ministry and the sermons that He delivered, the sacrifices and the healings that He made during mortality, the temptations that He faced, the dilemmas that He confronted—all of which are testified of concerning Him **now**—none of that was known at the time of the book of Ether being composed.

You have greater evidence. **You** have a greater testimony in front of you concerning Christ than did this man. **You** have greater reason to **believe** in Christ than did this man. **You** have far more witnesses and justification for having confidence in the promises of Christ. **You**, unlike him, have the New Testament; you have the Book of Mormon, including **his** record in front of you. **You** have Joseph Smith's revelations and Joseph Smith's testimony. **You** have the temple rites, with their ceremonial depiction of the return back into the presence of the Lord through the veil. **You** have restored again to you, partially, the book of Enoch in the Pearl of Great Price. **You** have restored to you a far more complete account of Abraham's testimony in the Pearl of Great Price. And you have a great deal more of the corrected and elaborated-upon words of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price. Therefore, when you read this third chapter of the book of Ether, you should recognize that you come to this challenge with a significantly greater collection of advantages (**if you will receive them and use them in that fashion**) than the one who composed the record that Moroni abridges here. Okay? Keep all of that in mind.

You should be able to muster "like-faith." Look at what it says will happen if you do that. We're gonna turn over to Ether chapter 4. And this is a dialogue between Moroni and the Lord as he's doing his translation and abridgment of this record. And in verse 7:

And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of...heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are. (See also Ether 1:17 RE)

This doesn't promise you that you'll receive the record of the brother of Jared. This promises you that what you're going to receive is: *I will manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations*, [and then I should probably read this again the way I would punctuate it, to be consistent with what I said last time] *saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father of...heavens and of the earth.*

Well, so, we're going to look at Ether chapter 3. Remarkably, remarkably, the very first verse gives us something of interest. I'm gonna begin about halfway through the first verse of Ether chapter 3, where it says that he (the brother of Jared)...

...did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass; and he did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount, and cried again unto the Lord, saying... (Ether 3:1)

So, I did an experiment yesterday while we were walking. And I picked up not 16, but 20. And I figured out what it would take in order to carry 20 small stones in my hand to the top of the mountain, and I'm able to do it. I have 20 stones in my hand. We turn them into like, well, we... Painters and fanciful folk who want to do such things, they turn them into these egg-shaped crystal balls. When's the last time you came in from the refrigerator in the garage into the kitchen and carried 16 eggs in your two hands? How would you get up the mountain with those in your hands? Okay? They were not behemoths; they were *small* things.

But even more interesting is what I just read to you. He takes them to the *top of the mount[ain], and cried again unto the Lord*. This is the tenth time in the record of the brother of Jared in which he **cries** unto the Lord. Throughout the record of the brother of Jared, never once does the word "pray/prayer" appear. When the voice of Moroni emerges into the narrative, the word "prayed" appears in Mōrmōn's [Moroni's] aside, but in the record of the brother of Jared, he does not ever use the word "pray" or "prayer." He *cried*.

Consider, for a moment, the difference between being someone who prays to God and someone who cries unto God. Consider the position in which the petitioner has

voluntarily placed himself when, instead of coming in prayer, he comes rather "crying out" unto the Lord.

Keep that word in mind. Eleven times it's mentioned in the book of Ether in the account that's dealing with the brother of Jared. The only time the word "prayer" appears is in the interlude. That's the way you can know that Moroni is abridging a record that belongs to someone else. Because he doesn't use the same word as the person whose record he's abridging. He uses "prayer"—one time.

This is what he cried out:

*O Lord, thou hast said that we **must** be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant... (ibid, vs. 2, emphasis added)*

Crying, asking Him not to be angry, reducing himself to being merely a servant.

...because of his weakness before thee (ibid).

What is this man's attitude? How is this man approaching the throne of God? What does he view himself as? How does he regard God? Why does this man have such faith? Why does this man attract the attention of God? Why is God willing to speak to such a man, such a vessel as this? What is it about this, this attitude that this man possesses that tells you his heart is right before God?

He is willing to receive. Some of you fear your own weakness. You are closer to God than those who are self-confident, proud of your understanding, and think yourselves better than others.

...for we know that thou art holy [this is the contrast: my weakness/your Holiness] and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires. (ibid)

"I'm doing what you asked because you commanded me. I don't think myself qualified, but I'm obeying what you told me to do." This is the attitude of the man. This is what the heart of the man reflects. And these words are why he **cries** to God.

Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock. (ibid, vs. 3; see also Ether 1:11 RE)

There is no pride here. There is no resentment for being chastened. There is acceptance of the chastening hand of God. There is no proclamation that this man is worthy. Quite the opposite, he says he is unworthy. There is no resentment for having been punished. It is the opposite—he recognizes that every stumble along the way is justified, is reasonable, is earned, was appropriate because God, who cares for His children, upbraids and disciplines His children.

I have a daughter who has more energy than, um, than she ought. And having finished her undergraduate as a Phi Beta Kappa (again, the product of her energy), she came home and needed a project. And there weren't enough projects, so she became a foster parent for the Humane Society. And she brought home a big dog, who we all suspected that this guy was pretty intelligent, but man, was that dog stubborn—a very likable, very pretty animal, but stubborn. And he got adopted 'cause he's photogenic.

Then she brought home a female dog, and this female dog was totally... I mean, I think we should have named her "Tasmanian Devil," but her name was Blue. She's a Blue Heeler, and so she has all the attributes of a Blue Heeler (which, really—they do not bite the heels of cattle; they herd cattle; they open their mouths, and they hit with their teeth the heels of the cattle, in order to herd them around).

And she had all of the psychological makeup that's required in order to engage in that hazardous line of occupation. And this dog, bless its heart, was **so eager** to please. Disciplining her was simple; you just had to indicate you weren't happy, and oh, it about killed the poor animal. But she's **so full of energy** that she couldn't help but drag the mulch bag out in the middle of the lawn and reduce it to shreds, and engage in excavation projects to find out exactly "how was the sprinkler system really put together, and do you **really** needed a valve in that location? And by the way, what would that valve taste like?"

I mean, when she finds out that we don't **like** that behavior, oh, she was so apologetic—and I could not bring myself to do anything other than (by the voice) to say, "What are you doing?" And she responded to tone of voice, and oh, she was on her back, "You have to love me still! Please, please, you have to love me still! Right? You do love me?"

That dog reminded me of the relationship which the brother of Jared recognize exists between even the best-intentioned of us and God. We don't know enough to be "good" in His sight. We aren't intelligent enough. We think that some pseudo-virtues that arise out of our culture are good indeed when, in fact, that behavior on display in the halls of heaven would be deeply offensive. And some of the things that we think are offensive to God are not at all. Not at all! And so, our righteousness at best is pseudo-righteousness. And much of what we feel guilty about was given to us in order to give us an experience down here. And it will not last past the resurrection.

Included within the experience of the brother of Jared (as you read verse 3 of chapter 3), is the events that originally separated them from their fellow man at the tower of Babel. Mankind had been engaged in inordinate wickedness, and he doesn't distinguish

between what they had done and what the residue of people had done in their migration. I also want you to notice that nowhere in this verse 3 is there anything like the proud descendants of Nauvoo here. There is nothing that claims that they are chosen or that they are worthy of something other than chastening. There is none of that.

Turn back to Doctrine and Covenants section 121. This is a letter Joseph composed while he was in the Liberty Jail. Mind you, the Liberty Jail... He had been there, suffering, through wintertime; it was now in the spring, when Joseph had no date in mind in which he would go free—or even if he **would** go free—or whether the original order of execution would be carried out, even though he'd been kept in jail for many years without it having been carried out. In these circumstances, verse 7 and 8 of D&C 121: *My son...* (that alone ought to be reassuring to Joseph, of course):

My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a...moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes. (See also T&C 138:11)

Endure it well! Joseph, in the extremity of Liberty Jail being told, *endure it well*. You think you have challenges, you think you have difficulties, you think you face dilemmas in your life? Endure it well. Your adversity and your afflictions are gonna be for a small moment, and then, if you endure it well, something better is going to come.

And then, as if it weren't enough reason, turn to 122, verse 8:

The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? (See also T&C 139:8)

If you think that your burdens that you carry are great, remember the burdens that were carried by the Son. He faced burdens that were inordinately greater than yours. All of us should be tested to our limits. All of us should be "proven" by the experiences that we endure. The only way to test some things is to destroy them. The only way to test you through mortality is to cause mortality itself—with the eventual coming of death. That's the way it works.

Look at verse 4 of Ether chapter 3.

And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea. Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men. (Ether 3:4-5)

He's not asking for this in order to have a light show. He's asking for this out of pity and concern, charity and intercession for others who will be left in the dark. He is trying to do

something to bless and benefit others in a very practical way. He hopes to make the lives of others better. He's not doing this for himself. He's doing it on behalf of his people.

Therein also lies something very important about the attitude of this man that tells you why it is that God had **respect** for this man.

Think about what it means to have the power of God. Think about what it means for God to be able to do all things, including sustaining you from moment to moment by lending you breath. And then for God to say you are free to choose to do with what He's lending to you whatever it is that **you** choose to do. Think of the patience of our God. Think of the meekness of our God. And think about the test that you are presently taking to prove who and what you are and whether or not, in the circumstances of this test, **you** are proving that **you** can be trusted to have the meekness, to have the patience, to endure in humility what will be done, to endure the abuses that God allows to take place in order to permit His children to gain experience so that, in the long run, they can ultimately know the difference between good and evil and, on their own, **choose** to love the good and to stay away from the evil.

Think about that. And think about this record, and think about the test that is currently underway. And think about what it is that you, in your life, should be choosing and doing, desiring and holding to your breast.

And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. (ibid, vs. 6)

Now, I wanna pause—because the only thing that the brother of Jared ever sees at this point, the only thing that comes... The Lord may stretch forth His hand, but the only thing that is seen is His finger, okay?

It's not... I mean... I really love Catherine Thomas. I love her books; I own them; I've read them; and I like what she did with the brother of Jared at the veil. But it's simply based upon a fanciful connection between the dialogue at the veil in the temple ceremony and this incident here.

But the hand of God never emerges. What emerges (and you can read it—it's in this verse 6; it's again in verse 9)... The Lord asks him, "Did you see more than this?" He says, "No, it's the finger." However, I put one of the stones in my hand. Let's assume for a moment that I have eight and eight. Okay? And let's assume that you touch it. It's impossible to touch the stone that's in your hand without **feeling** that the stone has been touched. Okay?

We read this record, and we don't notice what's really going on. Here they are, in my hands, eight and eight, and the finger of the Lord touches the stones one by one with His finger. Now, there is nothing in this record that suggests that after the last stone gets

touched (or after the stone the Lord was touching at the moment that the finger is seen) that there are any more stones left to be touched. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. This record, read in fairness, suggests to me that the brother of Jared stood there and witnessed 15 of the 16 stones—felt the touch on 15 of the 16 stones—before, on the last stone, he saw the finger of the Lord. Think about that for a moment. Think about coming into contact, admittedly through a stone, but coming into contact with the Lord when He manifests Himself for the first time to man **physically**. Think about that.

And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood...
(ibid)

That's the way in which the Lord chose to manifest Himself, because He came into contact with 16 stones.

...and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him: Arise, why hast thou fallen? And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared... (ibid, vs. 6-8)

(Hello? Can you hear me? Yeah.)

I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood. (ibid)

It frightened him to realize that the God who controls all things had flesh and blood. This was a great secret that ought not get out, and now he knows it. And knowing it, it frightened him. He's intruding into space that he didn't want to intrude into, and he felt convicted that somehow that was something he ought not know.

The Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this? (ibid, vs. 9)

...my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

And he answered: Nay... (ibid, vs. 10)

He didn't see the hand—he saw the finger, and he didn't see more than this.

Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me. And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak? (ibid, vs. 10-11)

This is a necessary prerequisite, because what the Lord is about to speak to him **will be covenantal**. When it comes to prophecy, covenants, commitments by God—what He's about to do requires that the brother of Jared have faith in what's going to happen. He's gonna show him "all things."

*...he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. ...I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and...daughters. And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that **ye** are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning **after mine own image**. Behold, this **body**, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear [to] thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the [same] likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. (ibid, vs. 12-17, emphasis added; see also Ether 1:11-14 RE)*

So, what was the body Jesus showed Himself unto the Nephites in? What is the difference between water as a solid, water as a liquid, and water as a gas? The difference between that, if you want to take a scriptural word, is "temperature" (excuse me, that's a **scientific** word)—scriptural word is "quickened." In one condition, it is quickened; in another condition, it is less quick. But in science, the difference between the two is "temperature."

God dwells in everlasting burnings. In order to be with or near Him, a man must be "quickened" in order to endure the presence. Does that mean that in a quickened state it is impossible for a quickened being to manifest itself in a solid form? Well, take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 131, verse 7. *There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter.*

Doctrine and Covenants section 77:2 includes the statement: *...that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; ...that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual* (see also T&C 74:2).

D&C 88, verses 15 to 16: *...the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul* (see also T&C 86:2). This

definition was given by revelation to Joseph Smith in 1832. Three years later in 1835, Chandler came through and sold the mummies to Joseph Smith. He did not bother translating the end part of the book of Abraham, as we have it, until the 1840s in Kirtland (or excuse me, in Nauvoo). But when he translated it in Nauvoo, he knew the definition of what a "soul" was, that is, *[a] spirit and [a] body*. When he translated the book of Abraham... In Abraham chapter 3, verse 23, speaking of those in the pre-existence, he says: *God saw these **souls** that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These [will I] make my rulers; for he stood among those **that were spirits*** (see also Abraham 6:1 RE). They were **souls**—possessing, therefore, a spirit and a body. And they were **spirits** because they had not come down yet in the beginning to be in **this** condition. And it's speaking about *the noble and great* (ibid).

By the way, I talked before about the definition of "rulers" in the Gentile world, and that's someone who exercises authority over them. In the vernacular of both the Book of Mormon and in the vernacular found here, "rulers" in the house of God have nothing to do with dominion over someone else. A "ruler" is someone who teaches. A ruler is someone who is able to give an accurate gauge by which to measure things. A ruler is someone who teaches the truth. If you would want to be a ruler in the house of God, then you have to be someone who declares and teaches the truth.

Take a look at Alma chapter 13—because this is where it becomes very important for **us**. Alma chapter 13, beginning at verse 17:

*Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had **all** gone astray; they were **full** of all manner of wickedness [**this is his audience**]. But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, ...received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they **did** repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father. (emphasis added; see also Alma 10:2 RE)*

First, he received this priesthood. Second, he preached repentance. But nothing would have happened except for, third, the people who heard him **did** repent. And because of that, people who are described as having *waxed strong in iniquity*, people who are described as being captivated by *abomination[s]*, people who have **all gone astray** turned out to be the very people among whom this City of Peace got established. But **they** did it. They did it by **repentance**. This isn't something Melchizedek pulled off, this is something that the **people** accomplished, and they accomplished it because of **their repentance**.

I want you to contrast that with another group. This group is in Mosiah chapter 12. Mosiah chapter 12, beginning halfway through verse 12. This is people reacting to the message that Abinadi was delivering to them. They're accusing Abinadi, and they're saying:

And he [Abinadi] pretendeth the Lord hath spoken it. And he saith all this shall come upon thee except thou repent, and this because of thine iniquities. And now, O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged [by] this man? ...now, O king, behold, we are guiltless, and thou, O king, hast not sinned; therefore, this man has lied concerning you, and he has prophesied in vain. ...behold, we are strong, we shall not come into bondage, or [being] taken captive by our enemies; yea, and thou hast prospered in the land, and thou shalt also prosper. (Mosiah 12:12-15; see also Mosiah 7:14-15 RE)

Here is the pride, here is the vanity, here is the very thing which, had the people to whom Melchizedek spoken, had they done this, there would have been no City of Peace, there would have been no Salem, there would have been no second Zion.

You generally hail from a tradition that assures you that you're in the right way. You generally come from a tradition that says you're better than others. You are able to look down your nose at other people who stumble about in the dark because they don't have all the great truths that you have. The fact of the matter is **you** (generally, not specifically, because there are some to whom this absolutely does not apply—your hearts are right before God—but there aren't many)...

You have been handed this tradition, and the wicked one cometh, and he takes away Light and Truth, and he does it because of the false traditions you've been handed. The greatest among us is wholly inadequate. The greatest among us can't be trusted with the power of God, not yet anyway. The greatest among us is still in need of repentance. Every one of us should walk fearfully before God, not because God isn't generous, but because what He offers can turn you into a devil. The only way to be prepared and not fall is to realize the enormous peril that **you** present, potentially, to the universe. Before you get in a position to enjoy the status that God offers to us all, you need to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, exactly like Paul said. You need to purge, remove, reprove.

This attitude we see in this man in this account, this **is** the man of God! Christ may be the prototype of the saved man, but I know of no record anywhere in scripture that exposes the heart of the real disciple of Christ as well as does this chapter expose the heart of this man. **This** is what we should become. **This** is why the Lord could open up to him. This is why this man became, in the history of the world, coming up to this moment—despite the fact the Lord came to Adam-ondi-Ahman and administered comfort to Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman... **Here** He came and showed Himself as He truly was: as a pre-existent spirit, possessing a soul as tangible as man's, and ministered to him in a way which (if you understood what it takes for a quickened being to condescend into the presence and make Himself known as He does here) was an enormous sacrifice by our Lord.

*Verse 18, He ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might **know** that **he was God**, because of the many great works which the*

Lord had [shown] unto him (Ether 3:18 emphasis added; see also Ether 1:14 RE). This is how God is known: by His works. It's not the lightning show; it's not the shaking on the mountain. It's the great works that proceed forth from Him.

Think about what He did when He appeared unto the Nephites. God introduces Him three times before the people who are there were finally able to listen with their ears and hear the introduction. And then, after the introduction is given, they still see Him descend; and He descends, dressed in white, down and stands before them. Despite the introduction, despite the descent, despite Him standing in front of them, what the people think is, "This must be an angel."

Clearly, He has arrived in a way that is extra-human. He's manifested Himself being able to use the law of gravity in a way that we can't. He descends; He stands there—but none of them are overwhelmed. None of them fall down and worship Him. None of them do anything but look at Him. He's so plain, so ordinary, so commonplace in the appearance that He makes, that when they see Him, they stand there, and they look (rather like tourists) at this man dressed in white who is now appeared to them. And He says, "Here's who I am." He introduces Himself in Third Nephi chapter 11, verse 11 three times. In order to tell you who He is, three times He talks about obeying the will of the Father, suffering the will of the Father in all things, glorifying the Father by taking upon Himself the sins of the world. Even standing in front of them, He bears testimony of someone greater than Him.

It is the humility of the individual standing in front of them and His introduction of Himself in Third Nephi that brings them to their knees. They fall down, at that point, and worship Him. Because when He opens His mouth—and you see what He is and who He is and what proceedeth forth out of the heart of that man—you know you are listening and looking at God indeed. And they fall down, and they worship Him.

*...because of the many great works which the Lord [God]...showed unto him [this man knew he was God]. And [then] because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and **he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting.** Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him.* (Ether 3:18-20, emphasis added; see also Ether 1:14 RE)

God is known by his many works. Faith gives way to knowledge. He ministers to him. Notice that verse 18, **ministered** unto him even as he **ministered** unto the Nephites. Verse 20: *...he did **minister** unto him.* Christ has a ministry. His ministry is not yet complete. His ministry includes coming and bearing testimony; and that ministry continues, as we looked at. Turn to chapter 4, verse 7.

And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest

unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the [Son of God the Father of Heaven and of Earth], and all things that in them are. (Ether 4:7; see also Ether 1:17 RE)

This is the ministry of the Lord. This is the comfort that He would have that He promises to bring us.

This text that we're looking at in Ether chapter 3 is probably the best single text in existence to study about gaining the knowledge of God and the process by which it is gained. But most importantly, it exposes the attitude that is possessed by the person who comes back to be redeemed. It tells you, not directly—it tells you indirectly by telling you what he did. Go, thou, and do likewise.

Everything that you have been put through and every challenge that you have been given and every weakness that you possess have been given to you in a studied way to bring you, hopefully, to your knees; to bring you, hopefully, to feel the chastening hand of God so that you (in your day, in your circumstance) can look upon that as a gift—because it surely is.

'I give unto men weakness that they may come unto me, and if they'll humble themselves and come unto me, I'll make weak things strong.' That's also... (Excuse me, did I just knock it? Okay.) That's also in the book of Ether. And that's in an aside in which Moroni is complaining that the Gentiles aren't gonna believe this book; the Gentiles aren't gonna believe this record; they're gonna say this stinks; they're... Ether chapter 12, verse 26:

And when I had said this, the Lord [God] spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. (Ether 12:26-27)

That's an unavailability. That's an inevitability. You stand in the presence of a just and holy being, you're gonna realize your weaknesses. You're gonna recognize what you lack.

*I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my **grace is sufficient** for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. (ibid, vs. 27, emphasis added; see also Ether 5:5 RE)*

How do weak things become strong? Not by fighting the battle that you're going to lose. It's by appreciating, as the brother of Jared did, the fact that none of us can come into the presence of God without feeling keenly this scripture. *But it is given unto men... Fools mock, ...they shall mourn. I...* This is Christ speaking: "I give unto men weakness for one purpose." *I give unto them weakness that they may be strong.*

The anvil you're dragging around? That anvil was given to you. Don't curse it. Pray for God to come and lift it. You're never gonna be able to get far carrying it anyway. You may not even be able to lift it, but in the economy of God, **that** is a gift. It's a gift—not for you to act upon and surrender to but for you to fight against, in humility and meekness, and to say, "I'm not winning. I haven't won. It goes on and on, and yet still I fight against it."

When will you finally come to Him and cry out? When, in the bitter anguish of your soul, (like Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail), "How long must I endure this? How long do I have to suffer from the abuse of the guards? How long do I have to sit inside a gated room, in a dungeon, to hear stories about the rape of the people who followed me? And the murder of the people that believed what I was teaching?"

How long did Joseph's heart break in Liberty Jail? He emerged from that ordeal a fundamentally different man than the man who went in. There are people who say, "Oh yeah, in Nauvoo he got carried away with all kinds of things..." We'll talk more about that tomorrow. We'll talk more about this idea of marriage, and we'll touch upon the notion of plurality of wives. We'll brush up against that tomorrow.

Look, these Scriptures, these invitations, these prophecies, **and this message**—that began in Boise and will conclude in Phoenix—this message is inviting you to **do** what was originally prophesied as this dispensation began that we looked at, at the beginning in Boise, Idaho. The game's afoot. The challenge is underway. The opportunity is here. There was a price that had to be paid—it involved several generations. You do not kill a man like Joseph (by the conspiracy of his followers) without forfeiting an opportunity.

But that moment has come to an end. And a new moment is upon us. And if you'll hear it, I can declare to you, in the name of our Lord, that the day of salvation has once again arrived! Have faith! Be believing! He's real! I gave you a description of His demeanor. I gave that last time, and I'm reiterating again, here, some of the things about His attributes. Come to Him! Seek for Him! Have faith in Him! **You** have more reason to have faith and confidence in Him **right now** than the brother of Jared did in his day to have faith and confidence in Him.

(So, we'll take a 5 minute break—and we'll then finish this up.)

Here, in moments, you'll be able to go feed the one-armed-bandits [slot machines], and I've seen the photos on the wall as I walked up here. Some guy won 48 thousand dollars in a slot, and the look on his face was ecstasy. So, you'll be released to engage in that folly shortly.

There's an incident that I think... One word... One word in this incident really explains a great deal of what I have been talking about in this last installment. This is an event that occurs within the Book of Mormon that may seem otherwise quite puzzling. But now that we've looked at the Ether chapter 3 material and we go back and we look at this incident, it suddenly begins to have a connection to it.

This is in Alma chapter 22; it involves Lamoni's father, the king. I want you to look at the father, beginning in verse 17 of Alma chapter 22:

*And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even [did he] prostrate himself upon the earth, **and cried**, [and cried] mightily, saying... (Alma 22:17)*

It's not the words of the prayer that provoked or gathered the attention of heaven (though the prayer is in fact needed, relevant, and exactly what the Lord answered). It's what came before.

This is the king. This is the king that can have people killed if he chooses to do so. This is the one who—**like God**—among his people exercises the power of life and death. This is the one who can exact from them taxes. This is the one who has absolutely no reason to do what he's doing here. But look what he does. He prostrates himself upon the ground, and he "cries out mightily." He doesn't pray. He mirrors exactly what the brother of Jared did when he approached God in the depths of humility and in the sincerity of his heart, showing absolutely his appreciation for the difference between himself, on the one hand, and God, on the other.

Don't mistake me, I do not think it is necessary to physically engage in this kind of display. When the display is an extension of what is in the heart, that is absolutely fine. But when what is in the heart is right, it doesn't matter how it's displayed because God looketh on the inner man. This King was so overtaken by what he had heard that he was not ashamed to prostrate himself in front of the missionaries. He was not ashamed to cry out in the depths of humility. He didn't care who saw it. He didn't do this for to be seen. He didn't care that he was being seen. He did this because, at that moment, that was what he was: he was seeking grace from the throne of grace.

*O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and **if there is a God, and if thou art God...** (ibid, vs. 18, emphasis added)*

Do you see this? This isn't someone who's certain. This is someone who is convicted of his own inadequacy. It may not be that you don't know enough; it may actually be that you know too much that's wrong. It may be that what you lack... It's all gonna be erased and started over anyway. If you could gaze into heaven for five minutes, you'd realize that people that have been writing about this stuff since the beginning of time (who haven't gazed into heaven) don't know what they're talking about. The suppositions and the connections and the ideas that get floated around are not only false, many of them are offensive to God. They're not right. The board's gonna be erased. God's gonna re-order it. You're gonna see things in a completely different light when it happens. It's not that you're brilliant and a shining light of knowledge. It's what's in your heart, and how has your heart been prepared, and if your heart is open to receive.

Sometimes I'm amazed by my own idiocy—because I have argued with God, preferring Mormon doctrine to the truth! Sometimes I think that the Lord had that in His heart all along. He wanted to qualify me in a way that would make me typical of every man who finds himself in the predicament that the Latter-day Saints really are. He wanted to qualify me to say, "You claim to hold authority. I held authority equal. If I did not abuse mine, and you abused yours, then the kingdom has been taken from you. But it's been taken from you and not left. It still exists."

And I'm not gonna start another church, and I don't intend to compete with the Latter-day Saints, and I don't intend to overthrow them. That's God's work, and it's up to Him. We do not need another church. The only thing we need are penitent people. The only thing we need are people with their hearts right. Go attend... There's someone here from the Baptist church; go attend your Baptist Church. Go attend your Mormon church. There's good in all churches. But study the doctrines of the Restoration, and get to know God, and then go and do what He would have you do.

I was pointing out in the break that at the end, the people that were invited to the wedding feast aren't gonna be ready and aren't gonna come. They're just gonna be indifferent. It's gonna be the byways. Right now there's one group that the Lord wants to have my voice sounding to. That's in a corridor, and it's very narrowly confined. And they're the first ones to hear what I have to say. We're gonna put it on the Internet. It's available for anyone. I don't care where you are in the world, when you read the words that I'm speaking (or you hear what is recorded in the materials that Doug is kind enough to put together), the message is to all. It begins here; it sounds here, but it will echo outward.

And I don't care if no one gives me credit for any of this stuff. It is the truth that matters! It's never been about me. It's been about the doctrines of the Restoration. It's been about the truth that rolled forth through the prophet Joseph Smith. And it's been about the act of God in offering salvation in our day. Ultimately, it will be about the establishment of a city of refuge—not **now**, but by and by. There aren't enough converted yet; it's too weak. But in that day, there still won't be need for another church. There still won't be some reason to say, "I want to sustain someone." God and God alone will be sustained in that day—not me and not any man—nor do I anticipate that there will ever be another need to rename the priesthood. My belief is that, should we have Zion, the priesthood ought to return to its original name, "The Holy Order after the Son of God." If some great man wants to step forward and rename it after himself, I'm not going to gather.

I will give away all my sins to know thee, ...that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day. And now when the king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead. (ibid; see also Alma 13:10 RE)

And then look what happens when he recovers—because as he was *struck as if he were dead*, he's converted. The Lord ministers to him! And in verse 23:

*...the king stood forth, and began to minister **unto them**. And he did minister unto them, inasmuch that his whole household were converted unto the Lord. (ibid, vs. 23, emphasis added; see also Alma 13:12 RE)*

This is what happens when converted to the Lord. You **can't stand** to look about you and see other people who are left in the dark. You want to **invite them**, rather as Nathaniel was invited, "Come and see for yourself." **You** come to the Lord; **you** come, and see for yourself. This little bit of **skeptical** praying, *if [there's] a God, ...if thou art God, will [you] make [your]self known to me—that worked*—not because this is a magic incantation...

Those folks who go through ceremonies think that ceremonies have some powerful mojo, some compelling voodoo. But the purpose of the ceremony is to teach you a **precept**. The **precept** is what you ought to find within your heart. Rites and ordinances are intended to testify to a greater truth. It was anciently among the Jews; it is an Aaronic priesthood function to turn around and look at the ordinances as if it were an end in itself, It is **not** an end in itself. It is intended to be a symbol reminding you of some great truth concerning our God.

Capstone of the ceremonies that were restored through Joseph—involving a dialogue between you and the Lord in which you're brought back into His presence, and then, following that, you're taken away, and you're sealed for eternity—those are lofty concepts. They are powerfully portrayed in the ordinances and the rites. They are intended to convey to you the reality that all of this is possible because God does, in fact, intend to preserve you and all those associations that you prize, so long as they're worthy.

Don't think that you lack the faith! If **this** king, with **this** prayer, can go to God and can ask and get an answer—that's not the impediment. **The impediment is the pride of your heart, the hardness of your heart, the self-reliance that you think that you own, the traditions that bind you down, the arrogance of your heart, the unwillingness to cry-out mightily to God, and then to be open to receiving an answer.** This was enough, and you too can do enough.

The Lord tells a story in Mark. This is Mark chapter 9. In... Beginning at verse 17, there's this fellow who comes to Christ and says,

Master, I have brought...thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; [the spirit overtakes him]: and he foam[s at the mouth], [he] gnash[es]...his teeth...I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; ...they could not. [And Christ says], O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? [they brought the boy unto Him and He] saw him, straightway the spirit [tore] him; and he fell on the ground, ...wallowed foaming. ...he asked [the] father, How long [has it been] since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it... [casteth] him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on [him], and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou

canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. ...straightway the father of the child cried out, [cried out] and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. (Mark 9:17-24; see also Mark 5:8-9 RE)

Help thou mine unbelief. You don't need **more** of what you already have. Why are you here?

(Well, most of you. Some have come only to criticize and gather information. Some of you—in the hardness of your heart—are going to come to the point where, in the day of judgment, you will look back on this moment and realize, "I damned myself by the hardness of my heart and the bitterness of my soul because I came to judge a man whose heart was right before God, and mine was not." Your heart will be broken in **that** day.)

But look at this man whose heart was broken on this day. He cried out: *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* I have a desire; I have a willingness, but it is so fragile! It is so frail. I don't think it's enough!

That's not the problem. Cry out! Ask Him! Remember, His disciples who'd been following Him, His disciples who were His faithful followers—His disciples **couldn't fix** this boy. And they'd given up everything to come and follow Him.

Jesus healed him. After the incident the disciples came to Him and said, *Why could [we not] cast him out? [Christ answered to] them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but...prayer and fasting.* (Mark 9:28-29, emphasis added; see also Mark 5:11 RE)

Why do you have to be afflicted by prayer and fasting (if you're a follower of the Lord) in order to get to the point that you can accomplish this??

Because **you** don't fall prostrate, crying out with tears. If this man, in this condition, can say, *I believe, help thou mine unbelief...* If this man can do this and have the Lord on his behalf work a miracle, **you too** can believe enough; **you too** can accomplish what you desire; **you too** can come to Him.

Matthew covers the same incident, but in Matthew he picks up... This is Matthew chapter 17, beginning at verse 19:

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind [come] not out but by prayer and fasting. (Matthew 17:19-21; see also Matthew 9:7 RE)

Faith as a grain of mustard seed was what the Lord said they needed. The defect does not consist in the absence of faith in the Lord. The defect consist in the arrogance and

hardness of the heart that prevents you from crying out, in the realistic and anguish of your heart, looking to God who is trying to bring you to Him. That "depths of humility," that status of being someone who is utterly harmless, that condition in which you present no threat to the righteous (you are harmless as a dove; you seek only the betterment of others)—that is who God is and what you must become in order for God to be able to redeem you to be like Him. That's **you voluntarily changing to be that person by your submission to Him**—because there is no reason to give to the proud, the vain, and the warlike the ability to torment and to afflict others. There is every reason to give to someone who would ultimately be willing to "give the rain to fall on the righteous and the wicked and make the sun to shine on both the righteous and the wicked" the power of God, because the power of godliness consists in this kind of a heart—and in this kind of a heart, God can accomplish anything.

All of these examples... The petition that is made to God is not prayer. All of these examples are crying out to Him. In Romans—Romans chapter 4—he's talking about father Abraham; and in verse 3, he talks... *Abraham believed God, ...it was [ac]counted [un]to him for righteousness* (see also Romans 1:18 RE). Faith was reckoned to Abraham **for** righteousness. Verse 13: *a promise, that he should be [an] heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith* (see also Romans 1:19 RE). Because Abraham believed in God, he trusted in Him; therefore, he inherited... He inherited it all, the world—he's the father of the righteous! Beginning with verse 17:

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which [were] not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. (Romans 4:17-21; see also Romans 1:20 RE)

There was no proof that an aged, "dead" (that is, now impotent), old man, could sire a child with a barren, post-menopausal Sarah. But Abraham doubted not. And **you have before you promises spoken by the voice of an angel concerning the things God has in store for your day, and you doubt?** And you question? And you think God not able to bring about what He has said He intends to do?

The very day that they have looked forward to, from the beginning of the days of Adam down 'til now (as we looked at in Centerville)—you doubt that God can bring this to pass? You doubt that what I have been talking about since we began in Boise and have now arrived here...? If God can send someone to declare these things to you, in the confidence and the faith and the knowledge that I'm speaking to you on His errand, and I can do it in this room, in this building, in this city... Salvation comes to you today by the

word of God, and you doubt that God cannot make a holy place somewhere that has not been trodden under the foot of the Gentiles? You doubt that God cannot bring to pass His work in culminating the ages? Have the faith of a grain of mustard seed, because it is coming; it is going to happen; and if you lack the faith, you will not be invited.

This required Abraham to endure the test of his faith. It is not easy. I want to take you back into an incident—remarkable in its own way, really. In First Samuel chapter 17: the entire armies of Israel had been put to shame. And David (bringing cheese and bread to his brothers) hears what's going on, and he says, "Well, I'll go out, and I'll smite that godless Philistine." And so it was that in verse 34 of chapter 17 of First Samuel:

David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by [the] beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath [defiled] the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of [the] Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:34-37)

So, this is David, who had every confidence—despite everyone else hanging back, looking across the valley, and saying, "Um... I'll pass." David says, "Yeah, I'll go out. I'll take care of him. I've killed a bear; I've killed a lion; I could kill this guy. I mean, there's no difference here, really." Because David did not see this necessarily as a conflict between man and man, *mano a mano*. He saw this as a conflict between man and God. And all that was required was that someone go out there who **believed in God**, and **God** would take care of the fight. The battle is the Lord's! It always has been. The battle is the Lord's, and therefore, the Lord is able to deliver. **But** here is where it gets interesting. Skip to verse 39:

David girded his sword upon his armor, and...assayed to go; for he had not proved [them]. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him [he got rid of the sword, got rid of the armor, he got rid of everything]. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, ...put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. (ibid, vs. 39-40)

So, on his way out to the battle, he stops at the brook, and he picks up five stones. Okay? Skip ahead to verse 49:

David put his hand in his bag, ...took thence a stone, ...slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead. (ibid, vs. 49; see also 1 Samuel 8:11-15 RE)

He needed **one**. David needed one. David approached him by picking up **five**. **David believed** that the Lord would kill Goliath, but David picked up five stones. He had enough faith, but it doesn't mean he had such confidence that he armed himself with one stone—'cuz when you cross the brook and you head on in, where are you gonna find another smooth stone? And it's a smooth stone—preferably round—that's gonna carry the trajectory true. He's a slinger. He knew that he needed that kind of a stone. So, as he crossed the brook, he picked up five.

Don't think... In **all** of these examples, you see exactly the same thing! You see **you**. That's what you see. Oh, the great and the mighty and the powerful and the miraculous and the wonderful and the ones about whom we read... They're **you**. They have the same insecurities as **you**. "I'll give away all my sins to know you." That's a bargain worth making, and then it's a bargain worth keeping.

Be believing. You **have** faith enough but also have faith enough in what we read earlier. I want to read it again. *Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, ...the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, ...it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, ...according to his own will* (D&C 88:68; see also T&C 86:12). He and not you control that.

I remarked during the break to someone, and I'll reiterate it again here. Many of those to whom these promises are made will receive the vindication of the promise in the last moments of their life. Alvin, as he lay dying, had angels come minister to him. Joseph would later see him in the Celestial kingdom, but it was in the throes of death when angels ministered to brother Alvin.

Stephen, when he was being stoned, had the heavens opened to him. In the last moments of his life, suffering a brutal form of execution, he's praying—because he's so filled with the spirit by what he's beholding, having the heavens open to him—that he's praying for those who were in the process of killing him.

St. Francis of Assisi, living in an apostate era, in an apostate church, believed and followed the Sermon on the Mount. His heart was pure, and as the last month of St. Francis' life drew to a close, angels came and ministered to him. Our idea of what it takes to be pure before God is not the same thing as God's view of what it takes to be pure before Him.

Turn to Luke chapter 18, because there the Lord pretty much tells you how it is He evaluates whether someone has purified themselves before Him. This is a story that the Lord makes up in chapter 18 of Luke, telling a parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. Beginning at verse 10.

*Two men went...into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, ...the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with **himself**, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the*

*publican, standing afar off, would not lift...so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, **this man** went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (Luke 18:10-14, emphasis added; see also Luke 10:7 RE)

God can only exalt the meek because only the meek can be **trusted**. This is what it means to sanctify yourself. Our idea of purity and Christ's idea are entirely based on different criteria. Why is meekness required **of** a God **by** a God? What would happen if God Himself were not patient, willing to suffer abuse, and be rejected? What would happen if God were egotistical? What would happen if God did not return blessings for cursings? What would happen if God were not **exactly** what He preached in the Sermon on the Mount? What if God did not bless those who despitefully used and abused Him? What would happen if God did not submit Himself to fall into the hands of wicked men to be despised and rejected? And then to be killed in shame, hanging naked on a cross, in full view of the world, while people spit upon Him, and while they mocked Him and they ridiculed Him saying, "If you really are what you say you are, come down from the cross; then we will believe"?

Woe unto all those who say, "If you really are who you say you are..." when the voice of God is sounding in their ears. **They** would have rejected the Lord as well. **They** would have crucified the Lord as well. They are not His sheep because **they do not hear His voice**. If they were His sheep, they **would** hear His voice.

If we're required to develop the attributes of Christ, how is it possible for us to do so, unless God **patiently** tries to persuade us to **voluntarily** be like Him? And how can **you** hope to be like Him, **if you refuse to be persuaded**?

God came as one of the weak things of this world. The only way He's ever going to invite you is through one of the weak things of this world, speaking in weakness, asking you to be persuaded. It doesn't matter how earnest I am, I know my standing before God. What matters is **your** willingness to **be** persuaded—over that I have no control and want no control; over that I simply put the case as the Lord has put it to me, in the hopes that what **He** has to offer and what **He** says needs to be said will get through to you. But your relationship and your accountability is not to me; it's to Him. Therefore, be persuaded. Be persuaded.

Now I want to cover a couple things that may seem disconnected, but they've come up:

We don't have opening hymns, and we don't have closing hymns; and we don't have prayers. You can read the sermon of the Lord, and He didn't have opening prayers before He delivered His sermon. He came, He delivered a sermon, and He left.

There's no... There's no choir to get you ready. There was no opening prayer or closing prayer. I thought we should do that; I was told, "No, we don't do it." He didn't do it; I'm on His errand; I'm doing it His way.

When we are on the Sabbath (which has happened on one occasion in these talks and will not happen again), we did have an opening song; we did have an opening prayer; we did have a closing prayer to **honor the Sabbath day and to keep it holy**. So, someone was put out—if they listen to this tape, they get an answer to their "put out."

In Christ's example of praying (I'm talking about His **example** now; I'm not talking about what **He said**)—Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, told you that prayer ought to be done in secret. *When thou prayest...* This is Matthew 5 [6], beginning at verse 5.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. ...when ye pray, [do not use] vain repetitions, [and so on]. (Matthew 6:5-7; see also Matthew 3:28 RE)

So, look, I've given opening prayers in sacrament meeting. I've given opening prayers in High Council meetings. I've given opening prayers in Stake Conferences. I've given opening prayers one time in a meeting Bruce R. McConkie was the visiting general authority for. I've given opening prayers in a lot of settings, and I have to tell you, when praying in secret, I don't have to worry about what anyone else thinks about my vocabulary, content, incomplete sentences, dangling participles, stupid notions. I don't have to worry about any of that. It is between me and God. But when I'm standing on the corner or in the pulpit or before people and praying... You may be better than I am, but I have never been able to pray in public in those settings without at least **some** concern about the words coming out of my mouth and their effect upon the audience. I have always felt like I was delivering more of a sermon than a prayer to God. That's a weakness I have; you may have, too. Christ deals with that by how He teaches us to pray.

Our Lord's example of prayer was so private that His disciples had to come to Him and say: "Lord teach us how to pray." They witnessed Him praying. (I'll insert it in the ~~transcript~~ [paper]. I'll give you the examples.) When the Lord went to pray, He went out alone, apart. Sometimes He spent all night praying. But the fact that He prayed, while that was known, the content of the prayer was gone. What He said was not known. There are two examples that we have.

- We have the example that He gives us in the Sermon on the Mount, which is largely in response to the question of "Teach us how to pray." He tells you how to pray.
- And then there's the forlorn prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He's begging to have the cup removed from Him.

When our Lord prayed, even though prayers might have lasted overnight, they were in private. He lived what He taught. He did what He said. And I don't want to tempt people to surrender to the same weakness I have and that is to do so for to be *seen of men*, simply because men are listening.

Go to John chapter 17. This is another thing about the prayer/the prayers of Christ. John chapter 17, verse 1—this is the "great intercessory prayer": *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven* (see also John 9:19 RE). When Christ prayed, He didn't bow His head or fold His arms. He addressed His Father who's in heaven, and He looked... His eyes were lifted up.

Go to John, back to chapter 11 again. This is in John chapter 11, verse 41: *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me* (see also John 7:6 RE)—again, addressing His Father by lifting His eyes up.

Now, I understand in some of the examples of contrition that we've looked at that they fell prostrate onto the ground. I know that they had bowed themselves saying that they didn't (in Christ's example) not so much beat on their breast and not so much as lift their eyes up to heaven. But the presumption implicit in the example the Lord gives is that His eyes **should** be lifted up to heaven when He's addressing the Father.

How would you like it [Denver turns to the wall and talks with his back to the audience, very muffled] if I talked to you like this? Maybe I'll finish the talk this way. [He returns to the microphone.]

Look, pray to Him. Pray to Him, and realize that as you reach up to Him, He would rather reach down to you with greater enthusiasm than any of you can muster. **But** in order to establish the necessary conditions for **our** development, there was a law ordained before the foundation of the world upon which **all** blessings are predicated. **And** that law is as **easily accessible** by the father of king Lamoni as it is accessible to the father of the young man who was overtaken and fell into the fire and fell into the water. It is as accessible to the brother of Jared as it is accessible to **you**. Because when the law before the foundation of the world was ordained, it was intended for **all men to possibly receive of God's fullness**. And if receiving of His fullness required a course in rabbinical reasoning or an advanced theological degree, there would be almost none who are saved. But the Book of Mormon gives us account after account. And what happens to those who do not possess the required soft heart and willingness to bow? They come away saying, *[God] maketh no such thing known unto us* (1 Nephi 15:9; see also 1 Nephi 4:2 RE). And like Laman and Lemuel, they establish for themselves, with their iron necks and their brass brows, an inability to look up unto God and be saved.

Look, I've finished the content that I'm required to deliver. I hope some of you come to hear what I have to say tomorrow. I understand it'll be a tighter fit. (Of course, I don't know that all of you have any intention of showing up.)

But let me end by bearing testimony to you that this is not so far away that you cannot lay hold on it. This is not so far away that you can't likewise receive it. This is not so distant.

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14; see also Deuteronomy 9:6 RE)

Receive the holy ghost, and it will reside in you. Receive what God offers, and then you don't need any man to say unto you, "Know the Lord," for you'll all know Him.

I end in the name of Jesus Christ. (And I apologize, but we have a sick daughter that we need to get back to who is about two hours away by drive, and my wife and I are gonna take off. I hope not to have to do that tomorrow—maybe hang around a few minutes—but today I need to take off.) Thank you all.

2014.07.26 Lecture 9: Marriage and Family

July 26, 2014

St. George, Utah

Okay, this then is the ninth talk in the series (the ninth installment of a single talk), all of which is designed to remind us of what was once given in the Restoration through Joseph Smith. Much of what went on before is intended to be foundational for what comes today and then what comes next when we finish this in Phoenix.

Today the topic is about marriage and family. And as a consequence of that, I view everything that went on before as foundational to today because of all things that are necessary to understand before we qualify to be like God it is having **this** subject understood and then this subject incorporated into how we live.

If you go to Genesis chapter 2, verse 18, it says: *The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him* (see also Genesis 2:13 RE). If it is not good for man to be alone; you have to necessarily conclude that if you're going to be "good" (in the sense that God desires for man to be good), you have to be with a woman. There **has** to be a union of the man and the woman. Otherwise, no matter who you are, no matter what you are, no matter what virtues you may hold, you cannot be—in the eyes of God—"good" (in the sense that God uses the word "good" to describe the condition of man in his separate and in his single state). The work of God, after all, is *to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man* (Moses 1:39; see also Genesis 1:7 RE). That is not even a possibility if you do not have the man and the woman together. It's **not** "good."

In the creation (this is the preceding chapter of Genesis chapter 1): *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it* (Genesis 1:27-28, see also Genesis 2:8 RE). You see, when it comes to the image of God, the image of God is both male and female. That is who the Elohim... And a singular verb gets used—the Elohim **is** (despite the fact that the word "Elohim" is itself plural). Why would you use a single verb with a plural noun? The reason you would do that is because they two are one. It's because there is no difference between the Father and His Consort, the one about whom so little is said because there is something about Her role that, at this point, has not emerged into our plain view. And that is wisdom in Them.

In the scriptures, very often, the voice of God is heard, and it's described as the voice that sounds like waters—rushing waters, mighty waters. If I were going to stage the endowment, the voice that you would hear whenever it is Elohim who speaks would be the voice of a man and a woman speaking in unison. It would not be the voice of a man. It would not be the voice of a man in an echo chamber. It would not have sound effects. I would not make some effort to get feedback or make it sound like Charlton Heston's conversation on the mount in Cecil B. DeMille's movie; I wouldn't do that. I would have a man and a woman speaking in unison whenever Elohim were to speak.

If you want to know what the image of God is: *In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them* (ibid). **That** is the image of God. **That** is what God—if you look at His image—looks like. **This** is the reason why, when you have **the Father** throughout Scripture on display, it is always a Host. He appears with a heavenly Host. It is because our God, in the end, is not the image of some fellow standing about in a robe. It is **this** image, male and female. They two are together.

You've seen this scripture; it's been read by Latter-day Saints perhaps more than any other denomination. But it's in First Corinthians chapter 11, beginning at verse 11: *Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God* (1 Corinthians 11:11-12, emphasis added; see also 1 Corinthians 1:44 RE). Now, the modifier there, in the King James translation, works marvelously well because think about what is being said here. The woman is **of** the man, all things are **of** God, and the man is **by** the woman. Woman of man, all things of God, man by the woman. That's how men get into the world—is by the woman. And that is, incidentally, also how the first man got into the world; it is by the woman.

Think of the image of God. And think of what is being said here about it "not being good for man to be alone"—that is, the image of God includes the notion of companionship. Think about multiplying and replenishing. The image of God includes, necessarily, offspring. As a separate and single individual, you are finite; each of us is finite. But when you put together the man and the woman, it **is** in the image of God because they become—despite the fact that we are in mortality—you become infinite, in that you have no end. Sitting in the room today, we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. They are present here today in you because they continue, despite the fact they died. Until they come back from the grave, it doesn't matter that they are dead; they are yet present through the people who exist that are their offspring. **They** became in the image of God.

This is at the core of redemption; this is at the core of the work of God; this is at the core of what it means for God to complete His work and to have the continuation of what it is that God does.

(There are two empty seats in the front row; they're not together, but they are in the front row. And if you wanna come up, you can take those; and there were some seats here, but...)

Take a look back in the Doctrine and Covenants at section 132, because we brush up against this concept of the infinite in section 132, as well. Now, I intend to say a good deal about some of the mischief that was introduced to us through section 132—but not now. We'll return to this. Right now, I wanna focus upon the language and the promises that are extended because they duplicate what you're seeing in the account of Genesis. This is in section 132 (about which we'll say more later today), beginning at verse 19:

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the

Holy Spirit of promise... [then they're promised—about midway through that verse—that they'll] inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, powers, dominions.

And it goes on to say, **they**. Notice it's not "he," and notice it's not "she"; it is **they** because if you're going to pass by, you're going to have to be **they** and not "he" or "she."

*...**They** shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. **Then** shall **they** be gods, because **they** have no end; therefore shall **they** be from everlasting to everlasting, because **they** continue; then shall **they** be above all, because all things are subject unto **them**. Then shall **they** be gods, because **they** have all power, and the angels are subject unto **them**. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain unto this glory. (D&C 132:19-20, emphasis added)*

The notion that you are going to succeed in acquiring the glory that is like unto God in a separate and single state is **nowhere** found as a promise in scripture. It's not a reasonable expectation. It's a non-scriptural expectation. It is a foolish hope because it does not reckon to the things God created. Understand, those verses that we read in Genesis—those verses were **before** the Fall. In the condition in which Adam and Eve found themselves at the time that those incidents took place, they were immortal; they had not yet fallen. The marriage and the union of the two of them was intended to last forever because death had not yet entered into the world. And as God put it, it was "good."

- Marry a wife
- Sealed
- Holy Spirit of Promise
- Pass by the angels
- Enter into exaltation
- Glory
- Fullness

All of these words are applicable only to the man and the woman together as one. It's only applicable to the exalted state of a marriage that is worthy of preservation into eternity.

Now, instead of focusing on this as something you may receive in the great hereafter (as some great reward because you qualified for glory in a parade in the afterlife), why not think about whether the conditions that are being described in the verses that we look at are **themselves** a reward. Think about this as something to be had **now**, not something to be postponed and hoped for in the afterlife—not in eternity, but today.

Can it be said, concerning your own marriage, that it is not good for the man to be alone? Are the two of you, together, better than what each of you are alone? Is your marriage a source of joy, of happiness, of contentment, of companionship? The Lord told them to multiply and replenish the earth. Do you find within your family relationship that there's joy and rejoicing and happiness as a consequence of the environment that you and your wife put together?

Is your relationship... As a woman, is your relationship in the image of God? Is there godliness about the way in which you and your husband interact? If you had to reckon whether or not someone, looking at the two of you, would see within you the image of God, would they do so?

These aren't just happy notions for the afterlife. These ought to be descriptions of what your marriage could and should look like. Can you sense the glory of God in your marriage? Remember, we looked at this in [D&C] 93:36. *The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth* (see also T&C 93:11)—glory of God being light; the glory of God being truth. Is that something that is present within the marriage that **you** have? Is your marriage filled with life, with light, with truth, with understanding?

Turn back to D&C section 121. There's a couple verses there that I wanna suggest, particularly if you view the man and the woman together as one... Read these verses as if it's descriptive of the "one," which is you and your wife:

Many are called, but few are chosen. [This is beginning at verse 40 of section 121.] No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. (D&C 121:40-42; see also T&C 139:5-6)

Within your family/within your marriage are you and your wife learning to use persuasion? Within your marriage are you and your husband learning to use gentleness in dealing with one another? Are the two of you, together, facing one another in all of the difficulties that come as a result of being married? Are you facing that together in meekness? Do you find that in all the relationship troubles, turmoils, and challenges what predominates is kindness? Is there a search for understanding that results in pure knowledge when it comes to a dilemma?

Look at verse 37:

That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (See also T&C 139:5)

It's been my observation that so soon as the Spirit of the Lord withdraws, **that** quickly will another spirit step in to assure you that you're right, you should be vindicated, that you ought to proceed on in the arrogance of your heart to feel yourself justified and vindicated. There are false spirits that go about, but there are no better an audience to receive the whisperings of those false spirits than it is the abusers who, having grieved the Spirit and caused it to withdraw, accept then counsel from yet another spirit that says, "You're right, press on! Well done! You're good! You're right. You'll be vindicated. This is all God's work, and you're a great man because you're engaged in God's work! Do not back down. Do not relent. Forget about persuasion. You should never be long-suffering; you should make those under your rule suffer. They **should** yield to your rule. There is no place for meekness. We believe in a God of strength, a God of power, a God whose work can be done despite the frailties of man! There is no need for men to be meek. And it's kind in the end, after all, to punish and to force and to coerce, because we have a good objective in mind." All of the lies and all of the deceit that led, in turn, to Catholicism falling into the abyss that it fell into are presently in play with spirits that worked this out long ago, taking the Restoration of the Gospel as yet another opportunity in which to whisper in once the Spirit is withdrawn.

So, does your marriage help you avoid covering your sins? Does your marriage... Because you're never gonna solve this problem in the community until you first begin to solve it within the walls of your own home. You're never gonna have Zion that exists somewhere among a community until **first** that community is composed of those who have a marriage that is in the image of God.

Does your marriage help you avoid "gratifying your pride"? Does it help hold down your "vain ambition"? Is your ambition to exalt the two of you rather than the one of you? Does it bring you time and time again to not exercise control but to respect the freedom to choose?

Your kids are going to make mistakes. It's not your job to force them to not make the mistake. It's your job to counsel them and to let them have the experience by which your counsel makes sense and is vindicated. You **hope** the mistakes that they make are not too serious. But even if they're serious and they involve lifelong struggles, it's **their** right to choose—and it's your obligation to teach and to persuade and then to **rejoice** when they return after they're tired of filling their bellies with the husks that the pigs are fed. It's your job to go and greet them and put a robe on their shoulder and put a ring on their hand and to kill the fatted calf. It's not your job to beat them and to chain them to the farm, so they can't go away and behave foolishly. They need to know that your bonds of love towards them are stronger than death itself. They need to know that they will endure in your heart into eternity.

And not only your children but one another—because we **all** make mistakes. Do not exercise dominion; do not exercise compulsion. Exercise long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and kindness. Some of the biggest disasters come when you do not give

people the right to choose freely, and you attempt to coerce them. Be wise, be prudent, be someone that they would respect and they would listen to.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 130, it says, beginning at verse 18 (we've looked at these verses in several contexts, but we need to look at them again today in this context):

Whatever principle of intelligence [and understand that means Light and Truth] we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he'll have so much the advantage in the world to come. There's a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it [is] by obedience to the law upon which it is predicated. (D&C 130:18-21)

Think about those verses and that admonition as an invitation to work this out inside your marriage first, to work out—inside the relationship between you and your wife—the principle of intelligence that gives you the opportunity to be diligent, the opportunity to be obedient, the opportunity to gain experience that will make you more like God. Your marriage is a laboratory to prove you up and to let you be intelligent.

After the creation itself, marriage was the first ordinance. I wanna take an opportunity to look at the way in which this unfolds because it's a very interesting... Adam and Eve were sent down here first. Adam and Eve were introduced into the world, and they were presented these challenges. Initially, they were the first ones to face this stuff. And the way in which their story is told is not chronological. You have to go through Moses' record and you have to go through Enoch's record within the book of Moses in order to put together the chronology of these things. But when you do that, a story unfolds and a scene unfolds upon us. It's really rather fascinating. So I wanna take a few moments and do that.

Marriage was the first ordinance. It was introduced before the Fall. It was introduced before man was instructed on sacrifice. Go back to the book of Moses in chapter 4. And in verse 27, after they had transgressed but before they had been sent out of the Garden, we learn, in verse 27 of Moses chapter 4: *Unto Adam, and also unto his wife, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed them* (see also Genesis 2:18). Now, it's important that, while the account sometimes refers to Adam by meaning both Adam and Eve, in this case, it was necessary for a clarification to be made. The garment that was given unto them to clothe their nakedness is also referred to, in the temple, as the garment of the Holy Priesthood. And God wants the record to be clear: *Unto Adam, **and also unto his wife**, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed **them***. Therefore, Adam was not clothed and then told, "You go and do this, and clothe your wife." God clothed them both. God did not expect Adam to intercede when it comes to the clothing of the woman. God treated her as if she too were about to embark upon a journey into mortality that would require her, likewise, to understand the principle of sacrifice. Because think about it for one moment, you learn (we'll look at this in just a

moment), you learn that they practiced sacrifice thereafter, but when were they taught the principle of sacrifice? They were taught at this moment.

There are legends about (and they show up in a variety of ways; they even show up in mythical characters), but there are legends about the animal that was chosen by God to slay and to offer as a sacrifice in order to clothe them with the skins of an animal. And I rather like the theme of many of those. The theme is that when the animals were brought to Adam and Adam named the animals, there were some that he'd really liked more than others. But there was one particular animal that he liked above all the rest. It was **that** animal, and that animal's consort, who were slain in order to provide the clothing for Adam and Eve—so that Adam and his wife Eve could understand that the principle of sacrifice came at an enormous price. And so, the animal was no longer able to exist in this sphere, having been used originally while yet in the Garden to provide the coats and to drive home the point about the sacrifice that's required in order to clothe the nakedness of the man and the woman.

(I'm thinking in a room this warm, some of you might envy the nakedness of Adam and Eve [laughter]. I'm hoping that you refrain [laughter].)

So, if you turn over to Moses chapter 5, beginning at verse 5, this is talking about **after** they had been expelled from the Garden. It says,

He gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. (Moses 5:5-7; see also Genesis 3:2-3 RE)

So, that sacrifice that was performed that brought such sadness (in verse 27 of chapter 4) that occurred **before** they were driven out of the Garden was simply a commandment to do, which Adam and Eve then did. And it was some time later, many days later... And "many days" is not defined. It appears to me from the context, as we go further, that "many days" in this context means "many years." In fact, it means more than "many years"; it means many generations. There were many generations of men alive on the earth while Adam and Eve were there **before** the definition or the explanation of why they were offering sacrifice is finally given to them. (And **you're** impatient. And **you** want to know more, and you want to know it now. And **you** don't think that God tries the patience of all those to whom He will eventually come.)

So, this occurs **before** the baptisms of Adam and Eve. Go to Moses chapter 6. We're gonna look at verse... beginning at verse 51. This is Enoch now, and Enoch is talking about this stuff. Enoch, in his record, is reminiscing about what went on before. We still

don't have the full record of Adam and Eve, but we have enough snippets. If you begin to gather them together, you can reconstruct the picture. And so, beginning at verse 50:

God [had] made known unto our fathers that all men must repent. He [that is, God] called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given unto you. (Moses 6:50-52)

So, this was what God said to Adam, preliminary to Adam being baptized, which was still later than when Adam learned about the purpose behind the sacrifice that he was offering.

So, he's told about it. Then look at when it happened (which again, this is not Enoch; this is going back to what Moses says about when it occurred. This is the voice of the Lord saying that it's going to happen). Well, when it happened is in verse 64. And this again is the record of Enoch. And this is still Moses chapter 6, verse 64. We'll go back to the earlier incident in just a moment. We'll do that next. Verse 64:

And it came to pass, that when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord.

Understand, that word "cried," after what we talked about yesterday, should mean something to you. Because the pattern is the same, and it doesn't matter which scripture you look at. Adam **cries** unto the Lord, and

he was caught away...

(and what he cried unto the Lord is not known, but clearly, when the Lord had told him about baptism, this is exactly what Adam wanted. And therefore, he cried unto the Lord for a purpose. And look what happens):

He was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever; And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity. (Moses 6:64-67; see also Genesis 4:7,10 RE)

This is Adam's baptism/confirmation. This is Adam's gift of the Holy Ghost; this is his baptism of fire, and this is his ordination by the voice of God out of heaven, ordaining him after the order of Him who is without beginning of days or end of years. This is all in one, at one moment. And this is many years later. There are generations of descendants of Adam and Eve that exist at the time this takes place, okay?

Well, the effect of that, when it happened, is picked up by Moses. This is in Moses chapter 5, verse 9: *And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I'm the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will* (see also Genesis 3:4 RE).

So, these are the events that took place in that first generation of Adam and Eve among their descendants. If you want to have peace and harmony for a community, it has to begin inside strong marriages. Zion necessarily requires holy matrimony. Adam and Eve had sons and daughters at the time this took place.

Chapter 5 of Moses, verse 2: *Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.* This is an event that occurs because they were married, and they were commanded to, at that point, offer sacrifice, multiply and replenish the earth. So they offered sacrifice, and they multiplied, and they began to have children. And their children began to multiply (in verse 3): *From that time forth, the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and **they also** begat sons and daughters* (emphasis added; see also Genesis 3:1 RE).

Notice that the image that is created of the man and the woman—that is, Adam and Eve—is now replicated in the children of Adam and Eve to imitate the same pattern: two and two. They're necessarily male and female if they are going to produce offspring. If they're going to beget sons and daughters, they have to be male and female. And it's not one on three; it's two by two. It is the man and the woman. **That** is the image of God, and no other image is offered to us in scripture; there simply isn't. There's no such thing as same-sex marriage in the scriptural model. There is no such thing as same-sex marriage; else how do they produce offspring? How can you obey the first commandment to multiply and replenish the earth? Because if the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth arises within the context of marriage, necessarily it requires that there be the man and the woman.

Adam and Eve had sons and daughters; their children likewise were married, and they had sons and daughters. They were visited, and they were instructed by the angel (we looked at that). They were baptized, then they received the Holy Ghost. And look what is contained in the Holy Ghost, in verse 66 that we read a few moments ago of chapter 6. They are *baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father and the Son from henceforth ...forever.* It's also referred to and defined more in verse 61:

It is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. (See also Genesis 4:9 RE)

So, that is what is within them. Look what happens once they are so endowed, and they're equipped? This is Moses chapter 5, verses 10 and 11. I am so glad that these verses were restored to us because contained in this is a much, much greater lesson if you have the eyes to see it:

And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

That's Adam prophesying what is going to befall the future generations. That's what Adam is doing. Now, look at what Eve does:

And Eve, his wife, heard all these things [the prophecy comes through Adam; Eve hears them—Eve hears all these things] and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. (See also Genesis 3:4 RE)

There is a profound difference between the response of the power of the Spirit unfolding upon these two, with respect to its effect upon Adam, on the one hand, and its effect upon Eve, on the other. These are remarkably different reactions. To the man it is that he prophesies; that is, he declares the truth—the 'truth' being a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. That definition is given to us in the Doctrine and Covenants. This is the **role** of the man, and this is the role that he fulfills.

But to Eve, on the other hand, she obtains wisdom. The role of the man is knowledge; the role of the woman is wisdom. And you see that on display right here in these verses. It is the role of the woman to have the understanding, to take the prophecy that has been delivered now by Adam, to process it, and to say: "Here is what it means." This is the role of the woman. This is the **gift** of the woman. This is **eternally** the role of the woman.

This is why there is a male and why there is a female. Because in many respects, the gift of wisdom eludes the male, and in many respects, the gift of knowledge eludes the female. And together the two of them... And I'm not talking about 'knowledge' in the sense that a woman can't have a Ph.D. Two of the brightest people I know are daughters of mine. It's not **that** that I'm talking about. I'm talking about knowledge in the godly sense—knowledge in "the gift of God" sense—and I'm talking about wisdom in "the gift of God" sense and in the scriptural sense. This is an example.

Now, together (look at verse 12): *And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God.* And how did they do that? They did that by a ritual. They did that by offering sacrifice. They did that by observing what they understood, but they did it together. *And **they*** [it is "they"—*they*] *made all things known unto **their** sons and daughters* (Moses 5:12, emphasis added; see also Genesis 3:4). This isn't Adam preaching repentance; this isn't Eve preaching repentance. This is **they**; this is the two of them. They are equally yoked. This is the two of them joined together to make the declaration—they together. The two of them, however (beginning in verse 12), begin to make all things known unto their sons and daughters, **after** they had been adequately prepared to understand and to make the declaration.

(I envy you sitting below this level 'cuz if you think it's warm there, you should be standing up here.)

They were first prepared before they began to preach.

There's some eagerness that Father Hyrum had to get busy—before the Book of Mormon was even done—preaching repentance, because he believed it. And the Lord held Hyrum back. If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 11, beginning at verse 13, there's a revelation given to Hyrum that says,

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I'll impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy; And then shall ye know, or by this you shall know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive. But I command you that you need not suppose that you're called to preach until you **are** called. Wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you may know of a surety my doctrine.* (D&C 11:13-16, emphasis added)

See, Hyrum was being told, "It's good to be eager, but don't go out and try to preach something, because you're not yet qualified. You don't have enough knowledge in order to do so." Likewise, Adam and Eve—not because the Lord held back and told 'em: "Don't do it; don't do it." But because the circumstances of their lives did not prepare them to do it until there were generations already alive on the earth. **Then** they were given the gifts that were necessary in order to begin their preaching.

Hyrum was told in verse 21:

Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men. But now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all that, which I grant unto the children of

men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto. (Ibid, vs. 21-22; see also Joseph Smith History 14:12-14 RE)

- Hyrum Smith, who would eventually become co-president with Joseph...
- Hyrum Smith, to whom the Lord would command that he be ordained not only to priesthood but to become the one possessing the sealing power over the Church...
- Hyrum Smith, who would be the successor to Joseph, though he was killed before Joseph...
- Hyrum Smith, who was the prophet of the Church (and Joseph rebuked the Church because they weren't giving heed to Hyrum's words)...
- Hyrum Smith, whose letter to the Church ought to be in the Doctrine and Covenants because he was a president, and he issued a general epistle admonishing people...
- Hyrum Smith, whose name is omitted from the list of Church presidents, even though it should be there...

Hyrum Smith is told by the Lord: "Don't go out and start preaching yet. You need to learn something first. You need to be qualified first." In the revelation to Hyrum given in 1829— and in the lives of Adam and Eve—God is in no great hurry to get people running around preaching before they're qualified.

There's this comment that Joseph Smith made. He said, "I am learned, and know more than all the world put together. The Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and He is within me, and comprehends more than all the world: and I will associate myself with Him." That's in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 350. This is what qualified Adam and Eve to go declare repentance to their children. This is what qualified them to know the truth of all things and have the wisdom with which to impart it so that they could persuade their children to believe in Christ. This is the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You, to be competent in teaching **your** children, must first have the Holy Ghost as your guide. Then, once you have that, you ought to have command of the Scriptures (just as Hyrum was told to learn what's in them). **Then** you're qualified to go and to teach your children, and you have an obligation to do that. Children are the means to preserve Zion. Without the conversion of children, Zion has no chance of surviving.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 68, beginning at verse 25:

*And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of...hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the head of the parents. For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized. And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands. And **they** shall also teach **their** children to pray, and to walk uprightly*

before the Lord. And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy. (D&C 68:25-29, emphasis added; see also T&C 55:5-6)

Isn't it interesting that coupled with the obligation of the **parents** to do this for their children, this is immediately followed by observing the Sabbath day to keep it holy. This is not a delegable responsibility. You cannot take your children and drop them off to someone in an organization somewhere and say, "There you are; I'll see you in three hours. And I hope that what comes out of your mouth at the end of that bears some remote resemblance to the content of scripture and not merely some warmed-over reiteration or regurgitation of a talk that we all slept through when it was broadcast on TV every six months" [laughter]. It is the same talk, recycled over and over. I can cut-and-paste and give you all the talks that are coming up in the next one [laughter]. **That's** what you're going to use? **That's** the basis upon which you discharge your responsibility to your children, to teach them to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost? **That's** what you're going to do to discharge your non-delegable responsibility? You think that enduring to the end is all that needs to be done? If you got the checklist and you've got your little pamphlet and you fulfill that, that's how you discharge your obligation to God? That's how you mirror what Adam and Eve did when they preached repentance? That's what you're going to do to take care of this?

Well, good luck with that! Because I'm telling you, that is not the way in which Zion is going to be assembled. It's not going to work. You're gonna have children who are inadequately educated about the events of this dispensation so that when they become an adult, they're gonna begin to see all of the holes that exist in the traditional narrative about what happened when God began to work through Joseph Smith. You're gonna have children that are gonna leave in droves. You're gonna have children who are gonna say, "I reject you. I reject your Gospel. I reject your Book of Mormon. I reject your Church. And I reject all of the notions that you present to me, because I have found enough material on the Internet to raise serious doubts about all of this stuff." And so, you—as parents—think you have discharged your responsibility when you've let your children grow up in ignorance, hearing a story that is put together to make the Church look good, without any regard for the salvation of the souls of your children? That's what you're going to do? And then you're gonna come to God and say, "Look, they were regular Primary attenders when they were in my house! I mean, look, we did the *For the Strength of Youth*. We went up, and we did the Trek thing, you know; we drug a bunch of carts around and mirrored carrying the girls across the creek—and we did all that stuff and praised our ancestry and [singing] 'Blessed, Noble Pioneers.' We did all that stuff! [Singing] 'Praise to the Man...' We stood... We stood when your 'anointed' entered the room..."

My God, people! What are you thinking!? What on earth are you thinking? Do you read these scriptures? Do you recognize that the salvation and eternal life of your children hangs in the balance by the ignorance that you visit upon them? Do you understand that their salvation may be lost entirely because the responsibility devolving upon you to

teach, preach, exhort, and expound (**both** the man and the woman, both mother and father) has been imposed upon you by God?

You have to take time on Sunday (if that's the way you're going to spend your Sabbath) educating your children about the foolishness that they just heard and about the vanity and the pride that has just been visited upon them. You need to inoculate them against the errors of our day, and you need to ensure that they understand the truth. Because if you simply turn them loose to hear what they hear there—I don't care if you go to a Lutheran Church or a Catholic Church or a Baptist Church—you're not gonna get anything more redemptive out of what **now** is taught in the Primary programs of the Church than what you can get in these others. And, in fact, some of them may even do a better job because they preach and focus upon Jesus; they don't have a hierarchy to point to to say, "Look at that man, and he'll get you somewhere! He's got a key, and all you have to be is some keyhole" [laughter].

Children **need** to be taught. Children **need** to be challenged. Children are the most inquisitive creatures on the planet. Children are eager to learn. They not only don't know a lot, they **know** they don't know a lot. They're sponges. They want to learn. Boring a child about the gospel of Jesus Christ is an offense to the child and an offense to God! Preach the gospel to them. Tell them the truth. Take the material and challenge them to see that this gospel is infinite in scope, that Joseph Smith did not (indeed, could not) have written the Book of Mormon, that there are at least two voices that appear in the dialogue that we looked at yesterday in the book of Ether, that one of them never uses the word "prayer," and the other one never uses the word "cry."

Show them from the scriptures what it means to be saved. You will be astonished at how much children are capable of understanding! But I have to warn you, when you begin to teach your children, if you decide to discharge your obligation to them, you're gonna make them strangers and foreigners and sojourners—and you're gonna have to find other people who are like-minded and willing to teach their children and discharge their responsibility, so that your kids know that there's more than just your family that's interested in comprehending the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look, go to D&C section 88. I wanna read this and take a slightly different view of it. Beginning at verse 119 of Doctrine and Covenants section 88:

Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God; That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High. Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings. Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, that every man may have

an equal privilege. See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to your bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated. And above all things, clothe yourselves with a bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace. Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen. (D&C 88:119-126; see also T&C 86:29-30)

Think of this as a description of you (as husband), you (as wife), and your children. And make **your** house this house. Make this **your** family: a family of prayer, a family of fasting, a family of faith, a family of learning; therefore, a family of glory—which will bring about a family of order; and therefore, a house of God.

This is seven things. Seven is a symbolic number that gets used to signify the completion or the perfection of something. **Finish** your house. It has yet to be built if you haven't built upon that foundation. Let this description not be of some multi-million-dollar building that's built somewhere using the finances you donate to the organization. Make this **you**. Make this **your** people. **You** should be the temple of God.

That building involves a ritual designed to depict the coming back into the presence of God. Make that ritual a reality in the lives of you and your children. "Where two or three are gathered in my name;" make it possible for Him to come and be with you. Make it possible for Him and the angels themselves to take note and to say, "Look! It's beginning again! There is faith again on the earth, and the children are being taught. We must act! Let us go down and gather them." Make yourselves worthy of preservation. Get your own houses in order.

Now, I want to change subjects and talk about something for a moment.

(How are we on time? Are we good? Oh good, okay.)

I've been asked over and over and over why I don't talk about some subjects. And therefore, I'm going to talk about this subject only because it fits within the context of what I'm challenging **you** to do.

I've been asked why I don't speak of the "One Mighty and Strong" and why I don't talk about a Davidic servant. And there's plenty of nonsense going on about that. And I don't wanna take good, honest, earnest people and to criticize them one whit for their best efforts in trying to parse through this stuff. And I don't blame them for resorting to all kinds of tools and making an effort, and I don't want anything I'm about to say to be viewed as criticism of anyone. I don't care to do that. I think there's some very good people making an effort at least to raise the level of consciousness. And I don't think there's anything wrong with trying to figure this stuff out and—preliminarily, in good faith—reaching what you think is an honest conclusion, and it's wrong. As long as you're

willing to hold onto that **tentatively**, as long as you're willing ultimately to be taught by the Spirit, I say all those folks that make this their primary thrust, good for them! I've avoided it, but in **this** context on **this** day, I wanna talk about those verses because they fit.

This is talking about the one who is "mighty and strong" in Doctrine and Covenants 85, beginning at verse 7. First of all, I wanna say, **if** this is a role to be occupied by a single individual, then no one can claim the role until after he's done the work. Only fools and knaves and imposters and pseudo-strongmen (who have accomplished nothing) run about proclaiming themselves as possessing the "button." You know, "Button, button, who's got the button?"

"Oh—well, I do!"

"Yeah? Well, I do—and I'm mightier and I'm stronger than you!"

What a load of crap! Beginning at verse 7:

And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God; While that man, who was called of God and appointed, that putteth forth his hand to steady the ark of God, shall fall by the shaft of death, like as a tree that is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning. And all they who are not found written in the book of remembrance shall find none inheritance in that day, but they shall be cut asunder, and their portion shall be appointed to them among the unbelievers, where are wailing and gnashing of teeth. (D&C 85:7-9; see also T&C 83:4-5)

Okay, so, this is work yet to be done, according to some. According to others, this was fulfilled by Joseph Smith. The narrative the Church would offer to you is that Joseph Smith fulfilled this prophecy. As a result of the Church urging that as the interpretation, I'm **very suspect** that that is, of course, wrong. Because if he did not, then what is coming will upset the apple cart. And so, the possibility that this is yet to be fulfilled, I think, is the greater probability.

But if this person wants to step forth, then they need to hold the scepter of power in their hand. They need to have light for their covering. Their mouth needs to utter eternal words, and their bowels need to be a fountain of truth. These are the works to be done. So, if someone wants to say, "I, I... Me, me," then go ahead, and do it. If you wanna do that, once you have, then maybe this was a description of you.

But in our context, in this day, on this subject, I want to invite all of **you** to set in order your own house. I wanna invite all of **you** (after putting it in order and making that house of order worthy to be God's house) for **you**, all of you, to be this One—to have every

one of you have the scepter of power (or in other words, priesthood) in your hand. I want all of **you** to be clothed with light for a covering; that is, to have the knowledge of Truth and Light, the knowledge of God. I want all of **you** to be that. I want **your** mouths to utter eternal words within your families. And I want your bowels to be a fountain of truth. And that as a consequence of that, you are able to set in order **your** house to make **it** the house of God.

Let this begin with you, whoever you are—male or female—sitting today. Let it begin with you! Then, let it extend to your spouse, then to your children. And when your house is in order, look at your extended family, then others who are likewise inclined to believe.

These are the kinds of preparations that need to precede Zion. We are not going to get **there** in one step. We're only gonna get **there** incrementally. And there's a great deal of increments yet to be accomplished. It's not gonna happen by fairy dust. There's not gonna be someone who comes along and says to you, "Spiritu Sancto, Ave Maria." You know, get the holy water; get the incense, voodoo—voila, now you're Zion! It's not gonna happen. It doesn't matter if it's a Dominican in a brown robe or a Mormon Elder with a name tag. **You... You** must become holy. **You** must receive the guidance, blessing, benefit, and baptism of the Spirit. **You** must become the house of God. You're going to have to be the one that God visits with in order to have the preparations that are necessary take place. This is not something to be accomplished in a single step. Indeed, all of it must precede the gathering.

We looked (a while back, in one of the preceding talks) at how dangerous it would be for an unworthy person to attempt to be in Zion. Because when it finally is acceptable to the Lord—and when His presence does come, finally, to dwell there—it is unsafe for anyone unprepared to face that glory to be in that condition. Therefore, when the gathering takes place and you would like to join in, you do so at your peril if you've not accomplished the things that are expected to be accomplished beforehand.

We read those verses in Alma (yesterday) about Melchizedek's people. Melchizedek's people—Alma chapter 13—about how the people that Melchizedek gathered had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination and had all gone astray. It doesn't matter that you look about and see a tattered ruin of the Restoration. And it doesn't matter that we're filled with all kinds of false notions, inadequate and incomplete teachings. And it doesn't matter that we're a vain and a proud people. It's even worse when, recognizing that we are a vain and a proud people, we tend to gather together and to think of ourselves as even better than they are. Because **we** immediately import that same culture of arrogance. **We** immediately take what is offered, and instead of becoming (as we talked about yesterday) humbled by the greatness of the steps left in front of us, we tend to think that we ought to view this stuff comparatively ("and we **are** slightly better than them, after all") when the standard is absolute! And it doesn't matter if you're kinda, sorta, a little better. It's absolute! It's an on-and-off switch. And if it's on, it's on; and if it's off, it's off. There is no dimmer. It doesn't happen that way. And we aren't better than them. In some respects, we have greater reason to fall into the folly of our own pride. We have greater reason to think ourselves better than the people that think they're

better than the rest of the people. And so, we move along incrementally to become yet further **away** from God. If we think we're better than them and they think they're better than the world, then we oughta become a fool for Christ's sake and go and serve among them. We oughta do like the missionary who went out and did everything that the king bid him do and did it with such exactness and such fidelity, because he wasn't trying to serve the king; he was trying to serve the King of Heaven. He was trying to show—in the integrity of his heart and in the integrity of his soul—what was true. Maybe the way to fix some of the problems that exist with your own children is for you to go and ask the Bishop to let you be a Primary teacher. And then you're not only teaching and ministering to your own children, but you're teaching and you're ministering to others as well.

Hearts of people get hard the older they get (although, there is at least one exception, 'cuz I ran into a guy at my office who was like 85 years old, and he's still as young and as nimble and as open and as flexible as a child). That's why we have to become childlike—because we have to be willing to consider these things.

Well, in that Alma chapter 13 material, beginning at 14, it says:

*Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now **these ordinances** were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for the remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord. (Alma 13:14-16, emphasis added; see also Alma 10:1 RE)*

And what is *these ordinances* that are being talked about? That's what we looked at in the Orem talk in chapter 13, and we're not gonna repeat it here. That's the material that includes: Everything that God does, He does by an ordinance. Everything that He does and every blessing He confers, He confers by a covenant. One of the good news about the absence of a binding covenant is that you can't damn yourself by taking upon yourself an obligation that you will never honor.

One of the good things about the Restoration is that there are covenantal examples that are given that give you an idea of the kind of behavior that God would want. I wish **everyone** would go to the temple. I wish **everyone** would go to the temple and take on them covenants, learn what they are, and then try to live them. But if you fail (unlike the stuff that comes into play with this Melchizedek character), there is no severe penalty, because it's for your good and for your practice and for your instruction. And if you honor that, there's no reason why God and the angels cannot ratify whatever it is you do if you qualify for it. The Holy Spirit of Promise is embedded within the architecture of the Church's teachings. And it was as recent as—what? General Conference before last?—when President Eyring got up, and he talked about how they had the sealing power, and

then he threw in that caveat that everything has to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. I put that up on my blog; I quoted it, and I said, "That's good doctrine." And that is good doctrine.

Go to the temple, get your ordinances, and then work to have this Holy Spirit of Promise. Because the Keeper of **that** Gate is the Holy One of Israel, and there's no employee there. It is the Holy One of Israel, and **you** qualify to receive that directly with heaven. There's no other gatekeeper opening and closing doors—there **is** the Holy One of Israel; He employeth **no** servant there.

Therefore, this stuff is talking about the very things I've been talking about since we began in Boise, and now we've reached this point. And **we** need to respond—when repentance is preached—by repenting. Righteousness only comes after **that**. And **this** is the only way out of **our** similarly bleak current condition. This! It's by remembering. It's by returning. It's by finding yourselves (no matter who you live among) being someone that God has accepted, that God has spoken to from heaven, that has taken the Holy Spirit as your guide and has not been taken off task. **You** set in order the house of God, beginning with your own marriage. You do that.

(Now, we're gonna change subjects and go back to Doctrine and Covenants section 132. But first, we're gonna take a break. And hopefully, some of you people will cool down and bring that back in here with you when you return.)

The next part of this needs to focus on what goes on in section 132. By way of background, section 132 has an uncertain beginning. There are lots of debates about how, when, and where. I have taken the position that during the translation of the Book of Mormon— because Joseph and Oliver prayed to know concerning baptism when they got to **those** passages in the Book of Mormon—that they would have likewise prayed to know about this subject of plural wives when they got to the translation of Jacob chapter 2.

The way in which the translation took place was that the Jacob chapter 2 materials was part of the Small Plates of Nephi translated at the very last. And so, it would've been very late in the translation process of the Book Mormon when they got to Jacob chapter 2—almost the end of the translation process. And I think they would've made an inquiry as a result of that.

Other people believe that it was as a result of the translation of the Bible and that it was during the time that Joseph and Sidney were going through what is now called the Inspired Version of the Bible that provoked the question/that provoked the inquiry.

However, even though it's not well-known history, those first four missionaries that were sent out... Oliver Cowdery expected to be able to take a plural wife among the Indians. There's reason to believe that Oliver was involved and had knowledge about it, and he would've gained that at the time that the revelation came.

And then I show or quote a comment from Brigham Young, in which Brigham Young says that knowledge of this came about during the translation of the Book of Mormon. And therefore, it would've been in the 1829 time frame, when the beginning of section 132 rolled off.

The fact of the matter is that because of the content of section 132, the document was suppressed. We know when it got reduced to writing. The headnote on section 132 says when it got reduced to writing in that July 1843 time frame. ([cough] Excuse me.) And the William Clayton diary also confirms that that was the dating in which it was reduced to writing. And then the subsequent events in the diary about what happened as the section 132 transcript was taken around and Emma's reaction and Joseph then deeding to Emma the unsold lots in Nauvoo in order to make sure that Joseph's affairs were not intertwined with other women and all of that...

There seems to be a pretty good historical basis for saying that section 132 **was** a document created by Joseph Smith, dictating it to his scribe in July of 1843, just as the headnote says here. And if you look at William Clayton's journal, you'll see there's other contemporary evidence on that date for this happening. But it did not get made public.

Nor does the content of section 132 appear to be a single revelation. It appears to be, at least in my view, at least five different revelations that go all the way back (in the beginning verses) to 1829, and when you get to the end, it's actually talking about events that were occurring in July of 1843. Okay? So, it's a series of revelations which were all dictated at one time by Joseph in one document. And therefore, when you look at it, it's really not clear where the divisions take place. I try to parse through it and give you what I think is a reasonable way to break the chronology off and see what happened in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. But you don't have to have read that. And I'm gonna talk about this revelation just generally:

The brother of Jared, like we saw yesterday, went to the Lord to inquire about a practical matter. And the Lord, in response to the inquiry about the lighting, first of all asks him if he's going to believe Him—asks the brother of Jared if he's going to accept the words (in other words, the covenant) which He's about to put into the hands of this man. And then once he agrees to the conditions, there is this revelation that unfolds to the brother of Jared in which God makes known to him **all** of His revelations. Okay?

What happens with the brother of Jared once the revelation begins to roll forth has **nothing to do** with the problem that brought him in prayer to the Lord. He wanted to solve a lighting problem inside a barge. The revelation has nothing to do with a lighting problem inside the barge. It has to do with all of God's revelations.

Joseph Smith went into the Sacred Grove trying to find out which church to join. In answer to the revelation about which church to join, he was told to join none of them and that they were all corrupt and that **he** would be the means of bringing something else about.

When Joseph prayed to find out what his state and standing was before the Lord and the angel Moroni came, perfunctorily, the inquiry that he made was answered: "Your sins are forgiven." Then he goes on to tell him about everything, including the existence of the plates of the Book of Mormon. Okay? So, the subject about which someone inquires in going to the Lord does not necessarily control the content of what the Lord is going to reveal.

Likewise, Joseph made an inquiry to find out about the plurality of wives. What the Lord wanted to talk about was eternal marriage. The **Lord's** priority is what you see **first** in section 132. He's talking about the eternal duration of the marriage covenant. He answers the question (beginning very late in the original revelation) as an afterthought concerning the issue of the **plurality** of wives. But it is first and foremost a revelation about the **eternity** of the marriage covenant. You do not get to an answer about the subject of plural marriage until verse 34. Beginning at verse 1 and going through verse 33, all of that is about the eternity of the marriage covenant. All of that is about marriage of **a** man and **a** woman, like the marriage of Adam to Eve and like the children of Adam and Eve who went off two by two to create their families.

All of the blessings concerning what you hope to inherit in eternity are tied to the first 33 verses of section 132, dealing with the marriage of **a** man and **a** woman. Therefore, when you read section 132, don't leap to verse 34 and then read retrospectively back into the earlier text that what it's talking about in the earlier text is something other than the marriage of **a** man and **a** woman. The subject matter changes, and the question that was asked begins in verse 34.

So, what was on the Lord's mind and what the Lord inspired an inquiry to produce is in the beginning of section 132. Look at verse 7:

The conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment...

(and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.

So, everything that you hope to receive into the next life, even your **expectations**, all of that has to be obtained from God by covenant.

I mentioned in an answer to a question in Ephraim that the role of the woman was significant, even in the life of Christ. I mentioned that she anointed Him preliminary to His death and burial. One of the things that gave Him the **expectation** of coming forth out of the grave was the anointing that promised Him. Why do you think (in the temple)

the rites include preserving some of the functions of the body? It's not to make you healthy here and now. It's so that you can lay claim upon this as an "expectation" in the eternities—because if you do not have the expectation conferred upon you by the Holy Spirit of Promise, you'll have to get that in some other cycle because the only thing you will be able to take with you into eternity you obtain in this manner. **Everything** has to be obtained by a covenant.

Look at verse 13:

Everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities...

It doesn't matter if it's ordained by men. And it doesn't even matter if someone sitting in eternity on a throne who has authority in the presence of God ordains it. Does not matter.

Or principalities...

That is talking about angels. That is talking about people from the other side. Even if they are in a position of authority in the presence of God, it doesn't matter.

Everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, **that are not by me or by my word**, saith the Lord, **shall** be thrown down, shall **not** remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, **saith the Lord your God**. (Emphasis added)

The Keeper of the Gate **is** the Holy One of Israel indeed! These words should mean something to you if you've listened to or read the text that we reviewed in Orem on priesthood. You should understand what God is saying here. You should understand that when it comes to **some things** that you hope to have continue into eternity, it is not enough to have even one of the "noble and great," even one of those who we regard as an Archangel; it doesn't matter. God and God alone holds the keys of death and hell. Christ paid that price. Christ **has** to be the One because He **is** the only one qualified to do this. He **has** to be the One. This is a non-delegable responsibility by He who—by virtue of bringing you back and promising you—**becomes** your Father in heaven. If Christ is going to become your Father in heaven, He's got that same responsibility to **you** that He imposed upon **you** as a parent in Zion (that we looked at before the break). He doesn't spare Himself.

For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed [that's Christ's word—that's what He says is going to happen]. Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are

dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world. (Ibid, vs. 14-15)

Although God is talking about the eternity of the marriage covenant, He extends this into everything. **Everything**—even your associations—all of them are obtained by a covenant from Him. Because His word, and His word alone, will endure.

Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory. (Ibid, vs. 16)

Partners in such marriages become angels that are ministering servants. Angels look to receive the things that God has offered to men, but unless they come down and participate here, they cannot obtain them, for they're only to be had here. Verse 19:

*And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife **by** my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise [skipping down]...
they shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths [skipping down]...*

they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as has been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. (Emphasis added)

You cannot receive these things unless you enter in by the Gate, the Keeper of whom is the Holy One of Israel who employs no servant. If you do that however,

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. (Ibid, vs. 20)

These are people who have qualified for the kind of trust from God that makes sure that eternity will not be infected by the kinds of abuse, by the kinds of neglect, by the kinds of unworthiness that typifies those things which God **wants** to throw down, those things that God **wants** to have come to an end—not because He's mean, but for the protection of yourself, for the protection of eternity, for the protection of the potential offspring that may arise as a result of the continuation of the seed. This is so that, in the beginning, when life comes into existence as an organized spirit, that spirit is introduced into an environment which is perfect, pure, holy, **and like God**.

Therefore, when we come—finally—to **this** topic, we are talking about something which, even if it exists only with you and your spouse, it **is** Zion. It **is** eternal. It bears the

hallmarks of God's hand and covenant. It **is** what this topic is all about. These people have no end; they are everlasting; they have all power. And all of this is a discussion about a marriage between **a** man and **a** woman. Plural wives do not get mentioned until verse 34 for the first time.

Lay aside all the issues that are thundering into your minds right now and ask yourself this: If you're a man, do you have a wife/If you're a woman, do you have a husband with whom you are one? Ask yourself, do you and your spouse reflect the image of God? Ask yourself that **soberly**.

Now, just to rule out what I think needs to be ruled out..

And it was in **this** place that **this** needed to be declared, because we are now in close proximity to those who have taken what starts at verse 34, and they've gone on, believing that it is appropriate to take a plural wife. I wanna ask you, since *there is never but one on...earth at a time on whom this power and keys of this priesthood are conferred* (D&C 132:7) and since in verse 64: *...verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power—this "power" being the power to seal, k? —do **you** hold those "keys"? Are **you** that one individual?*

Before you answer that question, I hope you're aware that every single one of the polygamist sects claims that their particular leader is the one described in verse 7: *There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred*. Every one of 'em.

Here's the bad news for you. They **can't** all be right. But they **can all** be wrong. And if no one has told you this before, I'll declare it to you today: **No man** holds that authority among the various polygamists sects, period. I don't care what priesthood line of authority they choose to claim. **They don't have it**.

If you are wrong and you engage in this behavior, D&C section 132, verses 42 and 43 address the woman and says if she does this without this authority, she has committed adultery. And verse 43 addresses the man and says if he does it without this authority, he commits adultery. It's interesting in this context (just like when the Lord clothed both Adam and then clothed Eve), He doesn't leave it with one. This is an important enough subject that He talks to them **each** and warns them both.

Adultery is one of the things so foundational to society that it is forbidden in the Ten Commandments—Exodus chapter 20, verse 14 (see also Exodus 12:10 RE). In Moses' day, those who committed adultery were put to death in Leviticus [chapter 20, verse] 10 (see also Leviticus 9:18 RE). In our day, we're told if you do this (I'm gonna read it)—D&C section 46 63 rather, beginning at verse 14:

There were among you adulterers and adulteresses...

Again, don't think God has one standard for men and another for women—it doesn't work that way. He's always, on this subject, treating the man and the woman the same.

...some of whom have turned away from you, and others [that] remain with you that hereafter shall be revealed. Let such beware and repent speedily, lest judgment shall come upon them as a snare, and their folly shall be made manifest, and their works shall follow them in the eyes of the people. And verily I say unto you, as [I've] said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear. (D&C 63:14-16; see also T&C 50:4)

And you oughta fear. Because you should ask yourself: Is **this** who you are? Is this what you are? Joseph Smith said, "If a man commit adultery, he cannot receive the celestial kingdom of God. Even if he is saved in any kingdom, it cannot be the celestial kingdom" (DHC 6:81).

We're supposed to hearken to the commandments. Look at Jacob chapter 2, verses 27 and 28:

Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and [concubine] he shall have none; For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; ...saith the Lord of Hosts. (See also Jacob 2:7 RE)

One wife! Jacob chapter 3 (this is a remarkable, remarkable passage)—3, beginning at verse 5:

Behold, the Lamanites your brethren, whom ye hate because of their filthiness and the cursing[s] which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our father—that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. Now, this commandment they observe to keep; wherefore, because of this observance, in keeping this commandment, the Lord God will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them; and one day they shall become a blessed people. (Jacob 3:5-6)

It was the fidelity of the Lamanites to one wife. They rejected the prophets. They rejected Nephi. They rejected the Gospel. They turned to their loathsomeness. They were a wild and a ferocious people. But **this** preserved them in the eyes of God. **This** was important enough that **they** deserved to continue on—unlike the Nephites who had the Gospel, unlike the Nephites who had the prophets.

Behold, their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children; and their unbelief and hatred towards you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; wherefore, how much

better are you than they, in the sight of your great Creator? (Ibid, vs. 7; see also Jacob 2:11 RE)

God doesn't judge righteousness the way **we** do. If you've read the Tenth Parable, what was it that attracted the attention of the angels? They looked at the marriage, and they said, "This! This looks like what **we** come from! **This!** This relationship, this marriage, the man and the woman—**this** is what heaven itself consists of. And look, look! It's on the earth!" And the angels go, and they bring the Lord, and they say, "Behold the man and the woman!" And the Lord sets in motion everything that was needed.

What more do you need to see from the theme of the Book of Mormon than **this** passage in order to realize that when it comes to the relationship of marriage, **this** is the image of God. **This** is what God would like to preserve into eternity. It is so much easier to take people who have this kind of a marriage and to preserve them into eternity than it is to take someone who may know all mysteries but whose marriage is a tattered ruin and attempt to preserve them.

Look at the example of your first parents. Moses 3, the last two verses, 23 and 24 (excuse me, the next—there's one other verse after that): *And Adam said: This I know now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh* (see also Genesis 2:14 RE).

You may have a spouse who is Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Mormon. You may have a spouse who is "Community of Christ" Mormon. You may have a spouse who believes in dancing naked at Wiccan ceremonies while high on peyote. You and your spouse need to love one another. You and your spouse have something far, far greater (potentially) between you and your children than all of the distractions of this world. You and your spouse face the challenge of becoming one. And if you are one...

The Lamanites were condemned consistently in the Book of Mormon; it came to blows. But they were praised because of their marriages, because of the love of the spouses.

Now, if you claim that you have enough love for two or more women, then I'd ask you: Can you not love your one wife enough to give her your full attention?

Every day, my wife and I get up; we have a four-mile hike that we do every morning before we come back and get ready for work and the day. We spend about an hour doing that that is filled with conversation—every day—about what's going on in my life, what's going on in her life, what's going on in **this** big problem, what's going on with our children—every day.

I come home for lunch very frequently, and we spend the noon-hour talking. We probably call each other—I don't know—four or five times during the day. I drive down to Utah County a couple of times. Driving down, I'm on the phone talking to my wife; driving back, I'm on the phone talking with my wife. We have a lot to talk about.

I do think that marriage can be something that is godlike. And two people can, in fact, become one.

Although Moses permitted a man to take another wife, the law that was propounded through Moses protected the first wife's rights. Exodus 21:10, *If he take him another wife; her food [the first wife], her raiment [the first wife], and her duty of marriage [that is, all of the rights of association, consortium, so on], shall he not diminish* (see also Exodus 13:1 RE). The first wife is referred to in scripture, throughout, as *the wife of thy youth*.

I wanna go back. Malachi gets quoted by the Lord; he gets quoted by the angel Moroni. Go to Malachi chapter 2, beginning at verse 14. This is talking about "the wife of the youth." Malachi 2:14,

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away. (Malachi 2:14-16; see also Malachi 1:4 RE)

Take heed to your spirit that you deal not treacherously. Only a fool will practice plural marriage. There's only one, if that, on the earth who can have the required keys. If you err, it is an offense and adultery and an abomination. Your first wife, the wife of your youth, must be unaffected in all her rights.

That having been said, it is possible that some of you are already in such a marriage. If that is the case, do not tear your family apart. That would be worse still. Do **not** take another wife. **But do not** abandon any wife you presently have. But **teach your children** to come out of this system. **Teach your children**. And if you have a friend or if you have a neighbor or if you have someone in your own extended family who is in this predicament, don't judge 'em. Help 'em. Help them teach their children to come out of the system. Don't destroy the lives of children that are already **in** such a community, but let it come to an end in this generation. It would be wrong to destroy families, even if they are peculiarly situated.

Zion is going to require strong, happy, and noble marriages worthy of enduring beyond the grave. I suspect that if someone repents (even if they keep their marriages intact) but teach their children that Zion is going to include among them some who've awakened and decided that the practice and the continuation of taking yet more wives needs to end. It would not surprise me to find out that there are those who have plural wives within Zion. But it will not include those who still believe in continuing the practice, perpetuating the practice, or adding additional wives. It will be those who have awakened.

Look, the practice of plural wives **is an abomination**. Everyone that says they have the keys to do that, they reckon that authority somewhere downriver from Brigham Young. Okay? I want you to think about all that has been said and all the scriptures that have been read today while I read to you a General Conference talk given by Brigham Young in the October General Conference on October 8th of 1861. And I want you to consider these words, and measure it against the standard of a marriage worthy of perpetuation into eternity.

The second way in which a wife can be separated from her husband, while he continues to be faithful to his God and his priesthood, I have not revealed except to a few persons in this Church, and a few have received it from Joseph the Prophet as well as myself. [This other...] This other path a woman may take, if she can get a chance, and do it in accordance with the order of heaven, if a woman can find a man holding the keys of the priesthood with higher power and authority than her husband, and he's disposed to take her, he can do so, otherwise she has got to remain where she is. This is the second way in which a woman can leave her husband to whom she has been sealed for time and eternity.

He goes on to say: "without a bill of divorcement."

Are you kidding me!? Are you kidding me!? This is doctrine!? I mean, I'm inclined to now engage in a string of obscenities. [Laughter.] You believe this crap!? You think Brigham Young knew what the hell he was talking about!? Oh, he just happened to be the guy who had the most keys. Really!? So, he can fetch the most women? Any woman, to any man, anywhere, at any time, if he could get her to come aboard, he can take her? **This** is the tenuous thread upon which eternal marriage is to be based!? My God, people!

Here's a section of the Doctrine and Covenants that existed in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants while Joseph was still alive. It's an article on marriage: *One man should have one wife, and one woman one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. It is not right to persuade a woman to be baptized contrary to the will of her husband, neither is it lawful to influence her to leave her husband.*

I mentioned Hyrum Smith's *General Epistle to the Church*. Do you know what Hyrum Smith said in the *General Epistle to the Church*, the President we don't recognize (no one does)? President Hyrum Smith said: "We don't break up marriages. You stay true to your wife, and if your wife is not a believer, you stay true to her; and if your husband is not a believer, you stay true to him. We don't do that."

Well, I guess "we don't do that" until the "mighty prophet," Brigham Young, comes along in October 8th of 1861 and says, "Hey, there's another way you can get a woman without a bill of divorcement from her husband: you can take her if you've got the keys. And damn, I'm just loaded with keys!" [Laughter.]

So that this topic becomes clear, I'm not gonna take the time today to address the many foolish things that have been said by the LDS Church and by break-off groups in an attempt to win a lawsuit; that was what happened. I have prepared a paper that I'm going to present at the Sunstone Conference in Salt Lake City on August the 2nd. On the evening of August the 2nd, I'm gonna put that paper up on the blog, and you can download it, and you can read it. And you'll see in there a discussion that fits right in with this series of talks, right here, at this moment in the content. It deals with the subject, and it's going to be put up, and you can read it.

When it comes to the subject of marriage (as if all I have said and all that is in scripture isn't clear enough), Revelation chapter 19 has a description of the culmination of all the Lord's great work in this cycle of creation. And this is talking about when it all wraps up. In the prophecy, God can't think of anything better to put into the mouth of John His Beloved (who wrote this stuff) than the analogy that gets used here. ~~John~~—excuse me —Revelation chapter 19, beginning at verse 6:

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude [that multitude being male and female], and as the voice of [mighty] waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. (Revelation 19:6-9; see also Revelation 7:9-10 RE)

Not only does He liken the final triumph of the Lord's atonement to a wedding feast, but it is, in fact, a wedding feast. For all those who come through the tribulation—male and female, in the image of God—He's going to put on for them a wedding banquet because **they are like Him**. And they will see as they are seen because **they** are like Him. "Male and female created he them, in the image of God created he them" (see Genesis 1:27; see also Genesis 2:8 RE)

When our Lord's ministry began, John's Gospel has (in chapter 1) Christ's baptism. John's Gospel has (in chapter 2) the wedding at Canaan. When Christ prepared for His death and burial, it was with a woman. And when Christ was resurrected, the first and (at the moment) only witness was a woman. And when Christ finally got around to seeing His disciples, He upbraided them for not believing the testimony of the woman.

Well, Zion is a distant accomplishment yet to be achieved—but it is before us.

The next talk is going to be in Phoenix on September the 9th in the morning. I hope before you come (or those who do come and who are hearing this) that they review the first nine talks. This is all one talk. This is all one subject. We've been reconstructing the Restoration.

I don't care who copies this stuff. It would please me if General Conference began to quote this stuff and began to use it. I think that is a fool's bargain. I don't think that's gonna happen. But if you believe the scriptures and if you believe in Joseph and if you believe in the Restoration, then you believe the work is still incomplete. You believe that the challenges lie in front of us. And one of the most **remarkable** challenges that we face consists in the topic that we addressed today. All of that other stuff is foundational to bring us to this point to talk about this subject—so that in **this** subject, you can see.

Now, I know that there are a lot of broken homes. I know there's a lot of broken families. I know there's a lot of broken hearts. We're not given any trouble in this world that we're not equal to. We don't get tempted above our ability to withstand. God has something in mind for every single one of us. God has something in mind for each one of you whose marriages may presently be troubled, each one of you who may now find yourself in a broken home. Trust in Him. Trust in His desire for you. Take your problems to Him, and weary Him.

Remember yesterday when we talked about "crying unto the Lord"? When I consider all of the people about whom I care and the problems that they face, **I** want to cry to the Lord. If your circumstances trouble you, **cry** to Him. Maybe all of that is one of those weaknesses that has been given unto you that you may be humble so that you might come and cry unto Him.

By the time Adam and Eve knew enough to declare repentance unto their children, their children were suffering from the ravages of the Fall. As soon as they began to declare repentance unto their children and teach them some things about covenant-making, one of their sons took that and turned it into a combination by which inordinate wickedness could be brought to pass.

And you wonder why God withholds some things from the view of the public? It's because some things, if abused, can bring to pass such wretched wickedness in the lives of men that you're better off not talking about 'em. You're better off not disclosing 'em.

Adam and Eve declared and cried repentance together; they labored side-by-side; they received the garment at the same moment; they were instructed on sacrifice at the same time; they were taught and received the Holy Ghost at the same moment; they experienced the baptism of fire, and Adam prophesied at the same moment that Eve (overcome by the Spirit and the Spirit of Wisdom) was able to interpret and define what was going on and how all of this was suitable and appropriate. They two were one.

Don't think that the heartache that you feel is any less poignant than the heartache of our first parents. This is a place to be proven, and it's rough stuff down here. You came here full of enthusiasm and confident in your ability to withstand the day. And now the day's upon us. And it really doesn't look the same down here as it did up there.

If you be noble and if you be faithful and if you be true and if you leave witnesses here among us, it just may be that in some other day, when some other rough challenge like

this is put to the test, and we are all asked, "Whom should the Lord send?" that some of us will look at one of you and say, "I trust him! I trust her! I know that she will remain true and faithful. I know that he will do so likewise." Because it will be a great while after we have departed **this** life before we will have attained to everything that is necessary in order to rise up. It's what we talked about in Ephraim.

You need to hear all of these, and you need to hear all of them in one continuous discussion because it's all one. This isn't my material; it's the Lord's. All we've been doing is looking at this stuff... It's actually color-coded; these are the scriptures... Let's see, scriptures are color-coded with orange in Boise, and yellow in Idaho Falls, and pink in Logan, and light green in Centerville, and dark green yesterday, and purple today. And you can see the scriptures have become rather littered with markers.

This is the Gospel of Christ. This is the power of God unto redemption. And this is the stuff that Joseph Smith was attempting to layout when he was taken. There's **a lot left to be done**. There's more left to be done than has been started. There's more that has not been revealed than what Joseph was able to get on the ground here.

As we've gone forward, we've taken less and less. And now with the engines of Correlation, we're managing to trim yet further. The Gospel of Christ is not about "Have a nice day." The Gospel of Christ is not about being a keyhole [laughter]. The Gospel of Christ is about awakening and arising. It's about you becoming redeemed. Thank God that before Joseph died, he was able to layout something in the red brick store (through ritual and through ceremony) that described walking back into the presence of God, conversing with Him through the veil, and then entering into His presence. Thank God that in addition to the Scriptures, Joseph left us a **ritual** testimony.

But do you know why ancient Israel had **their** temple? It was to have ceremonies to point them to the coming of Christ to the flesh. The Latter-day Saints have been given a ritual ceremony to point them to **receiving** Christ in the flesh. There needs yet to be another temple built, but it will be in Zion. And those who go there will meet with their Lord because that will be His house indeed. **You** can build **that** only if **you** qualify to do so.

There's so much left to be done! Right now the only thing that **can** be done is to remind you of the Restoration, and **that is available to all**. Everyone's invited. Everyone. But don't expect the Lord to give us anything further or permit us to move one inch further until we first remember what we've been given. And even if you are in a fallen world among a fallen people who are proud and who are arrogant and who think themselves more than they really are, if you will love your wife and if your wife will love you, **you** are in the image of God, and **that** will be preserved unto all eternity. No matter what else you may have to go through between now and then, **that's** what He's trying to preserve. That **is** the image of God.

I bear testimony of that and hope these words will be allowed to sink into your heart. They come from Scripture, and they come from the Lord. They don't come from me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2014.08.02 Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge

August 2, 2014

Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, Utah

Cathleen Gilbert (Moderator): Welcome to session 351 where we will hear a paper presented by Denver Snuffer entitled "Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge". Sounds like an interesting topic for all of us. There will be a response by Dan Wotherspoon after that.

First of all, I've been asked to, in addition to welcoming you to this symposium, I wanted to remind you that this session will be recorded, so if you can please silence your cell phones. Also, I've been asked to invite you to attend, if you're interested in the book sales, because that helps support the symposium, as well. This symposium session will be presentation of a paper by Denver, a response by Dan Wotherspoon, and if there is time at the end, which we anticipate there will be, there will be question and answer also. Let me get started so we have time for our speakers, and introduce them briefly.

Denver Snuffer is a practicing attorney who practices with the law firm of Nelson, Snuffer, Dahle, and Poulsen in Sandy, Utah. He's active in the Utah State Bar and has co-hosted two radio programs for a total of eight years. In his spare time he has written and published fourteen books, most of them very lengthy. He is the father of nine children and resides in Sandy, Utah.

Dan Wotherspoon has a PhD in Religion from Claremont Graduate University, with an emphasis in philosophy of religion and theology. He is a freelance writer, editor, and podcaster. He's the host of the Mormon Matters podcast, the former editor of *Sunstone* magazine, and the Executive Director of Sunstone Education Foundation from 2001 to 2008. He is currently co-authoring a biography of Eugene England. He is the father of two children and resides in Bountiful, Utah.

We will first hear from Denver Snuffer and then immediately thereafter we will hear from Dan Wotherspoon. Thank you.

Denver Snuffer: Saturday afternoon. This is a paper that has some 160 footnotes. I'm not going to read any of the footnotes, and I'm not going to read all of the paper. I'm going to give you an excerpt from the paper today and then this evening when I return home from here, I'll put the entire paper up for anyone that wants it as a downloadable online through my blog.

There are four topics that are discussed in the paper. They are plural wives, ordination of black African men, pressure to ordain women, and same-sex marriage.

The history of changing LDS doctrine, past, present and the likely future, are illustrated using these four subjects to show doctrinal changes required to build a necessary bridge between LDS Mormonism and the American public.

Religion moves through two stages. In the first, God reveals Himself to man. This is called "restoration." It restores man to communion with God as it was once in the Garden of Eden. In the second, man attempts to worship God according to His latest visit. This stage is always characterized by scarcity and inadequacy.

Audience Comment: You need to talk into the microphone.

Denver Snuffer: I can hear myself fine. [audience laughter]

This second part is called "apostasy," because apostasy always follows restoration.

Institutions cannot control God. As faith in God is institutionalized, it becomes part of this world and necessarily influenced by cultural, social, legal and economic pressure. Those forces erode faith. Religious institutions are where the ideal comes into conflict with the less-than-ideal. LDS Mormonism illustrates this dynamic. Through compromises of its ideals we see the pattern unfolding in our own lifetime.

Joseph Smith bridged the gulf between man and God and entered God's presence again. Some few of us, myself included, believe his claim. I regard him the equal of Abraham, Moses and Isaiah. But the various denominations claiming Joseph Smith as their founder again suffer scarcity and struggle to cope with God's silence.

With time, all religious bodies confront the complex challenge of holding onto God's word. The ever-changing present causes cracks. Churches try to patch cracks. This leads to fractures, then it leads to defections. Former believers either lose faith in the religion altogether, or faith in the church. Without a restoration's abundance, pragmatic choices first become policy, then doctrine. God's silence does not curtail doctrine, but often compels it.

After nearly a millennium-and-a-half, there was a great gulf between God's last revelation and Catholic doctrines. When Gutenberg's 1439 press and an increasingly literate population made it impossible for the Roman hierarchy to control information, Catholicism fractured. The Internet is to LDS Mormonism what Gutenberg's press was to Catholicism. It is no longer possible for an institution to control the narrative.

Catholicism attempted to regain control in two ways: First, the "Dogs of God" (that's the nickname that was given to the Dominicans) were unleashed to confront heresy and suppress dissent. After two-and-a-half centuries of pursuing this ill-advised course, the failure was recognized even in Rome. Pope Paul III reversed course and he launched the Counter-Reformation. A new order called the Society of Jesus (that is the Jesuits) was established at the Council of Trent to focus on needed reform. The LDS Church is following this pattern. Their first approach is to suppress dissent. The correlation infrastructure of the LDS Church has been put into place to protect doctrine and practice. An LDS group of "Dominicans," the Strengthening the Members Committee, has been empowered to find and then remove perceived threats. Ironically, as will become apparent as we get into this paper, the original targets of the Strengthening the

Members Committee were fundamentalist groups advocating the practice of plural marriage. At one time this practice was the hallmark of orthodoxy for the LDS Church. The juxtaposition of advocacy first, followed by prohibition of plural marriages, illustrates a passage. Brash confidence in God's restoration makes the organization brave. Then faced with opposition, a quiet and distant God no longer fortifies the church. They appease the worldly forces of government and economics. From heaven's silence men conjure "doctrines" they attribute to God. Plural marriage bespeaks this larger dynamic.

Because LDS Mormonism has "correlated", a great deal of what it once was has been trimmed away. History and doctrine have been forgotten or rejected. By reworking history, the LDS Church has managed to brand even those who believe in Joseph Smith, and accept the same scriptures, as nevertheless "apostate" if they also challenge the newly correlated part-truths. Within LDS Mormonism a short memory is necessary to accept the history and the doctrine now taught. Long memories get its members into trouble.

For LDS Mormonism, the Internet is a bastion of unsettling or unwanted information. Some of it is inaccurate. But the more effective challenges come from on-line sources telling the truth. When a false narrative is perpetuated by the institution and then confronted by truth, it is the institution ultimately that loses. At the moment, to deal with this the LDS Church uses "search engine optimization", meaning the LDS Church pays money to have their site come up first on search engine results. This directs traffic to church approved sources. LDS websites recount history designed to soothe the troubled Saints but it is not effective. All an inquirer need do is press through the first page or so of LDS Church website referrals to locate independent sources.

On their website, "mormonchurch.org" the church states: plural wives "was not mandatory and [is] not required for salvation[.]" This is both true (artfully using the term "salvation") and false. It is true that plural wives are not necessary for salvation according to LDS Mormonism. But, then again, neither is faith in Christ, repentance, baptism or a good life. All are "saved" in Mormon theology, other than the sons of Perdition. Therefore, this LDS Church on-line assertion is true enough. But the LDS Church once claimed, as a matter of doctrine, plural wives was an absolute requirement for exaltation. A reader lacking familiarity with LDS vocabulary will get the wrong impression. To those who are familiar with the vocabulary, this appears to be purposeful.

Multiple wives doctrine was so secretive during Joseph Smith's life that his wife could deny it was actually practiced. It was not until 1852 that the LDS Church publicly advocated belief in this form of marriage. The announcement caused national outrage. Abraham Lincoln's upstart Republican Party denounced it as one of the "twin relics of barbarism," the other being slavery. Beginning with the Morrill Act signed by President Lincoln in 1862, the full weight of national ire was brought to bear against the LDS Church. The dispute lasted three decades before the church surrendered. The final victory was achieved through the draconian measures imposed on the institution by the Edmunds-Tucker Act. The act dis-incorporated the LDS Church and the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, giving their assets to the public school. It mandated an oath

denouncing polygamy to be taken before anyone could vote, sit on a jury, or serve as a public official. It removed local judges (who were LDS) and replaced them with federally appointed judges (certain to be anti-polygamy). The act rearranged family law. It required marriage licenses, it disinherited illegitimate children, it abrogated the spousal privilege that prevented wives from testifying against their husbands in polygamy prosecution cases.

Although the LDS Church fought these laws through appeals to the US Supreme Court, they lost the fight. Faced with the dire prospect of remaining an outlaw organization, the church relented. The struggle and surrender inform LDS Church conduct in ways that remain a part of the institutional psyche.

We begin the story five years after Joseph Smith's death, when the doctrine of taking plural wives was first made public. Wisely, Joseph deliberately limited the practice and kept it secret. Personally, I believe that plural wives should never have been publicly adopted and preached. It was never essential to "exaltation." Much of the content when it was preached publicly was based on advice Brigham Young received from a US Senator. To win protection under the First Amendment, it was necessary to portray plural wives as essential to the religion. But it was portrayed as salvific as part of a strategy to win in the courts. When the LDS Church lost the fight, they were faced with the conundrum of undoing an oversold doctrine.

President Brigham Young asserted the practice was constitutionally protected if it was a fundamental part of Latter-day Saint religion. When he presided, he made plural wives essential to the Church. He was encouraged in this view by an unnamed US Senator. The unidentified Senator was likely Stephen A. Douglas who had been elected to the United States Senate in 1846. They made it public in 1852. Mormon leaders defended the right to practice plural marriage as constitutional, [and] delivered sermons for three decades to define the practice as a fundamental part of their religious beliefs. Young continually asserted it was both "wholesome" and constitutionally protected.

When Orson Pratt gave the first talk announcing it publicly, the place he went first was constitutionality. He said, "If it can be proven to a demonstration, that Latter-day Saints have actually embraced, as a part and portion of their religion, the doctrine of plurality of wives, it is constitutional. Should there ever be laws enacted by this government to restrict them from the free exercise of this part of their religion, such laws must be unconstitutional." That's the first sermon in the sequence.

The month before this Brigham Young made a similar comment: "There is not a single constitution of any single state, much less the constitution of the Federal Government, that hinders a man from having two wives; and I defy all the lawyers of the United States to prove to the contrary." It would take three decades but they did.

President Young frequently declared this practice was essential. He claimed his sermons were "as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible." Taking him at his word,

the following quotes show what the LDS Church believed during its second phase following Joseph Smith's death.

"Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned[.]"

"The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy."

Young preached it was monogamy that was a great evil, imposed by the Romans. Romans were a band of robbers who imposed monogamy to further the Empire's lust for prostitution. But polygamy was, according to Young, the only religion practiced in heaven. The Romans imposed monogamy in order to produce an excess of unmarried women, and according to Young this was responsible for prostitution and whoredom throughout the Christian world.

Young warned women that they risked servitude in eternity if they objected to their husbands taking plural wives in this life. They would serve those who lived polygamy in this life, who would be elevated to godhood.

Even speaking against plural wives could imperil your eternal reward: "Those who spoke against a Plurality of wives & in there [sic] feelings will not receive it will never inherit the Celestial Kingdom of God, for it has always been practiced there and always will be."

Plurality of wives was obligatory, not optional. If you rejected it, you were damned. Young absolutely rejected the idea of surrendering to the government. Doing so would be surrender to the devil. Polygamy was God's command and could not be disobeyed. Surrender to man's law was impossible because only God's law could save.

Young called out the hypocrisy of the society condemning the Saints. LDS women were wives and mothers. Congress was against that but tolerated adultery and illegitimacy. This doctrine was essential for the faithful to practice. Mormonism held forth the promise that man could become like God. But becoming gods in the afterlife demanded polygamy in the here and now. The only men who would qualify as "sons of God" were those whose quiver was filled with children produced by multiple women bearing offspring for him.

Brigham Young died August 29, 1877 and was succeeded by John Taylor. When Taylor took over LDS Church history was more the product of Brigham Young than Joseph Smith. Smith led the church for 14 years, Young for 33. The doctrine of plural wives had become public and essential under Young. The doctrine of plurality of wives had become carved in stone. As the Church's president, Taylor was just as emphatic about plural wives to qualify for exaltation. He had a full quiver of nine wives who bore him thirty-four children. Taylor preached it was apostasy to oppose polygamy.

Facing Federal prosecution under anti-polygamy legislation, Taylor spent the years of his presidency in hiding. He wrote a revelation on September 27, 1886 confirming to his mind the necessity of complying with the practice of plural wives. The revelation does not mention "plural wives" but refers instead to "the New and Everlasting Covenant" which he and Mormon fundamentalists, regard necessarily to include plural wives. He died in exile, firmly defending the practice, and preaching it must be continued.

Taylor was succeeded by Wilford Woodruff, likewise a full-quivered polygamist, having seven wives (or more, because our history leaves some of that open) and fathering thirty-three children. He was equally adamant about the indispensable practice of plural wives. Mormons would practice it "come life or come death" he declared. Like Taylor before him, Woodruff wrote a revelation confirming polygamy was not to be abandoned. The document was read to the Twelve on December 19, 1889. First Presidency Secretary John Nuttall recorded in his diary: "As I wrote at his dictation, I felt better all the time and when I completed I felt as light and joyous as it is possible to feel, for I was satisfied that Prest. Woodruff had received the word of the Lord."

Despite heaven urging them to continue, both society and the US Government were pulling in the opposite direction. Legal setbacks continued to accumulate. Reynolds v. United States upheld the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act making it a federal crime to practice plural marriage. The polygamist Church leadership was guilty of a federal crime. Davis v. Beason upheld the Idaho test oath designed to disqualify Mormons from jury duty and public office. The Late Corporation of the Mormon Church v. United States upheld Federal seizure of LDS Church property. It was expected the government would take possession of all LDS Temples.

When The Late Corporation of the Mormon Church decision was announced on May 19, 1890, a member of the Twelve Apostles recorded the internal reaction: "By the provisions of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, the property of the Church was ordered escheated for the use of the [public] schools. In pursuance of this provision some \$750,000 worth of church property was seized and placed in the hands of a receiver."

Events unfolded quickly once the church lost its property. US Secretary of State, James G. Blaine prepared a document on June 12th for Church leaders to sign renouncing plural marriage. There is only one existing document referring to a pre-Manifesto policy change. It was prepared two months before the Manifesto. Abraham H. Cannon's diary records on July 10th (he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time): "The resolution of the First Presidency of June 30/90 in regard to plural marriages was read. It is to the effect that none shall be permitted to occur even in Mexico unless the contracting parties, or at least the female, has resolved to remain in that country."

The church's worst fears were confirmed August 26th when the former Federal receiver, Frank Dyer related the US would soon attempt "to confiscate the Logan, Manti and St. George temples on the grounds that they are not used for public worship." Keep those dates in mind now.

Woodruff got the revelation on December 1889. The decision was in May of 1890, and on September 24th Wilford Woodruff issued the press release now called the "Manifesto" in which he denied plural marriages were taking place. The LDS Church would continue to practice plural marriages until a second "Manifesto" issued by President Joseph F. Smith in 1904. Plural marriages came into the LDS Church in secret before it became public. Likewise, it remained in secret after the 1890 Manifesto, ultimately dying sometime after 1904. It is now denounced and those who practice it are excommunicated.

The LDS Church was finally motivated by popular disapproval and federal legislation to abandon plural wives. In a sacrament meeting, the First Presidency the Twelve, on April 2, 1891, President Woodruff defended the Manifesto by claiming he had been "inspired" by God to issue the document, but polygamy would yet be restored in the Church.

Resistance to the popular will and Federal legislation had proven impossible. The LDS Church would not have survived as a legal enterprise if their members could not vote, serve on juries, hold public office, and if their temples were taken, their property escheated to the government, and their officials jailed. There was no other choice if the Church wanted to remain a corporate entity, possessing property, and practicing their religion. Polygamy had to go or LDS Mormonism would be obliterated. The Church chose to keep its corporate status and property. It wanted to continue as it had developed. Today likewise the LDS Church wants to retain its tax preference, and it owns much more property than in 1890. A recent acquisition of property in Florida resulted in one newspaper headline: "Mormon Church purchases 2% of the state of Florida for half a million dollars."

The likelihood of the LDS Church ever becoming embroiled in a similar battle of wills with the US government is improbable. As it did in the past, the church will find some way to bridge the gulf between its teachings and governmental ire. It has much more at stake today than the estimated \$750,000 taken at the time of Edmunds-Tucker Act. It would lose perhaps more than that weekly if the Church's tax-exempt status were now revoked. Today the LDS Church must be more nimble regarding public opinion than ever before because today it has more at risk than ever before.

So we turn to the next subject, which is ordination of black Africans. Another abandoned LDS doctrine involves the status of black Africans. While welcomed as members, blacks were denied ordination. Brigham Young began, and other leaders echoed, teachings relegating black Africans to doctrinally inferior status.

Slavery in America began centuries before the United States. From the late 1400's African slaves were transported to the Americas. By the end of the 19th Century there had been five times as many Africans brought to the Americas than Europeans. African slavery was a fact of life in the English colonies before the American Revolution. Once the US was independent, it had an economic infrastructure in which African slavery was

a fact of life. Before considering or condemning the LDS Church's teachings, the larger social, legal and economic setting should be remembered. Context is everything.

In 1856 the Republican Party was formed, in part to oppose the spread of slavery into the property that was acquired through the Mexican-American war. In 1857 the US Supreme Court issued the Dred Scott decision. The ruling established that blacks free or slave, had no citizenship rights and therefore no standing to sue in Federal courts.

On January 16, 1852, Young explained to the Utah Territorial Legislature Africans were the "seed of Cain" and could not hold priesthood. He described them as black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable, wild, and unintelligent members of the human family. (He did acknowledge them as members of the human family.) "[A]ny man having one drop of the seed of [Cain] .in him cannot hold the priesthood and if no other Prophet ever spake it before I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ I know it is true and others know it."

The curse was not just to protect the right to priesthood; it was also to prevent intermarriage. Said Young, "If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so."

The nation fought the Civil War but slavery was only concluded by the adoption of the 13th Amendment in 1865. To make the 13th Amendment a restriction on State conduct, the 14th Amendment was likewise adopted. The 14th Amendment says:

"No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States; ...nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The post-Civil War constitutional amendments were only the beginning of the process to establish equality for former slaves and their descendants. Segregation in post-Civil War America was legal, having been approved by the Supreme Court.

Although Brigham Young's comments about interracial marriage seem offensive in 2014, the United States had widespread laws making such marriages illegal. They were referred to as "Anti-Miscegenation" statutes. It was not until 1948 that California became the first state to strike down such a statute. And it took the United States Supreme Court until 1967 to finally decide that in all states of the Union interracial marriage could not be prohibited because that was unconstitutional, 1967.

The civil rights movement, the NAACP, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and the Civil Rights Act, all required to change the status of descendants of former slaves in the American culture.

While the civil rights movement was gaining momentum, LDS Church leaders remained committed to preserve their racial teachings. Apostle Mark E. Peterson defended the Church's position at a BYU audience of Institute and Seminary teachers in 1954 at BYU.

He said: "No person having the least particle of negro blood can hold the priesthood. It does not matter if they are one-sixth negro or one-hundred and sixth, the curse of no Priesthood is the same. If an individual who is entitled to the priesthood marries a negro, the Lord has decreed that only spirits who are not eligible for the priesthood will come to that marriage as children."

The question was so well settled that when LDS Church leader Bruce R. McConkie assembled an encyclopedic summary of Mormon beliefs titled *Mormon Doctrine*, he could state with authority under the entry "Negro" this: "The negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man's origin. It is the Lord's doing, is based on his eternal laws of justice, and grows out of the lack of spiritual valiance of those concerned in their first estate."

The clear legal trends, however, were against discrimination. Institutional racial discrimination had been targeted by the civil rights organizations for years. As would be expected, the LDS Church came to the attention of the NAACP. Efforts were made to negotiate for change. In 1963 the NAACP leadership attempted to meet with LDS Church leaders but the Church refused. A meeting took place two years later in 1965. The LDS Church agreed in that meeting to support civil rights legislation pending in the Utah legislature. They agreed to publish an editorial in the *Deseret News*. The Church failed to keep the agreement. First Presidency member N. Eldon Tanner explained, "We have decided to remain silent."

By March of 1965, the NAACP took more public means to pressure the LDS Church. They organized an anti-discrimination march in Salt Lake City to protest the Church's policies. The next year the NAACP issued a statement criticizing the Church, complaining it "maintained a rigid and continuous segregation stand" and has made "no effort to counteract the widespread discriminatory practices in education, in housing, in employment, and other areas of life." It's a really well lawyered statement because if you are discriminating in education, housing, unemployment, and other areas that are constitutionally prohibited from accomplishing, that attacks you indirectly rather than going at your religious beliefs directly. Brilliant piece of lawyering there.

Although the institution was hesitating, its membership was increasingly willing to see more racial equality. The culture was changing, and change began to exert pressure inside the LDS Church.

In addition to the Church itself, Brigham Young University offered a visible target for protests. The University of Texas at El Paso was confronted with a protest by their track team. "After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, black members of the track team approached their coach and expressed their desire not to compete against Brigham Young University. When the coach disregarded their complaint, the athletes boycotted the meet." And that resulted in newspaper headlines. In 1969 members of the University of Wyoming football team intended to protest during a BYU football game by wearing black armbands. The protest was aborted when the university suspended the

players. That resulted in litigation that went up through the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. Stanford University suspended all athletic relations with BYU in November 1969. Legal pressure on this issue was reminiscent of earlier conflicts with the Federal government.

There were rumors the LDS Church faced a threat to remove its tax-exempt status. These rumors were denied by an LDS spokesman. However, the issue of racial discrimination was before the US courts for years prior to the LDS policy change. Bob Jones University had a policy against interracial marriage. In order to enforce that policy, if you were a black student they would admit you only if you were married. The Bob Jones University case was ultimately decided by the US Supreme Court permitting the IRS to revoke tax-exempt status because of racial discrimination. A direct threat by the US government would not have been necessary in the circumstances. The threat of taxation can ultimately destroy any institution, including the LDS Church. Chief Justice John Marshall coined the truism: "The power to tax involves the power to destroy."

Faced with the obvious national trend against institutional racism, and with the memory of its past conflict with the US, the LDS Church changed its teaching June 8, 1978. Prior to this, efforts to make the change were unsuccessful because Church leaders were unable to get approval from God. President Spencer W. Kimball turned the problem around. He wanted the change. He pondered it for months. He had a growing conviction that it would be a good thing to accomplish. He consulted carefully with the Twelve, he took their comments and he sought their advice. When the day came to decide the matter, he did not pray to have Divine approval, instead he presumed it to be time for changing the Church's policy and asked to be clearly told not to proceed if the Lord objected. Hearing no objection from the Twelve, his counselors, or heaven, the change was adopted. It was implemented in 1978 and announced in Official Declaration 2, now part of the Doctrine & Covenants.

It is obvious the LDS Church could not admit forfeiting priesthood because African Americans are now ordained. It is equally obvious this change is incompatible with prior teaching. To bridge this gulf, the Church issued a press release titled *Race and the Church: All Are Alike Unto God*. The contradiction is accounted for by "the absence of direct revelation" to guide the earlier Church leaders. The return of scarcity is blamed. "The origins of priesthood availability are not entirely clear. Some explanations with respect to this matter were made in the absence of direct revelation and references to these explanations are sometimes cited in publications. These previous personal statements do not represent Church doctrine." This is the process. Scarcity forces the institution to substitute man's doctrinal innovations for God's voice. Restoration ends and apostasy begins.

In addition to now denigrating earlier prophets, seers and revelators for not having revelation to guide them, the LDS Church also unequivocally condemned them in a lengthy editorial on their lds.org website: "None of these explanations is accepted today as the official doctrine of the Church. ...Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it

reflects actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form." They attribute their earlier missteps to US history, including legalized slavery, when the LDS Church began.

Those are two things from the past. Now there are issues upon us at the moment. Homosexuality is a big issue with some of the people in this room, about whom I care a great deal. It's an issue. It's a personal issue.

Latter-day Saint history has surprisingly few teachings addressing homosexuality. It is a topic of only recent importance. There is a timeline published on the website "No More Strangers: LGBT Mormon Forum", which retells many of the events. The issue did not emerge into direct and regular discussion until the 1950's.

Under traditional LDS doctrine recently articulated, homosexuality is sinful, requiring repentance. In Spencer W. Kimball's book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, he wrote: "the seriousness of the sin of homosexuality is equal to or greater than that of fornication or adultery; and that the Lord's Church will as readily take action to disfellowship or excommunicate the unrepentant practicing homosexual as it will the unrepentant fornicator or adulterer."

In a chapter titled *Crime Against Nature*, Spencer Kimball called it "unnatural and wrong." He elaborated: "All such deviations from normal, proper heterosexual relationships..." (Boy, that reminds me of some of the Church Handbook of Instruction stuff and admonitions from the Church Office Building to make Stake Presidents and Bishops less inquisitive.) "All such deviations from normal, proper heterosexual relationships..." (And I suppose part of the definition of that would depend upon the gymnastic ability and the yoga practices of the couple involved.) "...are not merely unnatural but wrong in the sight of God. Like adultery, incest and bestiality they carried the death penalty under the Mosaic law." You know, as Latter-day Saints, sex is one of those subjects about which I think you're all gripping right now. *My goodness! What's he going to say?* Well, I'll keep that to myself.

A grim milestone was set in 1965 when five young Mormons, all homosexuals, all counseled by Spencer W. Kimball for homosexual sin; and all of them committed suicide. All of them were in their early 20's. Three had recently returned from missionary service. All had been BYU students. The year that these five suicides took place... Let me read you from Ernest Wilkinson's devotional talk that he delivered in that same year: "Nor do we intend to admit to our campus any homosexuals. If any of you has this tendency and have not completely abandoned it, may I suggest that you leave the University immediately after this assembly ...we do not want others on this campus to be contaminated by your presence."

In the United States there is a tidal wave of legal activity on homosexual rights, right now underway. Since 2003 every state has either legalized same-sex marriage or adopted laws prohibiting it.

In Utah an amendment was put on the November 2004 ballot. It passed with approximately 66% of the vote favoring the amendment to Article I, §29, adding the following language to the Utah constitution: "Marriage consists only of the legal union between a man and a woman. No other domestic union, however denominated, may be recognized as a marriage or given the same or substantially equivalent effect." This provision took effect in January 1, 2005. It was declared unconstitutional in December 2013 by the US District Court here in Utah. Last month the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that decision.

Proposition 8 in California faced the same state electoral vote in November of 2008. The ballot fight was aided by the LDS Church providing both vocal support, and assisting with door-to-door campaign efforts. Before the vote was taken, church leaders David A. Bednar, Russell [Ballard], and Quentin Cook (of the Twelve) and Whitney Clayton (of the Seventy) broadcast video into California urging Church members to be involved in supporting Proposition 8. When the vote was counted, the LDS effort had proven decisive and Proposition 8 passed. A post Proposition 8 statement from the LDS Church made this announcement: "The Church expresses deep appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the many Latter-day Saints and others who supported the coalitions in efforts regarding these amendments."

LDS opposition to Proposition 8 resulted in an organized effort to revoke the LDS Church's tax exempt status. A website was established to instruct those willing to protest on how to approach removing the 501c3 status of the church. The protest focused on the Internal Revenue Code provision which limited favorable tax treatment to institutions "organized and operated exclusively for religious" purposes and in which "no part of the earnings" and "no substantial part of the activities involves carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation."

The LDS Church has been publicly softening its position on homosexuality since winning the Proposition 8 battle. The Boy Scouts change to accept homosexuals was immediately approved by the LDS Church as a visible mea culpa. This is also true of others involved with Proposition 8. An LDS writer has advocated same-sex temple marriage in a popular Mormon journal.

The Deseret News national web issued an article on Friday saying that the IRS is now investigating political activity by churches.

The LDS Church is necessarily attentive to legal trends. Its existence was once hanging by the thinnest of threads because of laws targeting it. Lawyers are consistently among the highest leadership of the LDS Church. The legal, economic, [and] social environment in which LDS Mormonism has evolved cannot be divorced from its evolving doctrine, because many changes were adaptations to this environment.

So we turn to women.

When Joseph Smith was alive, women had limited property rights. When they married their property became the property of their husbands under the common law doctrine. It was not until beginning in the 1840's that some states first began to modify the common law in order to protect women's property from their husbands and their husbands' creditors.

Women's right to vote in the US began in 1869 in Wyoming. They were allowed to serve on juries in Wyoming beginning in that year. In 1893 Colorado let women vote. In 1896 Idaho and Utah did likewise. Keep this in mind because you live in a fundamentally different world than the world in which Mormonism began. The National Organization for Women was created in 1966 to pursue equal rights for women.

The ACLU announces on its website "Forty years ago, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) board of directors determined that women's rights should be the organization's highest priority. They created the ACLU Women's Rights Project and named Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the first director. She is now on the United States Supreme Court, and the Women's Rights Project (WRP) has won many landmark court decisions, and achieved significant legislative successes. They have shifted public awareness and understanding of women's equality issues."

The right to have contraception was determined in the Griswold case written by Justice William O. Douglas, who wrote that the right was found in the "penumbras" and "emanations" of other rights that are enumerated. A penumbra is that hazy place between the lamp that is shining in the darkness beyond; it's just the gray area in between. That's where you find these rights.

The innovation would produce another dramatic penumbral decision in Justice Blackman's landmark abortion ruling eight years later. In the newly found constitutional "penumbra" Justice Harry Blackmun found the right to privacy also gave women the right to an abortion. Writing for a 7-2 majority in Roe V. Wade, he said: "The right to privacy, whether it be founded in the Fourteenth Amendment's concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action, as we feel it is, or, as the district court determined, in the Ninth Amendment's reservation of rights to the people, is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." At the time of the decision all states limited abortion, and the majority prohibited abortion altogether. The dissenting opinion of Justices Byron White and William Rehnquist lamented the majority exercised improvident and extravagant judicial power to fashion a new constitutional right.

Whether it was improvident or not, the culture of the United States has been shaped by Roe v. Wade from 1973 to the present. At present it is estimated over 56 million Americans do not live today, having been aborted. That holocaust was designed to target an unwanted population, and it has worked as intended.

In 1986 the US Supreme Court found that sexual harassment is a form of illegal job discrimination. In 1999 the Supreme Court ruled there were punitive damages available for sex discrimination. In 2009 President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act. In 2013 Defense Secretary Leon Panetta lifted the ban on women serving in combat roles, reversing a 1994 rule.

All these larger national events affected views of Latter-day Saints. From imposing short haircuts on missionaries and BYU students, warning about "hippies" and drug use, advocating large families and not artificially limiting births, to denouncing rock and roll music, the LDS Church has been reactionary, trying to slow cultural changes. Whether viewed as progress or decay, LDS leaders have fought it.

The Ordain Women organization maintains a website in which Mormons are given a place to advocate change in LDS Church policy. They hope to end "gender inequality" by "calling attention to the need for the ordination of Mormon women to the priesthood." The public has responded with numerous profiles pleading for change to LDS doctrine. The Church responded through the Deseret News in an article March 17, 2014 titled *LDS Church: Aims of 'Ordain Women' Detract from Dialogue*. But the following month in General Conference, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks gave a talk titled: *The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood* in which he said, "The Lord has directed that only men will be ordained to offices in the priesthood." But he added this: "We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be? When a woman—young or old—is set apart to preach the gospel as a full-time missionary, she is given priesthood authority to perform a priesthood function. ...Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties."

And so according to Oaks, women can use the authority of the priesthood, though not necessarily ordained. Extending this reasoning to its logical conclusion, women will one day be able to baptize with "authority" borrowed from a male key-holder. If institutional discrimination on the basis of sex ever threatens the LDS Church's tax-exempt status, this seminal General Conference talk by a former Justice on the Utah Supreme Court can be the basis to permit the first female Bishop to serve, using authority borrowed from a male key-holder. In fact, under this paradigm, you really only need one guy and everyone can function.

In conclusion, LDS Mormonism claims Joseph Smith as its founder. Joseph thought his restoration one day would revolutionize the world. It was a "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" that would roll forth and grind to dust all other institutions. Brigham Young thought one of the necessary obstacles needing grinding was the US Government. However, LDS Church's history is filled with the contrary process: The US culture has been grinding away at LDS Mormonism's peculiar doctrines, and pushing it to conform with national cultural changes. It is not difficult to foresee how the present legal and social environment will influence future position changes on women's rights

and more open acceptance of homosexuality. We should all expect that the Church is going to do this.

There are two possibilities to account for the LDS Church's history of compromise on their doctrine. The first possibility is these teachings, although once proclaimed to be fundamental, even necessary to obtain exaltation in the afterlife, were falsely portrayed in the first place. The Book of Mormon seems to support this view. That is, if you read what Christ announces as His doctrine. In that statement Christ makes no mention of plural wives, priesthood, priesthood bans, or homosexuality. And Christ's admonition ends with "whoso shall declare more or less than this and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil."

Well, if this is so, then contrary to LDS past claims, no soul was ever damned by refusing to accept the doctrine of plural wives. Nor was God going to take away all priesthood from the church as soon as the church attempted to ordain black African descendants. Nor has Almighty banned women from the priesthood. Nor is homosexuality a serious moral offense before God. God's silence led the LDS Church to oversell these teachings and therefore they were, and are, free to "correct" them.

The other possibility is they got the doctrine right before, and by accommodating American legal and cultural demands the LDS Mormonism has been cutting down the Tree of Life to build a wooden bridge. If this is the case, then popular will, Federal legislation, and the US Supreme Court will have more to say in the future about LDS Mormon doctrine than the Church's "prophets, seers and revelators," just as they have exerted the primary influence after Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Thank you.

[55:00] Dan Wotherspoon: Denver's paper has presented a history of past doctrinal changes along with what he sees as potential changes currently trending within Mormonism. I don't have much to argue with in terms of his presentation of the historical moments or the leader quotations he cites. I do, however, have great difficulty with the historical narrative that he has told them within, the selection of things to share or not share, and even more with his framing of his story. *History... "his" "story"*. Certainly it's a story of many people here. The world is "going to hell in a handbasket," trending the wrong way. Go back to the source. I challenge that story here.

His is a story that ultimately culminates in a huge false dichotomy, one that he sets up in the very title as well as the final lines of his paper. Either the teachings at the heart of these four areas he touched [and] toured us through were falsely portrayed in the first place, or they are true revelations that Mormonism once got right but just now has compromised on, sold out for a mess of pottage. According to his tale our tradition has and is cutting down the Tree of Life. Forget its fruit, he seems to say. We want its lumber. We want to put it to use towards a doomed project accommodating to a fallen world. In presenting his tale and his dichotomy he excludes the huge middle, with wonderful other possible framings for this history of change. Two choices are fine in the court of law, where those involved must decide guilt or innocence. Deductive logic can be helpful at times. But the coherence of a case falls apart when there are substantive

challenges to the premises one builds from. In my response today I offer an alternative vision that I believe challenges his foundation, and in doing so offer a far more satisfying and capable way of framing the same ground that he has covered.

First however: where he and I agree. For anyone who has heard my podcasts for even six or seven episodes, or has engaged with me in conversation for a long time, you've probably heard me talk about a favorite metaphor and a framing for the power and the fire that is at the base of any revelation that kind of starts a church or that activates us in our hearts. It's from the Franciscan Father, David Steindl-Rast. He talks about God's revelation being like; when you receive that you're in the midst of the churning volcano. It's active, it's going, it's full, it is chaos. But as it erupts and as it flows over the sides we start to see it begin to cool. It is molten lava that is running down the sides but clearly you can still see the fire within it. You can see its origins. By the time it gets down to the bottom and a bit of time after the eruption, what it is? It's simply cooled rock, very, very difficult to see what is there.

Stephen Carter, the current editor of Sunstone, also helped to personalize this with me a few years ago, and he talks about our personal spiritual experiences. When we have them, when we are in those modes of wonderful enlightenment, almost out of body, we're soaring with open hearts, and everything is coming to us all at once; we have that experience. But guess what, soon we begin to say, *I don't know what to make of this*, and we begin to start to tell a story about that experience. Maybe we're going to share it with our friend. *"Man, you just can't believe that I'm so expanded here, and I can't even convey it to you, but it was kind of like this..."* And you begin to tell a story. You begin tell a part, and you begin to tell a part, and then pretty soon Fast and Testimony meeting rolls around and you get up to tell that thing, and by then you've nailed it down to just one or two lessons from that story. So from the fire, from the expansiveness, and things like this, we begin to quiet, to tame, to cool that story, and then from that point on, unless we do—I think Denver and I both agree, and I would hope most of us here are clear—unless we continually go back and mine it for something new, we're going to forever only interact with that story by those two or three things that we had decided to tell in Fast and Testimony meeting. For the next twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, that will be the moment of our experience instead of going back again and again to do that.

Where he and I absolutely agree is when you get institutions involved with their own needs and with their own ends that they must serve, absolutely, it's inferior to our direct experience with God, with our direct hearing from the divine source. So we're one hundred percent in agreement with that. As I wrote down here, and believe I've shared with him in an email: "I really wish that you simply would have asserted this, instead of this long history in these four areas Simply assert institutions get in our way. They screw up that thing. There's another layer between us and God, and this need to do it, because if we could then attempt to simply assert it we could have gotten to the more interesting things."

How does God actually work with us in our lives? That's what I hope that perhaps my conversation will prompt as you guys come up here. Certainly there are layers of his paper that I'm not addressing here at all. (Now back to text, sorry.)

I am far less certain than Denver that our societal trends, including and even especially the four areas that he discussed today, are the result of a large scale failure to hear God's voice, to feel God's Spirit. As Francis Bacon once observed, "God has two books; the book of his Word (scripture) and the book of his Works (nature)." We must read them both. Societies are comprised of individuals, and God works with individuals. Individuals interact with information from science and observations from nature and their own encounters with it, and with other people, and with what is new and is challenging, and they weigh it out and we weight it out in many deeply spiritual ways. God not only works and teaches us through direct wowee-zowee revelation to either ourselves or His designated prophets. The pronouncements of scripture and ancient prophets are not things that we can fully, and for all time, base our understandings of God and God's working upon.

As Adam Miller wrote recently, "God works with whatever small knowledge of the world we've already got. He speaks to people in their weakness and after the manner of their language *"that they might come to an understanding."* You'll recognize that from D&C 1. Our sacred texts witness God's willingness to suffer this weakness. They tell of a mix of stories from many different times and places that illustrate what happens when the strength of God's polyphonic voice gets funneled into the weakness of our mono channel ears. Miller speaks of the importance of not trying to harmonize scripture to pretend that the voices there do not agree with others. Scripture, he says, is best to meet rough, as uncut, for it is in this form that they bear witness to real revelations given to real people, because they also bear witness to the host of real weaknesses that can help socket God's world into their worlds.

Are plural marriages, withholding of priesthood from those of certain races and sexes, and full honor of relationship status to those via biology [and] are same sex attracted, really things that we want to hang our hats on as eternal? Are they Tree of Life stuff? I thought Tree of Life stuff was the love of God, was never to exclude. Is the Tree of Life stuff only communicated in face to face direct revelations from God, to us, to our prophets? Can it also be even more reliably available to us in our ongoing and ever unfolding experiences of love? In our relationship with family and friends, in meeting someone and coming to know them such that their divinity and absolute worth and blessedness reveal themselves to us in the ways that we had previously never imagined?

Revelations of God in such form are Denver's excluded middle. We are presented with new information, new persons, and experiences. We do fresh dives into the holy fire, and we yield to its burnings. Of course, not everyone does this in a disciplined way or with full consciousness of what they are doing, and they certainly do not do it at the same time or at the same speed. But I read the ultimate story of life in Mormonism—contrary to Denver's narrative—as one of advance, of ascension, not fall; of expansion, a

widening of moral concern, of growth into greater relationship with all of God's creation, and especially each other. As described by the philosopher Hegel's powerful framing: "At each and every moment we have active theses and antitheses, antitheses at play." Denver's examples—he actually left out some things of hippy culture and free love and illustrating the types of excess that we learned from... Basically the things that so many people, when they present the "going to hell in a handbasket thing," is excesses and things to avoid. You could call them the antitheses, antithesis, or whatever you'd like to do. But my assertion is that they are among our most powerful teachers. They are essential as well, that we bounce off when the new idea comes out there, we bounce off the rough parts.

...When the Church talks about John Dehlin's website and Kate Kelly as leading people away from the Church, to me, the bloggernacle with its free-for-all is absolutely saving the folks, especially in those voices that are so negative, so strong, so unfed-up here. They teach us what we don't want to be. How we don't want to be in that pain any more, just as much as they influence people out, I think. (I've of course botched where I'm at so hopefully this will pick up with some kind of transition.)

Although it is halting and frustrating at times, with painful lessons [and] with many growing pains, I trust us. I trust our human hearts. I trust that we're all susceptible to the influence of the spirit as we find ourselves faced with new questions and experiences. I trust that we are, as Paul urged, "proving all things," and though it's ultimately haltingly and with frustrating setbacks, whether it is sexual or other forms of excess, or ugly inspired pronouncements from those who shouldn't be prophets, we are holding fast to that which is good. What we are seeing in both church and society is a dialectic of creative advance that is far from a compromise of ideals.

It is many ancients, and we in our day have come to taste the fruit of the Tree of Life. We must understand it is a tree that never stops growing. Each taste can and should be fresh, far more delightful than each past bite because our senses are now better honed. And as the creative advance of the divine is showing us, even more wonderfully, it is a tree that has ever growing new varieties of delightful fruits. Many here testify of the envelopment of spirit as we meet and honor and love persons in depth, persons of all races and sexes, and who, in our encounter with them, bring all of their experiences. In the hugeness of their hearts and the fierceness of their efforts to understand the fullness of sexual identity, along with every other aspect of what it means to be a divine being in human bodies, our gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and intersexed brothers and sisters serve us as teachers and prophets. From then we understand even more of creation's richness, diversity, and goodness as we strive to love more deeply in our relationships with our husbands and wives, whether same or opposite sex as us; God is made manifest. Our hearts swell as we meet women whose gifts of hard won wisdom and leadership have been allowed to flourish. We soar with the angels as we receive the ministry of black men and the blessings from their priesthood hands, and in sitting and learning at their feet. Soon we will know this, and even more sweetness and fullness of joy with our sisters, as well.

"And the angel said unto [Nephi] ...Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all [other] things. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul." (1 Nephi 11:21-23). Two verses later it is compared to a fountain of the living waters. I testify that it is one that is shedding itself abroad in the hearts of all of us as we meet and ponder the meaning of all that God is showing us, the stirrings and one-on-one changes of heart and mind in these same four areas that Denver bemoans as compromise of revelations, as sure as any received by Abraham, Isaiah, or Joseph Smith. We, individuals, society, Mormonism, are on the journey that is anything but a fall. Thanks.

Question & Answer Session

[1:09:30] We do have times for questions so I get to make up the rules, and I also get to amend them if I decide they weren't the best rules in the beginning. What we will do, those of you that are interested in asking a question, if you'd like to line up over here by this wall, this will be on deck in the chair. There's the microphone, and I will call on the first one. They will be able to ask at the microphone the question. It can be asked of one or both of them. I'd like to ask Denver Snuffer and Dan Wotherspoon to keep their responses to two minutes. I know that's concise but it seems like we might have more than one or two questions, and that would be helpful. You look like you're ready to ask the first question. I'll let you go ahead.

Question: Dan, thank you for focusing on the fruit of the Tree of Life. I was looking for that in Denver's remarks, but let me ask this question of Denver. My take away is that you stated that the LDS Church has changed fundamental doctrine, is changing, and will continue to change because of submission to social and governmental pressure for fear of losing tax status. Is that a correct take away?

Denver Snuffer: The definition of fundamental doctrine is not something that I applied to the Church; it's what the Church has advocated on its own. I'm contrasting what the Church said at one time was fundamental doctrine, with what it has done to abrogate, denounce, renounce and even condemn unequivocally out of their own mouth, a prior practice. The motivation for accomplishing that transition was the focus of the paper. I'm not trying to make a moral judgment. I'm trying to understand the events against the backdrop of why the events took place. Not when they said were they right or wrong, but when they said it, and they said it with the "In the name of Jesus Christ" comment. Brigham Young I read, and I read that on purpose because he was stating, "I'm telling you this as my status as a prophet of God. I'm telling you this in the name of Jesus Christ, and I'm telling you this will never change," and it's changed. Now the Church, after making the changes, turned around and said, "We unequivocally condemn that." That's the purpose of the paper. The purpose of the paper is also to highlight the fact

that institutionally, this is the problem. The problem is that truth and love and purity do exist, but it exists primarily in a form that is not institutional.

According to the scriptures, one of the criticisms that were made about the paper was, "this is false dichotomy". According to the scriptures there are only two ways, "there are save but two Churches only." And one church, if it's going to subject itself to institutional control, vagaries of the law, the pressure of the tax code, everything else; that church will necessarily become sullied and soiled, tossed and pulled, and ultimately wind up contradicting itself. There is another church. And I agree that that church can remain pure, unsullied, untouched, untaxed, unregulated. That purity can exist in your heart. That purity can be found between you and God. I think any institution is going to suffer the exactly same history.

Question: My question is, if the fruit of the Tree of Life is not available to homosexuals and to women once they are embraced within the Church, what will they find instead?

Comment: I don't agree with that, that they're denied. They should be denied.

Denver Snuffer: The problem addressed in the paper, and the turf on which I feel very comfortable discussing, is the problem of Church doctrine, the legal pressure, fundamental positions being taken as if they were out of God's mouth itself, and then contradicted later to illustrate the problem of the institution. I don't think that I can, or ever should, have looked for institutional approval for my relationship with God. There was a time I did. There was a time I cared a great deal about that. But the institution has rendered that now an impossibility because I can't serve within the Church. That hasn't done a thing to deter my conviction, my relationship, [and] my fidelity to God. Likewise, I think in every individual's life, this world is a terrible place and this world is a wonderful place. It is precisely wonderful because it is so terrible. It doesn't matter what circumstances you find yourself in, everything down here is going to pull away at you. Eventually everything is going to wear out, break down. There are going to be disappointments, there is going to be challenges, there is going to be disagreements and arguments. The comfort that you find, like Joseph Smith in Liberty jail: "Peace my son, this is only going to be for a small moment, and if you endure it well you're going to be rewarded on high." I don't think that an institution can embrace with love, everyone, because some of us hate some others of us, and the institution would like to love us all. And those who get control get to use the bully pulpit for their purposes, and those that don't have it get to resent it.

I don't think, ultimately, that the fix will be institutional. I think it will be personal, and I think it will be individual, and I think there will be a gathering, and that gathering will be called Zion, and it will happen because the prophecies foretell it. But I don't think it's going to be after the fashion of something that can regulate or take control of, because anytime you manage to get control you wind up in politics and economics.

Dan Wotherspoon: In his fear of institutions, again, I argue, I asserted the same sort of thing. But I don't want to lose the fact that it's important that we work these things out in

community with each other. So the fact that we have an institution that provides the buildings, that provides some of the structures in which we meet and interact with each other and learn from each other, to me, shouldn't be outweighed simply by this. But again, I think both of us would be in agreement that, no matter what is said there, it's you and your relationship with God. It's you and the fire, yourself, that has to be able to drive it, to not be just simply interacting with it so far down the mountain to where it's cooled, that you can hardly even tell it's there. So I just wanted to shout out that I do think it's important to work out. Whatever God... The primary actors in the world are not institutions. The primary actors in the world are people, and we're complex, and we go forward and we go backwards, and we halt and we run fast, and we stumble. When I see an institution changing the way the Mormon Church is, even though it's frustrating, they are not changing anywhere nearer the directions I want, and when they say stupid things that just make me want to go crazy, I still see it as an advance, because we as people are advancing. We are meeting each other, we are learning from each other, we're engaging sciences, we are understanding what's going on, and this is sure revelation. This is sure revelation simply unfolding in just a messier way. So again, I want to get us together as often as possible.

Question: I think we can learn a lot from the community process, and discussing all that, but that's not revelation. My question is, usually the best we can do to personal revelation, whether it is lay members or leaders, is a yes or no, magic eight ball kind of a thing. And I'm not denigrating that, I'll take whatever I can get, but how do we move from that, to actually getting a complete sentence out of the Lord? [laughter and applause]

Denver Snuffer: You go ahead.

Dan Wotherspoon: I don't think it's possible. I don't think the Lord speaks in sentences. Seriously, every powerful spiritual experience I've had has been so overwhelming, so much bigger, so much beyond any kind of language. It's the downhill, it's the explaining it to you, to my friend, to my congregation or something, is where we put the words on it. And that's why it's so important to go back and constantly do the dive. I honor Isaiah. I honor Abraham. In fact, you left out a few references to some of the prophets that you really admire. I admire them because they're examples to us of Joseph Smith, of going straight to the Lord, of having that face-to-face relationship the way Adam, in Genesis describes, had with God in the Garden. I'm with that process, but I'm with all the time. Just as I don't accept the cosmology of a flat earth, sitting on waters below and a firmament held up by the pillars of heaven, I don't accept Abraham's pronouncements on cosmology. I don't feel the need to honor everything that they say. I honor their interaction with God, and I try to look at that as a model for my own life. And even in an institutional setting, to all remember this, we have to go straight to the source.

Denver Snuffer: You know, I was raised by a Baptist mother and got Bible verses read at me every morning before I went to school throughout childhood. When Mormon missionaries came and told me about the Joseph Smith story, and when Mormon missionaries assured me that Joseph saw God, and that, if you follow James 1:5 and

you ask God, He will give you an answer, and if you will pray about the Book of Mormon, God will make it known to you whether it's true or not, I accepted that. I was young still, I was still a teenager, but I accepted that as literal. I accepted that as possible. I had faith that that could happen. I'm not a theologian. I do believe God not only talks in sentences, but can make Himself known to man. Literally! I believe all that. I believe that God did appear to Joseph. I believe that He did appear to Isaiah. Having that understanding, I did not think there was anything unusual when an angel appeared to me, because an angel did appear to me. I thought that was the normal, usual, every day way that Mormon religion was practiced. Sitting in a ward as a young teenager, looking out at all these experienced Mormons, listening to the General Authorities, I thought they all were talking to God in the temple every Thursday. I thought this was common, ordinary. It took a long time. I presumed that was what everyone walked around with. It took a long time before I mentioned anything about any of the experience that I had had, before I realized that's not usual, that's not normal, and that's not customary. And so, I'm trying to make it usual, I'm trying to make it customary, I'm trying to say, Yes God is real! Because if I have seen Him, I think you can see Him, and ought to. I think everyone should make the fiery ascent to God's presence. I think it should not be limited to an occasional "here," or an occasional "there." I think we should have an abundance of witnesses. And the prophecy that Moroni spoke to Joseph Smith, that the time is going to come when no one needs to say to anyone else, "Know ye the Lord, for they shall all know Him," needs to be fulfilled. It is lying dormant. [applause]

Dan Wotherspoon: I agree with that principle that, go to yourself. You're going to go with your symbol system; you are going to go with your expectations. A Buddhist will never go and have the experience with the angel, with Jesus, and things like that. What Denver is having is not the same experience as what Hershel had, what Mohammed had, ... and things like this. And so when we talk about whether God speaks in sentences, what language does He speak in? He speaks in the systems of ours that open up to this sort of level of presence. But it is not... A deep dive through one symbol system is wonderful and it's pretty hard to get out of it, but I think we need to stay aware that there are so many other people diving and meeting God, meeting the divine and so many other different ways. I honor Denver's experience, but I can't limit God to the symbol system that simply we hold in Mormonism or wider. I'm with Mormonism's expansive views that simply say truth in God is working everywhere.

Denver Snuffer: This much I know: The angel said, "On the first day, of the third month, in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." Those are the words! I can quote them still. He spoke in a sentence.

Question: The more these situations are going on, I feel so strongly, more and more, I just keep getting that this is all about unity, and it's an opportunity for us. And if unity is about "agreeing" then frankly God did a terrible job. So the more I am seeing all of this, what I keep going to is, the quest for Zion seems to me the quest for open heartedness, and charity, and unity. And so in my family and my community, when I see one side that says an actively gay person will never come into the presence of God, or a gay person will go to hell. And then on the other side, I see a person who is an active Mormon, or a

person who doesn't approve of homosexuality, is an awful person, is a hater, and I see those two things. I see Christians say Mormons are going to hell. It seems to me that we more dig our feet in and say, *I'm right, and I'm trying to push this agenda in my discussion...we are working away from God, and away from Zion.* More and more I think that if we can say, *This is where I am, and because of my experiences, which are such and such, this is what I believe, and let me hear where you are, and what you believe, and let's talk and consider,* I think that's great. Even though I disagree with you and I may think you're wrong, I trust God to lead you to what is right, and I trust the atonement of Christ, which is my theology, to take care of whatever you've got wrong, just like I trust that for me. I think and I believe that truth exists, but I think when we all know all truth, we'll all agree. And in the meantime we are trying to find our way there. So my question is, first of all, is that possible? I mean, do you agree?

Denver Snuffer: I agree very much. In the first book I wrote I said, "Religion was intended to be applied internally only."

Question: Yes, thank you. My other question is, my theology, what I find in the scriptures on the issue of our day of homosexuality, is that I believe that homosexuals are a gift to us, to teach us great things. I think we need to learn charity. I also believe that God does have a standard, but I want to know if those two things can coexist. Can people hear me say, I truly love you, I'm thankful for you, I embrace you, I accept you, but this is my theology and morality? Can we be in this place where we can love each other with our differences instead of seeking agreement? Can we seek unity without seeking agreement?

Denver Snuffer: I grew up in a little town in Idaho. Homosexuality in the 1960s was almost a nonexistent issue. However, there was a restaurant in Mountain Home, Idaho that was owned by a gay man and his boyfriend; they lived together. Everyone knew that they were "funny." They were comfortable living in a community that was full of a bunch of retired military and active duty military people in Idaho in the 1960s, where I suppose they were just as Republican there and then as they are in Idaho now. It was known. It was not talked about. There might be a passing reference; that was it. I worked in those guys' restaurant. It was one of my first jobs. I washed dishes in a restaurant owned by a gay fellow and his live-in lover. It was no big deal. There was no politics involved; there was no agitating on the issue.

One of my law school classmates is here. He wound up on a drive to Idaho with a fellow who announced that he was gay and attracted to the man. It was one of those awkward moments. [laughter] When he came back we kind of chuckled about that. But the fact of the matter is that both he and I had business relationships with that fellow. It was essentially a nonevent. It was strange. It was a "*thanks, but no.*" I think we ought to be ginger about the way in which we deal with one another's weaknesses and problems. I think we ought to be firm in what we believe, and apply it rigorously internally, and then have compassion on every idiot you are going to meet— because we are all idiots, myself included. I agree with you.

Dan Wotherspoon: I agree with you too, but I don't think those answers are very fast at all. I am completely willing to live intention with that. Where you pushed a little bit too far, to me, is: "I love you. I love you but these are my standards, or this is that." To me, I'm willing to simply say, *I'm going to hear you, I'm going to be with you, I'm going to see your life, as much as you will show to me, without trying to have a resolution.* When I talked about the Hegelian dialectic, it's a process, and I'm completely fine for it taking forever in my own heart, or a long time.

Cathleen Gilbert (Moderator): We are out of time. Thank you to Denver Snuffer and Dan Wotherspoon.

2014.09.09 Lecture 10: Preserving the Restoration

September 9, 2014

Mesa, Arizona

This is the concluding part of a single talk. This has been going on beginning in Boise, and now, concluding here. It's all one talk—and it really helps if you have heard 9/10ths of the talk that preceded today—but they all stand alone; it's just that you'll understand things better, I believe, today if you've got in mind what went before.

All of this has been about Zion. The whole purpose of this endeavor is limited to that one subject: Zion and seeing that Zion comes again.

I wanna clarify a couple of things preliminarily. If you go to the testimony that John the Baptist gave of Christ that is recorded by John in the third chapter of John—it runs on for a number of verses from 27 to 36, but I want to only take out of that one reference that John makes to our Lord. He says that Christ had the Spirit given to Him without measure (see John 3:34; see also John 3:3 RE), meaning that when our Lord was down here accomplishing what was expected of Him, He had to have access to the Spirit in a degree to which none of us can equal. That was necessary in order for Him to fulfill His responsibility.

We are in a very different state—all of us, even the very best of us. **We** are being "proven." Christ came to prove us; we are here to **be** proven. As a result of that, all of **us** (according to the scriptures) are **given** weakness. **You** are not going to perform in this estate at the same level as our Lord performed in this estate—period. You are given weakness, and He was given the Spirit without measure.

And so, adding to what went on before (about the ascent up Jacob's ladder and the arrival to the state at which you've completed the course and you've "attained unto the resurrection"), understand that our Savior—who accomplished that—did it in this world using a very different criteria and experience by which to live His life from the one in which we live ours. And that's just the way that the plan operates, the way that the development operates.

Now, it's clear when it comes to "the gospel" that the gospel has—as its standard—absolutes. Doctrine and Covenants 1 section [verse] 31 says: *For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the **least** degree of allowance* (emphasis added; see also T&C 54:5). And if that's not a troubling enough idea, then if you go to King Benjamin in Mosiah 4, verse 29, it says (this is King Benjamin talking): *And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them* (see also Mosiah 2:6 RE). So, there's an infinite supply of opportunities with which to commit sin, **and** God cannot look upon that with any degree of allowance.

It's sort of a formidable challenge for us to look at, but there is a Divine purpose underlying that. And that Divine purpose is to bring us—in humility—to God, recognizing

that there's a gulf between who and what we are and what it is that is expected of us in order to be truly holy.

Think about all the ways that there are to err. In the warnings that are given in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants concerning priesthood: *[It can] be conferred upon us, [it's] true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or...gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in **any** degree of unrighteousness...* (D&C 121:37, emphasis added). And by the way, "any degree of unrighteousness"—it tells you in verse 41 how power or influence is to be affected, and it is **not** *by virtue of the priesthood*; it is *only by persuasion, ...long-suffering, ...gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; [By pure...] By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy* (D&C 121:41-42; see also T&C 139:5-6).

This presents an opportunity for everyone, every time, to fail. In addition to all this, if you go to Second Nephi chapter 26, at verse 29: *He commandeth...there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion* (see also 2 Nephi 11:17 RE).

Zion can only come about as a consequence of consecration and sacrifice and not as a result of seeking to get gain. In fact, when you're in the employ of the Lord, you ought to be sacrificing. It shouldn't be gainful. It should cost you in order to serve.

To accomplish purity, there are absolutes that are necessary. Sacrifice is absolutely necessary, and equality is necessary as well—or **at least** there be no poor among us. My guess is that, among us sitting in this room here today, there are those who have significant issues with financial needs—and there are some sitting here today who could help in solving those.

[Phone rings] Oh, hey—hold my calls, will ya? [laughter]

In Alma chapter 1, it talks about a circumstance in which the priests served. Alma 1, beginning at verse 26:

And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did...labor, every man according to his strength. And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely. (Alma 1:26-27; see also Alma 1:5 RE)

You see, they prospered in this, and they were blessed because of it. We should learn from their example, when they were prospering, about what it was they did that was right that brought it about. The ideal is not to have a professional class of clergyman. The ideal is to have every one of us being equal.

In our own day, in a revelation given through Joseph, Doctrine and Covenants 52, beginning at 39, it says:

Let the residue of the elders watch over the churches, and declare the word in the regions round about...and let them labor with their own hands that there be no idolatry nor wickedness practiced. (D&C 52:39)

Labor with their own hands means that they're not professionals—because as soon as you turn them into a professional clergy, people idolize them; and the object is to avoid idolatry, to avoid the professional class of clergy to whom people look for blessings at their hands. *That there be no idolatry nor wickedness practiced*—"wickedness" because when you have people elevated that have control... Almost invariably, the existence of control tends to lead, invariably—to lead, inexorably—to abuse. Because if all you have with which to work is persuasion, you're gonna find out that there are a lot of people who you will never persuade. There are a lot of people who will never get aboard.

Therefore, if you're limited to persuasion alone, you have to afford people the freedom to reject, to be contrary, to raise their hand and make a contrasting point, and not have someone say, "Your point isn't welcome here. You're not doing what you need to do!"

And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that [doth] not these things, the same is not my disciple. (ibid, vs. 40; see also T&C 39:9)

And isn't it interesting that both in the case of Alma (talking about how their system worked with their priests) and in the modern revelation (talking about how things should be among us), there is no such thing as a "professional clergy," followed immediately by, "remember the poor, remember the needy"—in both instances. That's not happenstance.

Well, I'm talking about priesthood because I want to remind you of a few things about priesthood **conceptually**. The priesthood was restored by John the Baptist **before** there was any organized church. Therefore, it **is** before, and it **is** independent and has never required a church in order for priesthood to exist.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 6: *And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he received under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro...* Now, just to remind you about this, Jethro was a Midianite. He was a descendant of Midian; Midian was the son of Keturah. Keturah was the wife of Abraham after Sarah. After Sarah died, Keturah bore him children, one of whom was Midian. The birthright had already been given to Isaac.

See, there is so much about the priesthood that has yet to be clarified (and I think that is a good thing, and I'm not going to clarify enough for mischief to ensue). But the fact of the matter is that that priesthood which Abraham handed to Midian—which then descended down and came to Moses—did not possess the birthright; didn't possess that. Therefore, it was not the same thing as the priesthood that had belonged previously to the Patriarchs. It was something less, and it was something different.

But Moses obtained **that** priesthood through Jethro, a Midianite—not even an Israelite, because Midian was named at the same time genealogically as Isaac, and it would be Isaac's son, Jacob, who would be named Israel; and it was Israel who possessed the birthright that descended down. And so, Moses inherited a form of priesthood that was, by its very nature, lesser. It's one of the reasons why the prophets of the Old Testament all had to be ordained directly by heaven in order to obtain what they obtained.

In any event, this point is only this: priesthood exists independent of Israel; it exists independent of a church; and while the church may be dependent upon priesthood, priesthood is not and never has been dependent upon a church—period. I hope you understand that. **Priesthood is not and never has been dependent upon a church!** These are two entirely different topics and very important to be understood for our purposes here today.

In addition to this, I hope you all understand that the Holy Ghost **can and does speak to everyone**—Baptists, Lutherans, Catholics. C.S. Lewis could not have written and comprehended what he wrote and understood unless the light of the Holy Ghost shown upon that man's mind. Period. There is no organization which **controls** the Holy Ghost. It is untrue to say that there is some organization(which itself must be dependent upon the existence of priesthood for its order) has the authority to control the priesthood in all the world! That is utter rubbish!

And the practice of the missionaries demonstrates the "rubbish-ness" of it all—because when the missionaries come and teach about the Book of Mormon, they get out Moroni chapter 10, verse 4 and admonish you to pray and *ask God...if these things are not true; and ...[God] will manifest the truth of [that] unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost* (see also Moroni 10:2 RE). To the unbaptized, to the unwashed, to the uninitiated... They're invited to come and listen to the Holy Ghost. And if they submit and if they do that, the Holy Ghost will speak to them. And the Holy Ghost does, can, will speak to anyone. You need these concepts in your mind in order to understand.

The Holy Ghost and the claim of owning a franchise is hollow, and the idea that the Holy Ghost can be controlled is false. The fact that LDS Mormons have some acquaintance with the Holy Ghost means very little. It does not distinguish Latter-day Saints, and it should not separate you from the Holy Ghost and its ministrations.

The Holy Ghost does not thrill you; it informs you. It gives you understanding. If you want to be thrilled, I can get that from *Braveheart* (because the Bruces are in my ancestry; Alice Bruce is one of my ancestors, and I was glad to see the repentance of

the son who led the rebellion). In any event, thrilling music can do it. A great TV show can get you thrilled and feeling goose-bumps. And **that's not the Holy Ghost**. The Holy Ghost enlightens your mind; it enlivens your senses; it brings light into your life; you understand something anew. There are some people who have the Spirit with them in such a degree that to be in their **presence** is to understand things better—understanding, comprehension, light and truth.

I have never said this publicly, but because of what I think will ensue after this talk, I'm going to say it (not for my sake and certainly not for the sake of anyone who believes the truth or has the Spirit)—but I say it only to benefit those who may view things completely otherwise. The Lord has said to me in His own voice, "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." And therefore, I want to caution those who disagree with me to feel free—feel absolutely free—to make the case against me. Feel free to disagree, but take care; take care of what you say concerning me.

I talked about paying and ministering your own tithes. I wanna remind you if you do that, that none of it should go to the priests. None of it should go to any other than to helping with the poor. And if—after all is done to help with the poor—there's money left over, well, we'll talk about that before we finish today too.

A great deal is made of Joseph's first vision and almost nothing made of his last one. But I wanna turn to his last one, given on the morning of the martyrdom. Joseph's last vision, taken from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, beginning on page 393. This is Joseph—it's being recorded and recounted by someone else, and I'm not sure that they got everything right in the way that they recounted it, but nevertheless, this is the best source we have of Joseph's last vision. "I..."—this is Joseph speaking:

I was back in Kirtland, Ohio, and thought I would take a walk out by myself, and view my old farm, which I found grown up with weeds and brambles, and altogether bearing evidence of neglect and want of culture. I went into the barn, which I found without floor or doors, with the weather-boarding off, and was altogether in keeping with the farm. While I viewed the **desolation** around me, and was contemplating how it might be recovered from the **curse** upon it, there came rushing into the barn a company of furious men, who commenced to pick a quarrel with me. The leader of the party ordered me to leave the barn and farm, stating it was none of mine, and that I must give up all hope of ever possessing it. I told him the farm was given me by the Church, and although I had not had any use of it for some time back, still I had not sold it, and according to righteous principles it belonged to me or the Church. He then grew furious and began to rail upon me, and threaten me, and said it never did belong to me nor to the Church. I then told him that I did not think it worth contending about, and that I had no desire to live upon it **in its present state**, and if he thought he had a better right I would not quarrel with him...but leave; but my assurance that I would not trouble him at present did not seem to satisfy him, as he seemed determined to quarrel with me, and threatened me with the destruction of my body. While he was thus engaged, pouring out his bitter words upon me, a rabble rushed in and

nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel among themselves for the premises, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud. When I was a little distance from the barn, I heard them screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as...appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the dream or vision ended.

Joseph did not live long enough after receiving this vision to offer up any comments upon it. But I can tell you that if the "farm" is the church he established, that today Joseph would have no welcoming arm within it. It would suffer from a curse in its present state, and they would quarrel with him and tell him to leave if he came among the church today. I believe that the farm in the last vision was the church.

God's house is a house of order, but that does not mean what you think it means. God follows patterns. He establishes and ordains things according to one pattern, and then He takes them down again according to another pattern, and He does not vary. There is no guarantee when He establishes a house in one instance that that house cannot rebel and reject and be neglected by Him at another. Just because God undertakes one work doesn't mean that He cannot undertake yet another. And just because He ordains one system at one time it does not mean that, when that system becomes abusive, He will not deal with that system according to **its own standards** in order to bring about the result that He warned about. He follows a pattern, and **therein** is the house of order.

At the time I was excommunicated, I was in good standing with the Lord. I had nothing amiss in my personal life. There was no sin warranting church discipline. As a former member of the High Council for years, every church disciplinary proceeding I attended that resulted in excommunication, always involved serious moral transgression, betrayal of marriage covenants, and in some cases criminal wrongdoing. In contrast, the reason for my discipline was a book [I'd] written about church history, in which I attempted to align the events of the Restoration to the prophecies of the Book of Mormon and...Doctrine and Covenants. The stake president admitted to me and my wife before the Council began, that I was **then** worthy of a temple recommend. By any standard of moral conduct, I was an innocent man, whose only offense was believing the scriptures revealed our condition before God. On the evening of May 1, 2014, the Lord gave me further light and knowledge about **His** work in **His** vineyard. The Lord is in control over the church, men, and all things. When **He** undertakes to accomplish something, "there is nothing that the Lord God shall take in His heart to do, but what He will do it" (Abr. 3:17.) Often the means used by the Lord to accomplish His "strange act," and to perform His "strange work" (D&C 101:95), are very small indeed. "Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small [things] in many instances doth confound the wise. And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls." [That's Alma 37:6 and 7.]

It is almost always the case that the Lord uses simple things to confound the mighty. I can think of nothing smaller or simpler and less important than myself. Inside the great church to which I once belonged, I was obscure. However, I lived my religion, attended faithfully, served to the best of my ability, upheld church leaders with my prayers, paid tithes, fasted, observed the Word of Wisdom, and helped answer questions for those needing assistance with troubling issues. There was no reason to regard me as a rebel who should be singled out for discipline. Nevertheless, the Lord chose to use a faithful and believing member to accomplish His design. Only someone who is devoted to His will could accomplish what the Lord had in His heart. Now **He** has accomplished it.

The Church has Doctrine and Covenants 121, verses 36 to 40, to warn it about abusing **His** authority. There is an "**amen**" or **end** to authority when control, compulsion, and dominion are exercised **in any degree of unrighteousness**. Therefore, when using authority, great care must be taken. In any case, the church was careless. Therefore, those involved, are now left to kick against the pricks, to persecute the Saints and...fight against God.

Section 121 is a warning to church leaders. It is addressing the powerful, **not the powerless**. It is addressing those who occupy the seats of authority over others. Only those who claim the right to control, compel, and exercise dominion, are **warned** against persecuting the **saints**, who believe the religion and practice it as I did from the time of my conversion. My excommunication was an abuse of authority. Therefore, as soon as the decision was made, the Lord terminated the priesthood authority of the stake presidency and every member of the High Council who sustained the decision, which was unanimous. Thereafter, I appealed to the First Presidency, outlining the involvement of the 12 and the 70. The appeal gave notice to them all. The appeal was summarily denied.

Last general conference, the entire First Presidency, ...12, ...70, all other general authorities and auxiliaries, voted to sustain those who abused their authority in casting me out of the church. **At that moment**, the Lord ended all claims of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to claim it is **led** by the priesthood. They have not practiced what He requires. The Lord has brought about His purposes. This has been in His heart all along. [He's] chosen to use small means to accomplish it, but He always uses the smallest of means to fulfill His purposes.

None of this was my doing. The Lord's strange act, **was not, could not**, be planned by me. **Was not, could not**, have been controlled by me. It was not anticipated by me, **or even understood** by me, until after the Lord had accomplished His will, and made it apparent to me on the evening of May 1, 2014. **He** alone has done this. **He** is the author of all...this. (*Journal of Denver Snuffer*, Vol. 8, entry of May 2, 2014, pp. 29-33, emphasis added)

Well, just because something is true at one moment does not mean that it is true at another moment. Things change; decisions matter; what we do matters. The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not the same thing as it was when I joined in 1973. And at this moment, it is not even the same thing that it was in 2012.

Now, prophecy... Prophecy is not given so that you know the details beforehand. Prophecy is only given so that after the event takes place, you can look at the scriptures and understand what the Lord **meant** to accomplish. Its purpose is not to allow you beforehand to know the events with enough specificity so that God's will **cannot be accomplished**. If you knew what He was up to, you could prevent it. But because you don't, when the prophecies are fulfilled, then you know that the Lord has acted. God can use **any** means He chooses to accomplish His promises. **Everything that God is doing** is not disclosed at the time He's doing it.

We all know and accept John the Baptist because history tells us that we ought to accept John the Baptist. But it was not until a revelation was given through the Prophet Joseph Smith that we understood the greatness of the effort behind the scenes that were involved in bringing to pass the mission entrusted to John the Baptist. We knew none of what I'm gonna read to you at the time that John acted, but we know it now.

Doctrine and Covenants section 84, beginning at verse 27:

*Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel **until John**, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his [coming], to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power. (D&C 84:27-28, emphasis added; see also T&C 82:14)*

It was because of this that Joseph observed concerning John: John "wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven." It's from the *Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]* on page 276.

Did the Jews notice?

In like manner, God's house is a house of order. He does it according to patterns. It is not God's purpose to abandon the Restoration; it is His purpose to **preserve** the Restoration, which at this moment is in terrible jeopardy. The Restoration itself must be rescued.

Well, baptism has always been required, from the days of Adam until the present. Baptism is always the sign of acceptance of what it is that God is doing, of penitence—that is, turning and facing God and then walking in a new path. From the days of Adam, it will continue through the end of the millennium. And whenever there has been a

believing people upon the earth, they have **always** been invited to partake of the ordinance of baptism as a sign of their faith.

Authority was restored as part of the ministry of Joseph Smith and should be remembered. In fact, everything that was accomplished by the Lord through Joseph should be both remembered and respected. We should not abandon anything that has been given by heaven, but we should also not neglect anything that has been given or commanded by heaven. We should not be forgetful. It is a sign of ingratitude when we forget and neglect.

And no church organization or man claiming authority should hijack your obedience to God. You're accountable to **Him**. You're accountable to **only** Him, not to me and not to any man. When Joseph wanted to know what his state and standing was before God, he asked God. It is to God alone that you must answer, and it is to God that you must be grateful. And before Him you must be humble.

That having been said, religion—when it exists—always exists in its true form as a community of believers. Community is required. If we don't have a community then we cannot be *willing to mourn [for] those that mourn*. We cannot *comfort those that stand in need of comfort*. We cannot *stand as [a] witness [to one another] of God at all times and in all places*. We cannot *bear one another's burdens that they may be light* (Mosiah 18:8-9; see also Mosiah 9:7 RE), as is required by the Gospel and by the covenant of baptism. None of this can be done without fellowship.

However, we do not need a new church. The only thing we need is a community of fellowship. Legal entities, when they are formed, become prey to the law; legal entities can become controlled by men who have ambition—sycophants, brown-nosers, people who are willing to do whatever is required of them in order to show that they are desperately submissive to the one above them so that they might join them in having control over others. **This** is the way that organizations go.

In the "Sunstone Conference," I wrote a paper; I presented part of it there called *Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge* (it's available on my blog with all of the footnotes—I think the footnote version is much better than what I was able to do verbally). But **that** process is the inevitable result. Aspiring men will always corrupt whatever there is that is organized on the earth.

So ask yourself, what can remain pure? Even here, in this awful world, what can remain pure? Because there are three things that **can** remain absolutely unmolested and uncorrupted: the truth, which is fixed and cannot be touched by us; God's love, which is free and available to all. Neither the truth nor God's love requires effort on our part. But the third thing that can remain pure here is **our desires**. That, however, requires effort. Nevertheless, it is possible that perfection can touch each of us, as well, if we have the right desires.

The fact is (as I began), however, we all have weaknesses. We all need rest. We all need food. We all wear down. There are things that trouble each one of us, and even your desires are gonna be better than you are. At least I hope they are.

But these three things can be perfect, and they can be pure: the truth, God's love, and our desires.

You do not need to leave anything behind that is good or noble or virtuous. And you (and we) do not need to establish another entity. You can serve wherever you are. **However**, to preserve the Restoration itself, starting now, we need to more closely follow the pattern of scripture.

The baptism prayer was given by Christ. This is in Third Nephi chapter 11, beginning at verse 19:

*And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him. And the Lord **said** unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. And again the Lord called others, and **said** unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. (3 Nephi 11:19-22, emphasis added; see also 3 Nephi 5:7-8 RE)*

I'm not gonna take the time to do it, but if you wanna check this out, you can check this out on your own:

Christ did not touch them; He said to them, "I give you power to baptize." When Christ touches them (which will be later still in the narrative), the fact that He touches them is so remarkable in the narrative that the verse talking about it repeats three times that the Lord touched them. The presence of God touching them being so significant that it's mentioned three times in the narrative when it happens drives home the point that it's missing here.

How then does the authority to baptize come? Well, once John the Baptist came and laid his hands on Joseph, we've had a practice of continuing that—and we ought to continue that. But before any of you baptize any other of you, do this. Do this! It's the same thing that Alma did in Mosiah chapter 18. If you go back to Mosiah chapter 18, before he baptized, Alma took Helam (this is Mosiah 18:12): *stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him (Mosiah 18:12-13; see also Mosiah 9:8 RE).*

He got the authority to baptize. If you're going to use the priesthood, (no matter what the Church has told you, and no matter what quorum leaders and respected others—including your own father, perhaps—have taught you), before you do so, ask God to give you the authority. And if you get it, you get it from Him, and then you're not

dependent upon someone else. But get the authority from Him. Power is required. It must come from Christ. The pattern must be followed.

John the Baptist—when he restored the authority (in Joseph Smith verse 69... Joseph Smith History 1:69)—said that it *...holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken...from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness* (see also Joseph Smith History 14:1 RE).

The Gospel of repentance is returning to face God. Baptism by immersion is for the remission of sins. And John's declaration does not say that it will not be taken from the church; it says it will *be [not] taken...from **the earth***. It was restored to remain on the earth. And no matter what happens among those that choose to abuse one another, it needs to be preserved by a faithful few so that it doesn't cease from the earth. It **is** still here—though it has been much neglected, and it has been much abused. But with you, renew it. Renew it using Alma's example.

He'd been previously ordained as one of the priests in wicked King Noah's court. And he'd been ordained by him **precisely because** he was wicked: he qualified; he was corrupt. Noah wanted him, and so he got ordained. But before he undertook to use the authority, he asked God to give him power. And God, seeing penitence on the earth, respected it and poured out His Spirit upon him so that Alma could baptize with authority. And the proof of that consisted not merely in what it was that Alma experienced with the Spirit empowering him to perform the ordinance, but it consisted also in the effect that the ordinance itself had upon **both** Helam and Alma (who himself went into the water at the same time). The Spirit was poured out upon them. Renew it.

Likewise, we need to renew a community—not an organization, but a fellowship; not a hierarchy, but a group of equals. The community needs to be renewed. Men who have been ordained already should renew this in the manner I just described.

In my disgust and in my personal preference, I asked that priesthood get extended beyond the confines of the men who have continually abused and neglected it. And I was told that priesthood is confined to men because of the Fall and that until we reverse things in the Millennium, that's the way it's going to remain (as to the ordinances thus far given in public). I asked the Lord to change that order. And it's not going to change. Here is how, then, you should proceed:

Even if you have already been ordained—as part of the community, the community itself needs to recognize that someone is authorized. **However**, given the fact that men have abused and neglected the priesthood that they've been given, and given the fact that if men are only going to hold the priesthood that there ought to be some other independent check, I would suggest—and it is agreeable to the Lord—that when it comes to sustaining men to perform as priesthood, only women should vote. No man should be allowed to vote to sustain another priesthood holder—period. If only men hold it, then only women should sustain them.

The saying pleased the Lord, but He set a criteria. He said if that is to be the case, then there must be at least seven women who vote. Call a conference. In the conference attended by a minimum of seven women, at least seven women must vote to sustain. When that's done, all seven who vote to sustain should sign a certificate. If you look in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, these were just handwritten things. But they did it, and they did it in the early church, and you can look, and it was the practice back then—except back then it was men. We're gonna change that. Call a conference, at least seven women vote, all seven sign the certificate. If the man is married, his wife **must** be among the seven women. If his wife will not sustain him, he is unworthy.

When you ordain, you should ordain no one to an office; you only confer the priesthood. Have no offices among you. Let everyone be equal. Be without ranks. Keep your lines of authority—it reckons from the one ordaining—but **power** can only come from Christ. And without ratification (from the Spirit) of your ordination, **wait** until the Spirit ratifies it before you act.

After April 2014... After April 2014 General Conference, only reckon your line of authority in **these** proceedings—not from LDS Church lines after April of 2014. All ordained keep a record of your line of authority and pass it down. And be prepared to defend your line of authority because of the records you keep. All of the women who vote to sustain: Put it in your diaries and in your journals. Let the records be kept so that if anyone questions, there will be an **abundance** of witnesses.

Conferences can be called by **any** who desire it, but you must have seven women if the business includes a priesthood ordination. There's absolutely no need to purchase a building. You can meet anywhere, including in your own home. You can meet in parks.

Continuing then with what Christ said:

And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you. Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water... (3 Nephi 11:22-23)

I would recommend, if it is at all possible, that the water for a living ordinance be living water. I would not perform this... I would get out of the buildings that are built by the hands of men, and I would use the things of God. You're trying to connect to God. Use the things that He has made. I recognize there may be circumstances where that becomes impossible. I've been baptized twice—once in the Atlantic and once in a stream in the Little Cottonwood canyon. Both times it was so cold my lips were blue. And I recognize that some of you hardy people may not want to experience a baptism that invigorates you to the point of turning your lips blue. But I would recommend when you go down and stand in the water that it be living water.

...and in my name shall ye baptize them. ...now behold, these are the words...ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. (Ibid, vs. 24-25)

When I was baptized into the LDS Church, the baptismal prayer was: "Having been **commissioned** of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father...." When I was re-baptized, I was re-baptized by one who had authority from Christ; therefore, in that baptism the words were: *Having **authority**...of Jesus Christ.* If all you're going to do is baptize someone again according to the LDS pattern, with a commission in a Church, don't bother doing it. But if you follow these principles and if the Spirit empowers you to baptize, then baptize having authority from Christ, and follow His words. We've deviated long enough. It's time to return.

Then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water. And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one. And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. (Ibid, vs. 26-28)

I'm telling you, in the name of the Lord, that that commandment is renewed again by Him today to you. This is His command. Do it on this wise.

And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another. (Ibid, vs. 28-30)

Do it... Do it in this way. If someone disputes and says, "They ought not be doing it, and you ought not be doing it," leave it alone. Don't fight. Don't quarrel. Invite; persuade. And if they're unpersuaded, let them go. If you invite and they will not come, let them go. If you entice—if you entreat—and they say, "We will not hear your entreaty..." If they mock you, let them go. There is no need to harbor ill-will and to fight with people.

Any—**any**—who desire to be baptized, should be baptized. If you have this authority and you practice this and **anyone** comes to you, baptize them. Refuse no one. Freely you get from God; therefore, freely give to others. **Do not charge** to perform an ordinance. The ordinance is between them and God. And they need to have it performed between them and someone God has asked to do it. **You** become the people God asks to do it.

Before baptism, teach them the Doctrine of Christ, which Christ immediately discusses following His instruction on baptism.

*Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and **believe** in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. (Ibid, vs. 31-35, emphasis added)*

That's the purpose of the baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of Christ is connected to this so that, once baptized, you can have the testimony of the Father concerning His Son shed upon you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

*And again I say unto you, [you] must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **this is my doctrine**, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against **them**. **And** whoso shall declare **more** or **less** than this, and establish it for **my** doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth. (Ibid, vs. 38-41, emphasis added; see also 3 Nephi 5:8-9 RE)*

This is Christ's doctrine—nothing more and certainly nothing less. This is His doctrine. This is the power of redemption. This is the means by which the Holy Ghost is given. And it is the Holy Ghost which, when given, bears record of all things. It is the Holy Ghost by which you learn.

Believe in Christ, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and become as a little child. There is no more inquisitive a creature on the planet than a little child. That's who you're to become. You should hunger and search for understanding. This is **all** of the doctrine. There is no more doctrine. This is not all of the teachings; this is not all of the tenets; these are not all of the precepts; this is not all of the covenants; this is not all of the commandments; and this is not all of the principles. But it's all of the doctrine. There is **no more doctrine** than this.

- Joseph F. Smith wrote a book called *Gospel **Doctrine***.
- Joseph Fielding Smith wrote a three-volume work called *The **Doctrines** of Salvation*.

- Bruce R. McConkie wrote *Mormon Doctrine*.
- Bruce R. McConkie wrote *The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, which is multiple volumes.
- Millet, Fronk, Skinner, and Top wrote *LDS Beliefs, A Doctrinal Commentary*.
- There's *The Development of Temple Doctrine*.
- There's *Unlocking the Doctrine of the Fall*.
- There's *The Doctrines of the Kingdom*—that's Hyrum Andrus.
- There's *The Doctrinal Developments in the Early Church*.

If you go to Deseret Book and you search the word "doctrine," they will sell you 791 items. *Whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock* (ibid). I haven't titled anything I've written "doctrine," but I do admit that we use the word "doctrine" very sloppily. And sometimes we apply the word "doctrine" when we really mean a tenet, when we really mean a teaching or a precept or principal or a covenant. Well, Christ has sort of narrowly-defined what we ought to be declaring as His doctrine, and I'd suggest that He did that on purpose in order to avoid *com[ing] of evil* (ibid).

(Do we **have** to take a break because of the recording? Is that... Oh, okay. We've been just a little over one hour. I think we will take a short break in order for them to serve up the next disk in the recording. So, let's take a five-minute break.)

[In answer to a question about a single man, and the recording began mid-sentence] ...then, I don't think there's any impediments to conforming with the pattern and being ordained in the absence of having a wife—but if you add a wife? You better add a wife who's going to sustain you. But that's your problem.

"Does this mean you have to leave the Church?" [question during break from audience member]. Of course not. I said this is to add to anything that you already have. There is no reason why you can't be part of this community and part of a Lutheran community and part of a Catholic community and part of a LDS community. I wouldn't leave until they throw you out—but they'll probably throw you out. But I wouldn't leave. I don't... If you find value in service there... I think the youth programs are wonderful...

I sent my son because (the winning-est high school baseball coach moved from Taylorsville High School to Juan Diego Catholic High School)—and I wanted my son playing for him. And so, my son played baseball at Juan Diego Catholic High School. And they had devotionals, and they had, you know, Catholic stuff going on. And while he was at Juan Diego Catholic High School, he heard a bunch of Catholic stuff. And he'd come home, and we'd talk about it. There's nothing wrong with letting your kids learn within the LDS community. I wouldn't run away from it. Though, if they find out that you're participating in another community (particularly one that says that there's been some loss of authority), my suspicion is that immediately—at a minimum—you're gonna forfeit a temple recommend, and you may suffer more than that.

"What about ordinations that occurred before April 14th [2014]?" [question during break from audience member]. Yeah, I would respect them and keep them in place. God didn't

do this until April of this year. It's **His** act. It's not mine. It's **His** purpose. It's not a man's. And so when that's accomplished... If I had a son and I were still attending, if I were serving in a position in the church and I continued to serve and I ordained my son in the regular course of events in the LDS Church, I'd go ahead and participate in that. And then I'd come to one of these conferences, I'd get the vote for my son (including with my wife being one of those who sustained him), and I would have him ordained again, and I would have the seven women certify the new ordination. And I would tell him this is your LDS Church ordination, and this is your ordination according to the pattern of God. And I would hold onto both of those. I wouldn't abandon... For goodness sake, some of the people that need to hear what you have to bear testimony to are ideally situated within the LDS church.

And then the question is... "Do you lay on hands?" Yes, I would follow everything that has been given to this point. We're "adding to"; we're not throwing away. We're trying to preserve, and we're trying to return, and we're trying to renew. We are not trying to tread under our feet anything that is useful, laudable, worthy, desirable, or that came down from the Restoration. It is not God's purpose to abandon the Restoration. But it is His purpose to preserve it.

There are changes presently underway that are going to jar the LDS community more and more in the coming years. If **you** are not prepared to preserve what has been given, **everything** will be lost in what will soon happen. It's necessary that there be someone who seeks for some community that tries to preserve in its purity what is rapidly becoming at an accelerating pace more and more corrupted. It **has** to be preserved. Every one of you have some issue that you would say to yourself, "If this, then I would no longer follow." All of the "if this"-es are in the wings. Inexorably, they are coming. It has to be preserved. And it has to be preserved in a manner in which it can remain pure.

In modern revelation, once again, the Lord clarified, in Doctrine and Covenants section 10, verses 67 and 68, exactly what He said to the Nephites. *Behold, this is my doctrine —whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church* (see also Joseph Smith History 10:19 RE). So, if the LDS Church chooses to do more or chooses to do less (and they are choosing to do both), then His church will consist of those who choose instead to do what He says.

It's what He said to the Nephites; it's what He said in modern revelation. It is exactly the same. Not only does it appear there (as if that were not enough witnesses), Nephi taught it as well. In Second Nephi he explained the Doctrine of Christ. Second Nephi chapter 31, beginning at verse 5, he talks about the need of baptism. *The Lamb of God...being holy, [He needed] to be baptized*; therefore, don't we likewise need to be baptized? And then after baptism,

...if [you]...follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto

the Father that [you're] willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea... following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and...the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel. But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that [you're] willing to keep my commandments, by...baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that [you'd] not known me. And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved. (2 Nephi 31:13-16; see also 2 Nephi 13:2-3 RE)

Then He goes on to talk about—all the way through—the "way":

There is none other way nor name given under heaven... this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and...the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen. (Ibid, vs. 21; see also 2 Nephi 13:5 RE)

It was what the Doctrine of Christ consisted of at the time of Nephi. It was what the Doctrine of Christ consisted of at the time of the Restoration. It was what the Lord taught in His own voice to the Nephites in Third Nephi. That is the doctrine. Baptize. Preach Christ's doctrine; any who will receive it, baptize them. I don't care if they've never been a member of any church. I don't care if it's a Catholic priest that comes to you. I don't care if it's a Mormon Apostle that comes to you. If they come to you and they'll accept the Doctrine of Christ, baptize them.

One other thing is required. The other thing that's required is a record of the names—not email addresses, not vital statistics, not phone numbers, not any contact information—**only** names. Therefore, after you have complied and someone is being baptized, choose a recorder—someone that has to record who the names are. Faithfully record the names every time there is a baptism. There will be various recorders in various locations. The various recorders need to submit them to a single, central, record keeper on an annual basis. Have the recorders identify themselves (and I can give them some further direction), but there should be annually compiled a single volume which will be deposited in a temple when it is built. Because there will be a temple ultimately built.

Grand Junction had a talk in which I spoke about tithing. I talked about organizing yourselves, collecting your own tithing, and managing it yourselves among yourselves, and for you to assist the poor who are among you and to do this by the voice of your own local group—do it by common consent—and to provide for those who need housing, food, clothing, healthcare, education, and transportation. Do it without a leader

but by the voice of the united agreement of you all. Since that time, there have been several groups that have begun. Two groups are assisting single mothers with their needs. One group is assisting a family. One group has no needy among them, and they've accumulated for large charitable purposes, and they bought for a quadriplegic a sophisticated electric wheelchair with the tithing money that they've gathered.

There is no reason ever to pay for priesthood service. Serving should require sacrifice, always and continually. We do not pay for ministers. I would recommend that if you choose to participate in a tithing group, that you do it in the same manner that was described in Grand Junction, and you do it among yourselves. Community is necessary. I don't know how you can bear one another's burdens without administering your own tithes, without administering your own fast offerings, without doing things to help people in need.

It's hard, I think, to give away what you have to an organization that is purchasing real estate and farms, and purchasing and developing shopping centers—and then have anything left over to assist with the poor among you. But if you choose to do that, that's fine too—but try and care for those among you who have needs.

As to the Sacrament, only an anti-Christ would forbid you from partaking of the Sacrament in the way commanded by your Lord. That is an abomination. If you get together, even if it's only in your own family, partake of the Sacrament together. Let no one forbid you from partaking in remembrance of Christ, because **He** commanded that you do it. Follow the pattern that is given to us. In Doctrine and Covenants section 20, verse 76, one of the things that used to be practiced (that has since been abandoned and ought to be renewed among you) is that when the Sacrament is blessed, kneel. Kneel. *Kneel with the church* (see also Joseph Smith History 16:24 RE). Remember it. Keep it. Do the things that have been instructed in the pattern that He commanded that they be observed.

If you partake of wine and for some reason you either are opposed to alcohol, or alternatively, you have some medical condition, use grape juice. Use red grape juice. Use the symbol of the blood of our Lord. I can tell you that, generally, red wine is bitter for a reason. And partaking of that bitter wine in remembrance of the blood that was shed is apt.

Here is the doctrine that is required for us to be gathered. Doctrine and Covenants section 10, beginning at verse 57: *Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not* (D&C 10:57-58; see also Joseph Smith History 10:18 RE).

Even today, He is the light that shines in the darkness, not comprehended because there's just too much darkness. We forbid His presence by quenching the Spirit and not allowing utterance in our meetings. That's where we should be hearing from the Spirit and edifying one another.

Yea, and I will also bring to light my gospel which was ministered unto them, and, behold, they shall not deny that which you have received, but...shall build it up, and shall bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me. And this I do that I may establish my gospel, that there may not be so much contention; yea, Satan doth stir...the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they...wrest the scriptures and do not understand them. Therefore, I will unfold unto them this great mystery; For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts; Yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely. Behold, this is my doctrine—[whoso] repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. [Whoso] declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church. And now, behold, [~~whatsoever is of my church~~] whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And now, remember the words of him who is the [light and life] of the world, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Amen. (D&C 10:62-70; see also Joseph Smith History 10:18-21 RE)

There is... Priesthood is confined because of the Fall to the way in which it presently operates. But when He **gathers**... When He gathers them together, every time He refers to **that** gathering, the identity of the sex changes. It's not as a rooster; it's as a hen—and **she** preserves **her** chicks. There is something more to be looked forward to, **if** there should ever be a gathering.

Christ taught this. Nephi taught this, anciently, at the beginning of the Nephite dispensation. Christ taught the same doctrine, and modern revelation reaffirms it—not only there [in D&C 10] but earlier, in March of 1830. This is in Doctrine and Covenants section 19:

I command you that you [shall] preach naught but repentance. (D&C 19:21)

And then 29:

And thou shalt declare glad tidings, yea, publish it upon the mountains, and upon every high place, and among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see. And thou shalt do it with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers. And of [the] tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost. (Ibid, vs. 29-31; see also Joseph Smith History 17:6-8 RE)

That's the Gospel. That's what needs to be preached. That's what needs to follow. But there **are** tenets. There are tenets to the faith. And those we're commanded also to search into but not declare as doctrine necessarily. The things about which we need to have unity and absolute agreement is the Doctrine of Christ.

Every dispensation of the Gospel has left only a remnant behind. Christ's work is designed to preserve a remnant and, at the end, gather **all** remnants together again. The Restoration that was given through the Prophet Joseph Smith has likewise put itself in a position where, now, it can only produce a remnant—but one that will be preserved and not abandoned.

In Third Nephi chapter 21, the Lord talked about some things that become exceptionally relevant in light of what we've covered today.

And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that [you] may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and...establish again among them my Zion [this is addressing all of those various remnants, wherever that they may be found, so long as they are some residue of the house of Israel]. And behold, this is the [sign] which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles [see, the Gentiles had to first receive some things] that they [the Gentiles] may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them [the Gentiles]. Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them [some constituent group of Gentiles] of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you... (3 Nephi 21:1-3)

It can't come from any source other than from the Father—the Father and Christ being one—the authority to minister and to deliver it coming from Them, the power to baptize being brought forth from some remnant of the Gentiles who care to bear it.

For it is wisdom in the Father that they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted [~~with this people~~] with his people, O house of Israel. (Ibid, vs. 4)

"O house of Israel" is much more. "O house of Israel" is that same inclusive of all bits and remnants, wherever they may be found. I talked about covenants when we were in Centerville and about the fulfillment of the covenants. **All** of the covenants which apply to people scattered everywhere, all of those included within the previous remnants—they need to be gathered into one constituent group.

*Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth **from** the Gentiles... (Ibid, vs. 5, emphasis added)—*

Not their "book"; their **works**. Not their "book"; the works: bringing to pass the Doctrine of Christ, establishing repentance, declaring and baptizing by the authority of Christ, having people visited by fire and the Holy Ghost—these are the works. These are the works.

*...shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity; For thus it behooveth the Father that it **should** come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles. (Ibid, vs. 5-6, emphasis added)*

That's what He needs now to do. That's what He intends **to do**—if you will receive it.

*For this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that **they** may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that **they** may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. (Ibid, vs. 6, emphasis added)*

You can't get there except through the power of the doctrine and the power of the ordinance that God has given, in the way that is has been given, performed with the exactness, fidelity, and language that has been given to us by Christ Himself.

When these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things— it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he...made unto the people who are of the house of Israel. (Ibid, vs. 7)

All of them. It's a witness that His work has commenced.

And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and...marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them. But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring [it] forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant. ...[whoever] will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ. (Ibid, vs. 8-11; see also 3 Nephi 9:11-12 RE)

These are Christ's words. We touched on these words all the way back in Boise. It was quoted by the angel Moroni, referring to Joseph Smith. Acts 3, verses 22 to 23:

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

That prophet is Christ. It doesn't say Christ is going to come and deliver His words; it says, His "words." Those who *will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, ...they shall be cut off* (3 Nephi 21:11). And the angel Moroni said to Joseph, in verse 40 of the Joseph Smith History, *The day had not yet come when 'they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people,' but soon would come* (see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE).

That prophet is Christ. His words are what I've spoken to you today.

And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots; And I will cut off the cities of thy [lands], and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of [the] land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; Thy graven images will I also cut off... (3 Nephi 21:12-17)—

Graven images are people you worship. Graven images include men to whom you submit as objects or idols of authority in whom you trust, thinking that they can deliver you by some magic, using some key that they purport to hold, whether Catholic or Mormon or Fundamentalist. Graven images—they're going to be cut off.

*...thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel [that's all remnants gathered together]; And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. But if they [speaking of the Gentiles—if **they**] will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance. (3 Nephi 21:17-22, emphasis added)—*

...because every time there's a covenant, there is always a land. And this is the land that God covenants He will give. And the people to whom He will give it are those that come back and receive the covenant, including the Gentiles **in whose ears** this first shall

sound...if they will come. And coming unto the covenant—that is not yet possible. It requires more than has at present been given. It is possible to come in and become part of His church. It is possible, if you follow as you've been instructed today, to become part of the church He recognizes and will preserve. But coming fully into the covenant... That will require more than has at present be given. It will require a covenant. It will require adoption. It will require sealing. It was what Joseph looked forward to have happen at some point in the future during the days of his prophecy.

And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven [in this case, it is the singular—it's not the "powers"—because when you have Him present with you, you have all the authority—then shall the power of heaven] come down among them; and I also will be in the midst. And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day... (Ibid, vs. 23-26)

Christ will come. Once the covenant has been renewed, the city of Zion will follow. The Lord's presence will come, and then the final stage begins.

...even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among...the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may [be]come [in] unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. And they shall go out from all nations; ...they shall not go out in haste, nor...by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward. (3 Nephi 21:26-29; see also 3 Nephi 9:12-10:1 RE)

It's not gonna happen in haste. And the work of the Father that will commence in those nations, to commence the possibility for the gathering, will involve destroying a great deal of political, social, and military obstructions that prevent the gathering, prevent even the preaching to those that would gather if they could hear. But the work of the Father (and it's always masculine when it comes to destruction)... The work of the Father is going to bring this to an end. All the scattered remnants will be brought back again. The original, unified family of God will be restored again. The Fathers will have our hearts turned to them because in that day, once it's permitted to get that far, we will be part of that family again.

Our day is **filled** with darkness and deception. Our day is the day about which Nephi wrote. If you turn to Second Nephi chapter 28, beginning halfway through verse 4:

...they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance. (2 Nephi 28:4)

This is why the ordinance has to be renewed. This is why the pattern has to be followed. This is why the light has to be turned on. Because the Holy Ghost has not assisted with the kind of robust assistance that it can if you're penitent. God cannot dwell in unclean vessels, and so He remedies that by cleaning the vessel, cleaning it in accordance with the pattern that He's given, thereby making it possible that the Holy Ghost **can** give to **you** utterance.

*And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Harken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold [there's] no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men [you can hear that every Sunday if you want]; [But] behold, hearken ye unto **my** precept; if they...say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; [~~for his day~~] for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work. (Ibid, vs. 5-6, emphasis added)*

See, God doesn't do miracles—but if there's a miracle done, then that's the devil. So, the only one that's responsible for anything miraculous is necessarily the devil, and you're following the devil.

...there shall be many [that] shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. (Ibid, vs. 7)

Indulge yourself. You needn't be caring for the poor,. You needn't be attentive to their needs. You don't need to minister to those who are in want. Eat, drink, and be merry! It's gonna be well with us!

There shall...be many which [will] say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; ...lie a little, take...advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; ...do all these things, for tomorrow we die [and that's, by the way, how you get ahead: digging a pit for your neighbor]; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God. (2 Nephi 28:8; see also 2 Nephi 12:1 RE)

"Don't worry; there is no hell. There is no hell, no awful pit, there's just degrees of glory. Don't worry about it!" *...which suffering caused myself, ...the greatest of all, to shrink...to bleed at every pore, ...how sore you know not...how hard to bear you know not, how exquisite you know not...* (D&C 19:15,18; see also T&C 4:5). There is no hell. There is no need for repentance. There is no need to come to Him to be redeemed and to seek to remove from us the awful burden of sin:

...there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord. (2 Nephi 28:9; see also 2 Nephi 12:1 RE)

How might one better "hide their counsels from the Lord" than to conceal all the money that's gathered from the tithes, all the revenues that are paid to the authorities of the church, and even admonish the paid mission presidents that they must never disclose the revenue benefits that they are receiving? How better to hide your counsel than to conceal it from the very sheep that are being shorn by the people who sit in positions of authority, claiming they have the right to come to the stake that I lived in, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and to hand my membership record to the Stake President and insist that there be disciplinary council held against me. Now, I know, President Hunt, that I told you that I wouldn't mention that, but I have no intention from coming back again. Therefore, for us, it's over.

The Church seeks deep to hide their counsels. I participated in that conspiracy when I agreed that I would conceal that Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve came on the day that he called my new Stake President and handed to him my membership record and instructed him that I was to be excommunicated. And to his credit, President Hunt took 18 months fighting that decision (because he knew I was an innocent man) before he submitted. I will no longer participate in concealing the counsels that are kept from the public! It's wrong! President Hunt shouldn't do it. Elder Ballard, Elder Russell Nelson should not do it. None of them should do it! They should come clean.

When Elder Neil Maxwell (with whom I had correspondence) died, shortly after the funeral, Elder Dallin Oaks showed up at ~~the widow~~ the widow's home and demanded the journals that ~~Nelson~~ [Neil] had kept—because one of the conditions of the agreement that General Authorities must sign is that all of their diaries become the property of the Church once they become a General Authority. And Elder Oaks went and gathered back the personal diaries of Elder Maxwell (because a great deal of information about what goes on spilled out into the public when the diaries became public).

Seek[ing] deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark is exactly what the authorities of the LDS Church now do! It is **exactly** a description of the hierarchy of Mormonism. Put your budgets online. Disclose your revenue. Show us what you do with the poor. Don't hide... We don't even know what the revenue is.

...seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; ...their works shall be in the dark [indeed]. And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them. ...they have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted. Because of pride, ...because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; ...they persecute the meek and the poor in heart,

*because in their pride they are puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, **they** are led, that in many instances **they** do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.* (2 Nephi 28:9-14, emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 12:1-2 RE)

The dedication of the first book I wrote, *The Second Comforter, Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*, was dedicated to "the few who are the humble followers of Christ," and it cited this verse. Some people say, "Well, he was, you know, enlightened at one point, and then he fell victim to a dark and evil spirit, and now he's an apostate!" I'm closer to the Lord at this moment, than I've been at any time when I was a member of the Church. I know His will more today, and I understand it better than I've ever understood it before. It is not a different spirit than the one that brought me into the church, and it is not a different spirit than the one that animated *The Second Comforter, Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*. At the time I wrote that, I was keenly aware of the fact that, from among us, there were only a few who were the humble followers of Christ. And I understood that we were, nevertheless, led that, in many instances, we err.

Working within the system, I did everything I could to preserve the doctrine, to preserve the truth, to testify of Christ, to teach the precepts, to remember the covenant. I would still do that today if I were left alone by them.

Clearly, those of you who think I'm a rebel don't get it. God knew exactly what He was doing. I would've taken a bullet for Spencer Kimball. I was among the most devoted of Latter-day Saints. I viewed the Church as a source that had rescued me from a life that was headed into something terrible. I had friends I grew up with who became alcoholics, drug-abusers, whose lives were in tattered ruins. One of my... One of my good friends in Elementary, Junior High, and High School died, stopped his heart with cocaine abuse when he was 26. The LDS Church introduced me to a form of cleanliness-in-living that I have nothing but high regard for. And if every one of you choose to remain active in the LDS Church while you do these other things, you won't hear me complaining or criticizing. You'll hear me praising. It's a community trying to do good, but *they are led, that in many instances they do err*, and you should not go partake of that. Accept whatever is good, and hold onto whatever is good, but seek for something higher and better.

These are the kinds of precepts. "Hearken to our precept," "hear my precept," "hear my precept." This is where we get into all of the mischief. The precepts, if they're not true, are not worth having. And it is the doctrine, above all, that saves.

Go to Isaiah chapter 29—this is beginning at verse 13:

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from

me [that's where the Holy Ghost must reside, in your heart] and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

"You better stay in line! You better get approval! If the bishop hasn't authorized that, you're being... What?—You cannot pass the Sacrament in your ho... You're an apostate! You're just an apostate!" **Fear**, taught by the precepts of men! Be free. Be free.

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. (Isaiah 29:13-14; see also Isaiah 9:5 RE)

Their precepts are nonsense, and they don't save. And they change from handbook to handbook and leader to leader. It is so unstable a reed that if you lean on it, it'll break and pierce your hand, to use Isaiah's analogy.

Now, let me remind you of what precepts—false precepts—include, because this is an example Christ gives:

And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?

This is, I don't know, somewhere in the New Testament. I photocopied and put it in my book, and I didn't write down the cite. So, you're just gonna have to trust me and use a word search when you get home to find out where this is at.

And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. [And] for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he [said] unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. (Mark 10:2-12; see also Mark 5:20-21 RE)

This is Christ talking about a false precept—the false precept being divorce.

One of the reasons why the wife should sustain in order for a man to be worthy (and one of the reasons for the comments that were made in St. George) are because that is a false precept. And I have to tell you, if you've read *The Second Comforter*, you know

that I had a wife divorce me. And you know that I viewed myself as an absolute failure. I was still worthy for a temple recommend, but I had the words of President McKay echoing in my mind—you know, "No other success can compensate for failure in the home." And so, while I teach this and while I know this to be true, the only thing I can be thankful for is that it was not I who set her aside, but she who chose to do so.

Zion will require a worthy people. There's a Second General Epistle as we've got it preserved for us in Peter 2—Second Peter—in which he talks about what he would like to see. I'm gonna begin at verse 5.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they [shall] make you that ye shall [be] neither...barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8; see also 2 Peter 1:2 RE)

This was a great admonition, and this is a great path. And I think Peter thought this through because he knew that this was a progression that actually follows in almost this order in almost every life. However, those Saints of that day did not have Zion, despite this admonition. Therefore, if you're going to see it in your day, you have to do something more. We have to be more holy than were they. We have to be more disciplined than were they. You see, the word "discipline" and the word "disciple" come from the same word. We need to have greater virtue than they did.

I read this before, and it belongs again right here. This is Joseph Smith, writing from confinement in Liberty jail. This is after Joseph has been confined in the Liberty Jail and had months of opportunity to reflect upon what it was that had gone on among the Saints while he was still free and living among them:

The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God. (A letter to the church signed by Joseph Smith Jr. and four others on 20 March 1839, from Liberty Jail, Clay County, Missouri; see also T&C 138:18-19)

Don't waste your time when you're with one another! Learn, study, testify, search the scriptures. Worship God. If you are still LDS, use whatever good you find there. But I'll tell you the definition of an active member of the LDS Church: it's someone who has

attended one meeting every ninety days. They measure it every three months. And they only report Church-wide activity based upon two quarters: that quarter which has Easter in it, and that quarter which has Christmas in it. And if anyone comes to one meeting during that time period—that quarter—they're considered active and will not become inactive until more than ninety days has passed. Therefore, activity rates are skewed and overstated.

The LDS Church claims it has approximately 16 million members. Activity—they claim to be somewhere between 4 and 5 [million] members. That's less than 33% of the Church in activity rates. People who self-identify (depending upon which poll you look at) are between 3 and 4 million. That means that there are less than 22% who self-identify. Therefore, the greatest majority of Latter-day Saints **don't** support the Church or its programs. "Follow the majority." "Stay with the majority." I'm quoting **them** when I say, "Follow the majority."

If you choose to remain an active Latter-day Saint and you're a minimalist (going once every 90 days), just remember you cannot delegate the responsibility that you owe to teach your children to someone else. You have a duty to teach your children, and it is a duty that is imposed upon the *parents...in Zion* (D&C 68:25; see also T&C 55:5); it is non-delegable. You have to do it. In many respects, what I'm doing in these talks is addressed to children who no longer live at home. You cannot delegate the responsibility that you have.

You do not need buildings to hold meetings. Joseph Smith only built one building—completed the Kirtland temple, got the Nauvoo temple started. Joseph Smith only built a temple.

Tithing is for the poor. It is not designed to pay for a professional-clergy class. If we have no buildings, more money can go to assist with the needs of people. In this day and in this economy, anything that can be done to assist with the poor is a good thing.

If Joseph Smith were here today—looking at the Latter-day Saint church—he would have (and I am quoting from his last vision), "no desire to live upon it in its present state."

Now, we've looked at Joseph's admonition that people were depending upon the prophet and, hence, were darkened in their minds in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves. Ask yourself this: If Joseph Smith had it all to do over again—and if Joseph Smith had no desire to live upon it in its present state and wanted to avoid the problem that darkened the minds of those he left behind—how could you go about accomplishing that? I mean, there seems to be one very obvious conclusion: Refuse. Just refuse to do so. If he handicapped us by taking too much on himself—and we refused to not handicap him—then the best thing would've been if he'd kept riding when he crossed the Mississippi river with Hyrum (and he had his horse)... He should've just kept riding to the Rocky Mountains.

The weak things are always preferred by God because it requires faith for the weak things to succeed. It's only when you're placed in the most vulnerable spot that you realize that you've got to rely on God. And the only way that you can become strengthened is if you **rely on God** and not some man. Because when you depend upon a man, what you do to that man weakens him as well. The...

[It is] by sad experience [we learn that when] men...get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to do things that are inappropriate (D&C 121:39; see also T&C 139:5). I'm personally tired of all the sex and all of the wealth and all of the abuse and all of the nonsense that has gone on in the name of religion by people claiming that they ought to be respected as some giant, freaking, priesthood-key-holding, omni-competent bafoon. I'm tired of that. I don't want any more of that. I've had enough, and that's what you get when you submit to the rule of a man. But when you submit to the rule of God and you place yourself in a position in which you must be dependent upon Him, every one of you realize your own weakness. Every one of you has to grapple with the uncertainty. Is this right, or is this wrong? Every one of you has to grapple with the fact that in answer to some questions there is silence, and you're forced to choose—and if you choose right, you don't know that you chose right, because He refused to tell you; and then you act in reliance on that going forward, only later to be told, "If you'd made the mistake, I would've corrected you; but you needed that experience."

God answers prayers, and sometimes He forces you to make choices. And very often (I can't tell you how often...), very often I make the wrong choice. It's almost like I got a compass pointing south; I don't know what the deal is there. I choose wrong, and then I get an answer—but I got an answer because I made a mistake. I have no clue (other than the fact that I was **so** converted and faithful to the LDS Church) why the Lord would've chosen me to accomplish what He's accomplished. Because I sincerely believe that most of you here are just genuinely better people than I am. And that I have **nothing** but weakness to offer. Weak things are used by God because that requires faith, and faith requires that we have a correct belief and then that we take action. That's from the Lectures on Faith. "A correct belief," and then we take action. If you're converted to everything that is said in this meeting today (and in all nine of the preceding sessions of this one talk) and you do not take action, then you do not have faith. But if you do take action, then you will receive the reward from your faith. Do not rely on man.

You need to baptize because the LDS church no longer preaches the doctrine of Christ, but they have added to it the commandments of men. In the baptismal interview, the second question that is asked is: "Do you believe that [current church president] is a prophet of God? What does this mean to you?" You can find that on page 206 of *Preach My Gospel*. As a condition, therefore, today of being baptized into the LDS church, you must offer up, as a catechism, your confession that the current church president is a prophet of God and explain what that means to you. This has been added and, therefore, does not conform. Therefore, you need—as part of preserving the Restoration—you need to practice in the way that we've outlined today.

(Well, there's one more section of this. This is a good moment to start—I'm getting signaled that we only have a few minutes left on the disk. We'll take a five-minute break for the disk transition, and then we'll wrap this up in a final session.)

"What do you do if you're alone, you're the only person, and there is no priest available to administer the Sacrament?"

It's a commandment that we partake of the Sacrament. It's a commandment that we do it— and do it frequently. In fact, if you read the record in Third Nephi, one of the things the Lord did was to administer the Sacrament with surprising regularity. One time He did it in a miraculous manner because it was that important an ordinance to have take place. I think if I were alone, and I didn't have any authority, I think I'd bless the Sacrament and partake and then ask to be forgiven afterwards. I think it's like the fruit of the Tree of Life—you know, probably one of those things that ought to be done.

I was also asked, "What do we do to get started?" Look, I mentioned conferences. You can call conferences in your home, anytime, anyplace. All you need is to have a minimum to sustain that will sign and say that they're sustained. In terms of those who are already ordained? You can function as a priest in the LDS Church. It's just if you're going to begin to function under this system among this community with these people, have a conference, and get sustained. You don't need to be re-ordained **if** you were ordained before April of 2014. If you were ordained after April of 2014—I don't care if you got ordained in the LDS Church or not—you should get ordained as a consequence of these proceedings among this community with any group that has the required number in order to create the vote necessary and to have the signatures to prove it.

There is nothing special about us...YET. But there can be. We do not need numerous temples, but we will need one to which Christ can come. We do not need to perform endless work for the dead until **after** there has been a covenant made for us. We must be first connected. Only then can we do something to liberate them. I've written so much on that, I won't repeat it.

There is so many opportunities to go off the rails that I want to remind you of some of the early problems in Kirtland. In Doctrine and Covenants section 50:

Behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world. And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you. Behold, I, the Lord, have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that profess my name. But blessed are they who are faithful and endure, whether in life or in death, for they shall inherit eternal life. But wo unto them that are deceivers and hypocrites, for, thus saith the Lord, I will bring them to judgment. Behold, verily I say unto you, [that] there are hypocrites among you, who have deceived some, which has given the adversary power; but behold such shall be reclaimed [not the hypocrites; He's gonna reclaim those that are deceived]. But the hypocrites

shall be detected and shall be cut off, either in life or in death, even as I will; and wo unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world. Wherefore, let every man beware lest he do that which is not in truth and righteousness before me.

And now come, saith the Lord, by the Spirit, unto the elders of his church, and let us reason together, that ye may understand; Let us reason even as a man reasoneth one with another face to face. Now, when a man reasoneth he is understood of man, because he reasoneth as a man; even so will I, the Lord, reason with you that you may understand. Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained? To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth. And then received ye spirits which [you] could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this [ye are] justified? Behold ye shall answer this question yourselves; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto you; he that is weak among you hereafter shall be made strong. Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be...some other way [it's] not of God. And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? If it be some other way [it's] not of God. Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth? Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which doth...edify is not of God, and is darkness.

That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day. And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you; He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all. (D&C 50:2-26; see also T&C 36:1-5)

This is what we should be. This is how we should teach. This is how we should edify one another. This is how we should be preparing our children. This is what we should lay hold upon: truth, light, understanding, edifying, growing in knowledge of the principles of truth.

You should not waste another three-hour block of time fiddling around with nonsense, because you don't have permission from God to do that. Preach the principles. And if you don't think you know enough to do anything else, get together and read the scriptures out loud. In the early church, when they... In this dispensation, when they got together, one of the things that they regularly did was they got together, and everyone prayed in turn. **Everyone** prayed. And the meeting would last until all had prayed. They called it a "Prayer Meeting," oddly enough. One of the early brethren didn't like that. He

didn't feel like he could pray vocally around other people. There's a section in the Doctrine and Covenants admonishing him in a revelation that he needs to pray.

If you don't have any wisdom to impart to one another, get together and pray; get together and read the scriptures; but don't get together and read out loud out of any recent publication from Deseret Book.

If we are going to begin again, it must be in conformity with the Doctrine of Christ; it must be taught by the spirit of truth; and it must follow the pattern that was given in Kirtland for us to follow.

Now, having said all that, let me read to you some things which the Lord said concerning this moment, because He's talking about an event that **will** happen.

This is from Matthew chapter 22, beginning at verse 2.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go...therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So [the] servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:2-14; see also Matthew 10:17-19 RE)

Now, several things about this: This is one of those places in scripture in which "remnant" is used in a negative way. A remnant. God invites **all** to come to the wedding feast of His Son. This is when the kingdom is going to be established in the last days. He invites all to come. And from among **all** of those people who had been invited, there's a remnant of those who still hold onto the Restoration, and they are the worst of all. They have the hardest hearts. They are the ones who will not come.

And after the Lord deals with them, then He goes out and invites **everyone** to come. Everyone! Come in! And included among those that are invited in are *as many as they found, both bad and good*. They're all invited to come in. And there's no **excluding** the bad (speaking after the judgments of this world). Bad people get invited in! And when they come and when they arrive, it's not whether they're a bad person or a good person that determines whether they get to stay or not. It's the presence or absence of a wedding garment.

Well, turn to Luke chapter 18. This is Luke chapter 18, beginning at verse 10.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, ...the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14; see also Luke 10:7 RE)

Didn't matter that he was a "bad man." Didn't matter that the other was a "good man." I tell you, at the wedding feast, it would be the publican who wore the "wedding garment." The first wedding garment, if you want to call it that, is the original garment that was given to Adam and Eve in the Garden to cover their nakedness and to cover their shame before God—all of which is an allegory.

The covering required the sacrifice of an animal to teach them the principle of sacrifice and to foreshadow the death of our Lord that would be required in order to restore us back to a state before God. And so, what the covering given to Adam and Eve in the Garden represented was the **sacrifice** of our Lord. It was our Lord's atoning sacrifice which makes it possible for us to be covered, so that our shame is no longer there. Instead, God looks upon the righteousness of His Son who has clothed us and not upon our own guilt and our own weakness and our own shortcomings. He beholds the image of His Son in the garment that we have put on.

And so it is that, in the wedding feast to which people are invited, the **first** who got invited would not come. But even the bad ones, even the bad ones who are out in the byways, even the ones... There's... There's about 13 million inactive Latter-day Saints. There's a lot of "bad ones" out there who are only kept from the truth because they haven't heard it yet.

If I had the means, I'd buy an ad space in the Los Angeles Times, and I'd say, "Here's the Doctrine of Christ." And I would quote Third Nephi. I would say afterwards, "If you believe this doctrine and you want to be baptized and get the Holy Ghost, meet me at..." and I would put a location. And I would hope that included among those who came would be gang members, inner-city people who live lives of desperation and violence

who want a way out. Can you imagine what would happen if you sent someone back into an abusive neighborhood clothed with the power of repentance and the Holy Ghost?

We can't fix this world by legislating, but we can fix anything by changing hearts. Those that are invited will not come. They'll even abuse those who try to take them in. But there are plenty of folks in the byways who are only kept from the truth because they don't know where to find it. This is **your** responsibility. This is **your** work to do. This is the day in which these things need to be done.

Oddly enough, in our own day... In our **own** day, the Lord tells a slightly different version of exactly the same stuff, prophesying how it's going to happen among **us** in **our** day.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 58. This is talking about... Well, I'm gonna begin in verse 7:

And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand.

I'm gonna put this into some footnotes when I finally get around to publishing, in a book-form, the talk that was given in Grand Junction. But I'll stick it in here because we've touched on the words: *the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand*. I pointed out there all of the historical reasons why Zion could exist somewhere other than in property owned in Jackson County, Missouri and could, in fact, be constructed elsewhere.

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, in their first trip out to Jackson County, Missouri, came there in order to confirm and ratify that this was the place where Zion would be built. And they got language and revelation that said this was "the land of Zion." And so everyone since then 'til now are all relying upon that language saying, "It's gonna be Jackson County, Missouri." That same month that Joseph and Sidney went out, Sidney Rigdon gave an explanation of what the geography of that "land of Zion" was. He said it began at Kirtland, Ohio, and it ran to the Pacific Ocean. So, the land of Zion is rather flexible in where the Lord might choose ultimately to locate it.

So, there's gonna be some land where Zion will stand.

And also that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor [so the feast that is being prepared has a highly specific audience in mind in the revelation, it's "the poor"]. Yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; Yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; And after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come. Behold, I, the Lord, have spoken it. (D&C 58:8-12; see also T&C 45:2)

Did you get that? First they invite the "rich" and then the "learned"; and the nations shall all be invited. The "wise," the "noble"—doesn't say they enter in. Doesn't say they'll partake. It was prepared, after all, for the "poor." And the people who **will** enter in?—who **do** finally make it into Zion where they get to partake?...

Then shall the poor [that's who it was prepared for], the lame, ...the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come. (Ibid)

Every time you partake of the Sacrament, it's a reminder of the promise that there will, at last, be some great wedding feast. It's not just in remembrance of the blood and of the body, but it's also a preliminary to the final feast that the Lord intends to offer.

Well, who **are** the "rich?" Who **are** the "learned"? Who **are** those that are presently considered "wise"? And who are those that make the claim that they are the "noble," the "elect"? They do not enter into the wedding feast in Zion.

And who is it that is the "poor?" Who is it that is derided—even in today's vocabulary—and accused of being "lame"? Who is it that is considered to be "blind" and misled? Who is it that is referred to as being "deaf" because they cannot hear and respect all the great wisdom that pours forth from these empty cisterns, having nothing but drivel to offer, quoting one another endlessly—as if one misled man on a false path can offer light to a fool following after him.

I hope we are the "poor." I hope I am speaking to the "lame." I hope you are counted among those that are considered "blind," and I hope that you have ears not for what any man has to say but for what the Spirit alone has to confirm to you. I hope you're "deaf" to everything in this world but have ears for what our Lord has to say.

This is the day in which, at long last, it is possible for what God intended to happen before His return to actually begin. The Gospel is not supposed to be merely a record of how God dealt with other people at another time. Joseph Smith talked about how we can't read the words of an old book and then apply those words (in an old book that were meant for someone else at some other time) to us and then restore ourselves back to God's grace. That is just as true of the revelations given in the days of Joseph Smith as it is true of the revelations given in the New Testament.

It becomes really apparent when you read them out of the scriptures. Because all our footnotes and all of our chapter headings and all our cross-referencing, it sort of gives you an impression that this stuff is talking about us—right here, right now. When you read them as they were written in the *Joseph Smith Papers*, it really becomes clear that when God is talking about how the church is "living" and "alive" and "approved," it's because He's talking to Joseph Smith. And the church is listening to what Joseph Smith had to say. And "rolling forth" is the voice of God in that day. And Joseph Smith commissioned people to go out and to take it. And they took it, and they went out, and

they preached it; and when they preached it, others were converted. And the people that were converted actually had experiences and came to know God. But that's because God acted to set it in motion in the person of Joseph Smith. Joseph had a covenant given to him by God. Therefore, Joseph could testify to these words, and they were true, and God owned them. And people who follow them received the wages of those who follow God. It worked! We can't mimic that and have the same effect.

God has to say, "This is what I want to do." And if no one else will say it to you, **I'm** saying it to you. Everything that has been said in this talk—which began in Boise and concludes here today—everything that has been said is, in fact, exactly what happened when God offered something through Joseph. He's offering something again, right now, in our day, to you—to any that will hear, to any that will listen. The work is beginning again.

I suppose it was necessary that what began in Joseph's time had to run down to the condition that it's in at present—that it had to become a leaky ruin of a farm that Joseph himself no longer even wanted—before it was possible for the Lord to say, "At this moment, we turn a new leaf." But... My word! Can't you see the signs of the times? Can't you look about and see that the whole world is waxing old like a garment? Can't you see that there is right now a balance of things that are kept at bay only to preserve the possibility that a remnant might be claimed? God promised He would do this.

Until today I really haven't done anything more than read scriptures and bear testimony to you that they're true. This wasn't my idea, and I can't tell you how happy my wife and I will be when we conclude this and this project is done. There'll be some... This transcript, and they'll be... I'm gonna edit them all and put them into a book. And the book, in order to be readable, has to have run-on sentences and grammar and everything fixed, so it has to be readable in its own way. So, there's that still left to do. But the project and the labor and the work that needs to be done is **you**.

If **you** don't lay hold upon this, if **you** don't move this forward, if **you** don't rise up, then I suppose He'll find another people. But you ought to allow yourself to be found, and you ought to allow yourself to be numbered among those who choose to have that Gospel live again. The Gospel shouldn't be the words of an old book. The Gospel should be **alive in you**, rolling forth with new vigor, every day a revelation of His involvement in your life and in the lives of those around you.

I know it's not easy to let yourself stand out. It's... For some of us, it's really unpleasant. I'm a trial lawyer, but you have to understand that what that means is I'm usually engaged in an intellectual fight in a room with six or seven people in it. If we have a jury, we may have up to 18 in the room. What I do, I don't do in front of big crowds. And this is not a pleasant thing for me. I enjoy the law; I particularly enjoy appellate argument, because there it's just a three-judge panel or a five-judge panel, depending on which court you're in. It's just a small, intellectual undertaking in which you're trying to reason something through.

This is not pleasant for me, but I suppose that what you're being asked to do will be even more unpleasant for you—because all of you have your families; you have your friends; you have your neighborhoods; and you have your wards. And many of you are faithful members of the church, and I commend you for that. And I wouldn't... I wouldn't want to be the source of creating a problem there. But the Lord has in His mind a way of doing things in which, if we follow the pattern, we get authority from Christ. We may get ordained by a line of authority that comes down from another man laying hands on our head, but authority to activate that comes from heaven, by the voice of God. If you follow that pattern, the fruits will follow.

Whether or not these talks make any difference at all does not depend upon how well I've spoken at these things. They depend entirely upon what **you** now do. If there is any fruit to be born, the fruit of that is not me talking—or CDs, a book, ultimately. That's not the fruit. The fruit is to be found in your lives. The fruit is to be found in your influence, in your family with your children, in the light that comes into your lives and the lives of those that know you.

This process can be so informal that when we conclude today (if there's still time left), everyone who wants to can call themselves a conference and begin doing some things right now today. It's that informal. There's at least seven women here. And some of you brought your wives. That'll teach ya, for not bringing her. I brought mine.

Let me end by testifying to you that, however improbable or unlikely all of this may seem to those of you who spend any time at all thinking about this, it was just as improbable when John was baptizing. It was just as improbable when Christ taught. It was just as improbable when Joseph Smith said, *I [saw] a vision; I knew it, ...I knew...God knew it, ...I couldn't deny it, neither dared I do it* (JS-H 1:25; see also Joseph Smith History 2:9 RE). It may seem improbable. It's true!

Now, in order to conform with the burden that has been laid down, I need to turn time over to Keith Henderson. (Keith, if you'll come up...) Because he has something which he necessarily must add as part of all this.

So, Keith—it's all yours.

KEITH HENDERSON: 52 years ago, I came to this area on a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I came to bear testimony of Jesus Christ and the Book of Mormon and the Prophet Joseph Smith. Today I stand before this people again of this area to again bear testimony. My growth in these 52 years has been great, but my testimony still remains very simple.

My name is Keith Henderson. At the time I bear this testimony, I am still an active member in good-standing with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm grateful for this opportunity that I've received to lift up my voice and bear my witness and testimony before the Most High God, before His holy angels, and before all of you who would be witnesses with me that this talk given this day by our friends and God's

servant is a message given from God to all men and women everywhere who will hear or read. I so witness that I know that it is.

I have attended every portion of this talk, making now ten in total. I have listened time after time to the recordings, and I have read every transcript made up until this one. I bear solemn testimony that I have received a message by God's voice of their truthfulness and also of His desire for us to believe in and act upon these things that have been spoken.

I stand as another witness with Denver in the law of witnesses that these things are true, and I expect to be held accountable for this in the days and the eternity to come before God and my Father and to all men.

I bear this testimony humbly and solemnly but in the power of the most holy priesthood, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen!

2015.03.22 Plural Marriage

March 22, 2015

Sandy, Utah

This talk is actually sooner than I would have liked to have given it. It is driven by events that necessitate addressing the subject. I didn't want to put it off because if I'm going to deal with this in something that's written it would 18 months or more from now before I could even begin on it, there are so many other projects that I have. The fact is that there are such numbers of those who have been polygamists, who have recently been rebaptized, that there is a need for someone to do the work of clarifying and addressing the subject so that people do not lapse back into mistakes. Therefore, this talk is being given, driven by the needs that currently exist, and not necessarily by whether or not I want to give this talk today. It just needs to be done and so I am going to do it.

This talk isn't an attempt to explain what Brigham Young thought, what John Taylor thought, what Orson Pratt thought, or what any of these other men who have gone on the record and elaborated upon this subject, thought. You have all their material in front of you if you want to know what they think; it is available to you. We are interested only in one thing and that is: What did Joseph Smith understand, what did Joseph Smith teach, what did Joseph Smith attempt to establish on the subject of the plurality of wives.

Joseph Smith's writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on celestial and plural marriage, Doctrine and Covenant 132, period. That's it. That's all we have. Now that we have that we have a series of historical events that have taken place which color our ability to look back and understand what it was that Joseph Smith was revealing in Section 132. Today I am not going to make any attempt to go over all of the stuff that I have covered previously in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* or on the blog. I printed all of that out and I've written a surprising amount on the blog and all of that I believe to be absolutely consistent with my current understanding and consistent with what is in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and consistent with the truth as I understand it.

Now, I know that there are people who, when it comes to the subject of plural marriage, like the subject for a variety of reasons. They may like it because of historical curiosity. They may like it because their ancestors were involved in the practice. They may like it because they use it as a tool with which to beat up other Mormons. Well, there are a lot of reasons why people enjoy the subject.

I came to the subject of plural marriage very slowly and very cautiously and completely indifferently. I didn't have any ancestors that were involved in the practice. I didn't have a dog in that fight. I didn't care. The only thing I was interested in was trying to understand it. What became remarkably apparent to me is that what we think we know on the subject of plural marriage is informed almost entirely by events that occurred in history after the death of Joseph Smith, and very little by what we learned during the life of Joseph Smith.

There is a tendency to attribute to Joseph things that he had no connection to. There is also an enormous distortion to the historical lens as we look back to try and see what Joseph Smith was doing because of a series of events that took place, both during Joseph's lifetime and after. There is even some amount of historical detritus that's hanging as far back as the 1600s to the mid-1700s that come from Emanuel Swedenborg, that some people believe inspired Joseph Smith. I don't believe that.

There is also a fellow named Jacob Cochran. Jacob Cochran advocated the practice of what he called "spiritual wifery". He may have had an influence on some people that were involved in Mormonism. He does not appear to have had any influence whatsoever on Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith's vocabulary never included the term "spiritual wives" or "spiritual wifery". That was a phrase that was coined by Jacob Cochran, and interestingly enough, was the same phrase that John Bennett would use when John Bennett was practicing what he did in Nauvoo. So while Jacob Cochran had no apparent influence upon Joseph Smith's thinking, he may very well have influenced the thinking of Mormonism in the person of John Bennett.

John Bennett becomes the very first historical distortion to our understanding of what Joseph Smith was doing because John Bennett became the mayor of Nauvoo, he assisted in getting the Nauvoo charter done, he was a confidant inside the highest circles of the Church. It was assumed that John Bennett knew what he was doing and talking about and he couldn't leave the subject alone. So we're going to talk about John Bennett.

Before we begin I want to mention that Brian Hales has done a good job in trying to isolate Joseph Smith and looking at the practice of polygamy involving Joseph Smith alone. He's put together three volumes of material on the subject of Joseph Smith's polygamy and I'm going to use a couple of those volumes to read historical sources. The good thing about the work that Brian Hale has done is that he has isolated the historic source. He preserves the historic source, and then, when he offers his opinion about it, he makes it clear that this is his opinion from the material. This is how he wants to interpret it, or the suggestion that he wants to make. I like that because I disagree with a lot of the interpretations that he makes. I don't have any disagreement with his gathering of the historical material or of his quoting of the historical material.

As we ease into the subject I want to suggest that interpreting the material and making attribution to Joseph Smith of behavior, of understanding, of teaching, and of doctrine, is something that I think we ought to be extremely circumspect about doing. I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. We sing a hymn that says, "Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer." If that hymn be true, and I think it is, then Joseph Smith is included among those who are anointed by the Lord, about whom we should be very careful of evil speaking. Attributing to Joseph Smith sexual indiscretion that he was not actually involved with, and assuming that you know the heart of that man when you don't, is something that you ought to be awfully careful about.

There are a lot of people who, looking at the historical record and accepting the distortions of the various events, think that Joseph Smith was sexually promiscuous, given to having sexual relations with other women, involved in the very kinds of sexual misdeeds that he condemned. All of those who have written about this subject, who have gone to the trouble of carefully examining the record, take the reputation that has been developed through history concerning Joseph's sexual activity and dialed it back dramatically. Those who have looked at it most carefully become the most equivocal on things that people take for granted that Joseph Smith did. I'm no longer willing to be equivocal. I'm willing to say that, from the totality of the circumstances, I do not believe that Joseph Smith was ever involved in adultery. I do not believe that Joseph Smith was ever involved in bigamy. It would be bigamous to marry another woman for this life when you have an existing wife. Joseph Smith had a wife.

When he looked around in Nauvoo and said, "There are people here who say I am married to numerous women, and I look around the crowd and I can see but one." (Meaning Emma.) I think he was telling the truth. First we will look at the record, then we'll look at the whys. I think what Joseph was really doing was never preserved in the restoration and has not been understood. How far I'll go in that today, I don't know.

Brian Hales invited me to participate with him in jointly writing a book and I actually started on that process. I've since changed my mind. I've got too many more important things to do and so that won't happen. I begin... I want to read you some of what I started with.

The talents of the historian, the grammarian, the lawyer and the researcher can lead them to offer conclusions and to attempt to persuade others to agree with their insight. But in the end the answers do not exist.

All those involved, (and the universe of those that were involved is quite small) died without providing a trustworthy account which would have given us the truth. We can guess to whether they did this wittingly or unwittingly. If it was unwittingly, then we might be encouraged in our quest to reconstruct the events. But if it was instead done wittingly, then we are immediately faced with the issue of why. Why did they deliberately leave an historic lacuna on a subject which would later both jar Mormonism and the United States. Perhaps nothing has so altered the history of the faith established through Joseph Smith than his introduction of plural marriage. It resulted in national scandal, federal legislation, postponement of the statehood for Utah, confiscation of LDS Church property, barring Mormons from voting or serving on juries, schisms and lingering social and familial scars that remain part of the "Mormon landscape" to the present. Joseph's own sons, David and Joseph III, relied on Emma's carefully parsed denials, and provoked Joseph F. Smith's quest to gather affidavits (decades after the fact) to document the earlier practices of their father. The lawsuit over the Temple lot focused in part on this controversy in resolving ownership of property in Independence previously set apart for a Temple to be constructed. Senator Reed Smoot's election as senator for Utah was stalled for years while hearings were convened to determine his suitability as a United States senator

over this issue. President Joseph F. Smith testified in these hearings. In short, the subject cannot be called unimportant.

If Joseph Smith had the foresight of a prophet, it is reasonable to assume it was a deliberate, witting decision to leave the record uninformative by his own account of the chronology of plural marriage. More interesting still is that likewise neither Oliver Cowdery nor Fanny Alger thought it our business to tell us definitely what went on as plural marriage was introduced, first in theory, and then in practice.

With this conspiracy of silence by those principals directly knowledgeable about the introduction, it begs the additional question, "if this is deliberate why the silence?" Was it the result of reticence in a prudish society? It's a reasonable conclusion. But Joseph Smith was a religious revolutionary whose private life, even private thoughts, became relevant "for the record." He discloses, for example, his own "deep and often poignant" feelings about his encounter with God. Sharing his inner feelings, his nearly unprecedented use of "seer stones" and other difficult to understand, much less believe, information about his life did not deter him in other respects. Yet on this subject we have almost nothing from him.

Was it because he believed the Lord did not want the information available? There were subjects about which Joseph Smith knew we would very much care, but which he could not provide us with information because the Lord wanted it withheld. For example, during an early church conference in 1831 he was asked by his brother, Hyrum, to explain how the Book of Mormon was brought forth. (It's actually more than that. Hyrum introduced the subject and said he was turning time over to his brother who would now tell you about the story of the Book of Mormon coming forth.) In response Joseph explained, "It was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and ...it was not expedient for him to relate these things." (DHC 1:220.) There is no comparable statement made about the origin of plural marriage. Instead we are left with silence and the challenge of deciding what to do about the missing information.

As a result of this omission we have the freedom to guess if we lack the self-control to refrain from doing so. In a circumstance in which we are left to venture out our own speculation about the matter, I first ask, "why?" Is there a purpose behind leaving us to our own to sort out something so shocking, culturally out of step and deeply personal as plural marriage? I venture to offer it was wittingly done precisely to prove us. Our reaction to this topic lets us put on display what is in our heart. We get to project onto the blank screen something about ourselves as we expose our presumptions, suspicions, and attributions to Joseph Smith.

In his three-volume work, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, the underlying proof, to the extent it exists, is well gathered and presented. It represents the best to date in reconstructing the fragments from which we can reconstruct a theoretical history; to the extent it can be done at all. I take issue with the speculative chronology in these books, not with the underlying proof gathered by Brian Hales. It is appropriate, in my view, to accept the documentary stage that he

sets (with only one addition) as it is set in Hales' three volumes, and then move on to a discussion, the correct conclusion to be drawn from the available evidence, rather than to dispute the evidence itself.

The only addition I would make to the record is a statement made by Brigham Young on July 26, 1872, in a talk he gave in the Salt Lake City 14th Ward. I'm reading from *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Volume 5:

Said that while Joseph and Oliver were translating The Book of Mormon, they had a revelation that the order of patriarchal marriage and the sealing was right. Oliver said to Joseph, "Brother Joseph, why don't we go into the order of polygamy and practice it as the ancients did? We know it is true, then why delay?" Joseph's reply was, "I know we know it is true and from God, but the time is not yet come." This did not seem to suit Oliver who expressed the determination to go into the order of plural marriage anyhow, although he was ignorant of the order and the pattern and the results. Joseph said, "Oliver if you go into this thing, it is not with my faith or consent." Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdrey took to wife Miss Annie Lyman, cousin of George A. Smith.

There is a problem with that. First of all, he's quoting the conversation that takes place between Oliver and Joseph, and apparently quoting this off the top of his head. He was not there. He didn't hear the conversation. He didn't know what actually transpired and he doesn't tell us where he got the information from that he gives to us there. I think that belongs within the record of the chronology because I put the moment in which the first portion of D&C Section 132 was given in 1829 and not in 1932.

The earliest intrusion of the topic of plural wives that we can find anywhere is in a court proceeding that happened before the Far West High Council in April of 1838, in which there were seven charges that were preferred against Oliver Cowdrey in a Church disciplinary council leading up to the excommunication of Oliver Cowdrey. The second charge – and I'll read it to you – second: "for seeking to destroying the character of President Joseph Smith jr by falsly insinuating that he was guilty of adultery &c." In the transcript of the hearing, when you get far enough into the record, one of the witnesses testified concerning Oliver Cowdrey:

he seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith jr was guilty of adultery, but when the question was put, if he (Joseph) had ever acknowledged to him that he was guilty of such a thing; when he answered No.

Then another witness, David Patten, testified:

he went to Oliver Cowdrey to enquire of him if a certain story was true respecting J. Smith's committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty; he then went on and gave a

history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape [alleging] that no doubt it was true.

Thomas Marsh testified that:

while [he was] in Kirtland last summer, David W. Patten asked Oliver Cowdrey if he Joseph Smith jr had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true.

Joseph Smith testified in the hearing:

Joseph Smith jr testifies that Oliver Cowdrey had been his bosom friend, therefore he intrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting (and these are the words from the record) the girl business.

The record goes on. I'm only looking at excerpts from these pages. After the counsel deliberated:

...it was decided by the Bishop and his Council that the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd charges were sustained...

It was the second charge that dealt with adultery, the false accusation of adultery. Oliver Cowdrey – the complaint that he was falsely attributing to Joseph Smith, the charge of adultery – was sustained. Satisfactorily by the circumstantial evidence, the ninth charge was sustained and "was, therefore, considered no longer a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."

This is the High Counsel record that occurred in the court in 1838. Oliver was excommunicated. Joseph Smith was taken prisoner. He was confined to Liberty Jail. He lost his *History of the Church* during the same 1838 time frame because other of the three witnesses also left the faith, and so he began to recreate the history of the Church in 1838 after the court involving these allegations, and before he would be arrested and spend time in Liberty Jail. As Joseph Smith was writing his history in 1838 he was writing it in the wake of events including the allegations that had been raised in the Church disciplinary court involving Oliver Cowdrey. The charge of adultery was in front of him. His history begins:

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they have

transpired, in relation both to myself and the Church, so far as I have such facts in my possession.

He goes on to explain within this history written in the wake of that court proceeding:

I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been.

Joseph is making it clear. He acknowledges his sins, foibles and weaknesses, but he did not commit "malignant sins."

Fanny Alger may have been Joseph Smith's first plural wife. She subsequently married a man. Between her and her husband she bore nine children. Joseph Smith fathered with Emma Smith eight children. But in the prime of their reproductive years, Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger produced no children.

There is an account that is preserved in a record that Hales assembled about Emma Smith observing "the transaction in the barn". Once again there is nothing other than those words given to what happened. Emma Smith came to the barn and from an ajar door was able to observe inside the barn, Joseph Smith, Fanny Alger, and Levi Hancock. Levi was given the words of a ceremony to marry the two of them for all eternity. This was "the transaction in the barn" and Emma overheard "the transaction".

If you take all of the material gathered by Hales and you consider it as one, "the transaction in the barn" did not involve Joseph in a haystack with a gal, caught in the very act by Emma, as a number of people have asserted. Even good-faith Mormons believe that nonsense. Even people who have the desire to uphold Joseph Smith as a prophet have attributed to him illicit sexual encounter in the barn between Joseph and Fanny Alger, witnessed by Emma Smith, which was the substance that was tried in the Oliver Cowdrey court, and it becomes clear that whatever went on in the barn did not involve adultery. Did not involve adultery.

Brian Hales goes through and makes an elaborate effort to demonstrate that Joseph Smith *may* have had sexual relations with, and he takes the entire number of known or suspected wives, and he ratchets this down to a handful and he says, okay, with these it is possible.

Let me suggest an analytical framework that might be useful. Because I would not want to be someone responsible for attributing to Joseph Smith something which is not true; I would not want to attribute a lie to him. Joseph Smith, if he be a prophet of God, is

entitled to only be convicted on the same standard as we would convict anyone else. As a lawyer I know that if you're going to convict someone of inappropriate conduct boarding on criminality, your burden of proving that is "beyond any reasonable doubt." If you've got a reasonable doubt about it then you don't go forward and convict. I think a prophet of God on this subject is entitled to the same standard of deference. Therefore, if there is reason to doubt, I say we ought doubt, and we ought not say yes, yes, now we know the truth and we know that we can attribute to Joseph Smith actions which are not his to own.

Reading from Brian Hales Volume 1 on page 391 he observes:

None of these women left a specific record of how Joseph Smith explained the principle of plural marriage to them, the specific path they followed to come to an acceptance of the principal, or what exactly it meant to them in terms of their daily lives and activities.

We don't have the necessary information from which we can reconstruct it. He does think Eliza Snow may have been one of the women with whom Joseph Smith had sexual intercourse. However, he also quotes an 1877 letter from Eliza to RLDS missionary, Daniel Lund. This is the hand of Eliza R. Snow writing this letter:

You asked (referring to President Smith), did he authorize or practice spiritual wifery? Were you a spiritual wife? I certainly shall not acknowledge myself of having been a carnal one.

This is Eliza Snow. If she's not a "carnal wife" then what does that mean? The term that's been used in the letters is the term that the missionary wrote to her and inquired of her about, and therefore she used that term.

In all of the efforts that have been made to try and track down punitive offspring and descendents of Joseph Smith, the DNA testing has resulted in not one child ever having been established as Joseph's. There are those that say that's not good enough because some of the DNA testing cannot prove one way or the other. It's equivocal. But to say that is to concede the point that you don't have proof. So in the absence of proof, you're going to attribute?

One of the best comments that's most useful to try and resolve the issue is a dying woman speaking to her – she's now quite elderly – her full-grown daughter on her deathbed, saying to the daughter, on her deathbed, which got repeated in the 1930s: "You (daughter) have Joseph Smith as your father." So we've got that statement. We presume that the dying mother would not die with a lie on her lips, saying, you are a daughter of Joseph Smith. If this woman was sealed to Joseph Smith for all eternity, it would not matter who the biological father of that child was. On her dying bed she would want her daughter to know it doesn't matter who your biological father is, you are a daughter of Joseph Smith, because she was sealed to Joseph. And there's no question

about that. You can reach a contrary conclusion if you want to do so, but I'm telling you, the proof is not sufficient to justify those kinds of conclusions.

In *Rough Stone Rolling*, Richard Bushman writes:

The husband knew of the plural marriage and proved in cases where Joseph married other women. The relationship would bear fruits in the afterlife. There was no certain evidence that Joseph had sexual relations with any of the wives who are married to other men.

...The personal anguish caused by plural marriage did not stop Joseph Smith from marrying more women. ...

...Joseph did not marry women to form a warm, human companionship, but to create a network of related wives, children, and kinsmen that would endure into eternity. The revelation on marriage promised Joseph "an hundredfold [more] in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds." Like Abraham of old, Joseph yearned for familial plenitude. He did not lust for women so much as he lusted for kin.

Romance played only a slight part. In making proposals, Joseph would sometimes say God had given a woman to him, or they were meant for each other, but there was no romantic talk of adoring love. He did not court his perspective wives by first trying to win their affections.

In trying to figure out what Joseph was all about, going back to the record of his talks, when it comes to the subject of sexual relations and the statements that we know that we can attribute to Joseph Smith, they were largely confined to denouncing adultery. They were largely confined to advocating chastity. In fact, at one point Joseph Smith said that an adulterer will not enter into the Celestial Kingdom, even if they enter into any kingdom it cannot be the Celestial Kingdom. You are forced to choose really, between circumstantial proof compounded by conjecture on the assumption that Joseph Smith was a vile hypocrite or take him at his word and accept what he says about himself, and believe and trust in what he said about himself. Well, why would we not?

One of the obstacles to getting the truth is Mr. John C. Bennett. In the *Times and Seasons* edition for June 15, 1842 there is a little notice on the last page of the paper, a little notice that appears that says:

NOTICE.

The subscribers, Members of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, withdrew the hand of fellowship from General John C. Bennett, as a christian, he having been labored with from time to time, to persuade him to amend his conduct, apparently to no good effect.

JOSEPH SMITH

HYRUM SMITH

WM. LAW

The following members of the Quorum of Twelve concur in the above sentiments.

BRIGHAM YOUNG
HEBER C. KIMBALL
LYMAN WIGHT
WILLIAM SMITH
JOHN E. PAGE
JOHN TAYLOR
WILFORD WOODRUFF
GEORGE A. SMITH
WILLARD RICHARDS
We concur in the above sentiment.
N.K. WHITNEY
V. KNIGHT
GEORGE MILLER
Bishops of the above mentioned Church.
Nauvoo, May 11th, 1842

That's the notice. That was the only thing that was intended to be done to deal with John C. Bennett. John C Bennett 'did not go quietly into that good night.' When you get to the July 1st edition of the *Times and Seasons*, almost the entire edition is devoted to dealing with John Bennett, because as soon as the notice was published he went out of his way to try and make it clear that he was the good guy and that Joseph Smith and the Mormons were the bad guys, and he began to invent and attribute to Joseph Smith and to members of the Church things that he had done. So the *Times and Seasons* for July 1st, the first lead article says:

It becomes my duty to lay before for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and the public generally, some important facts relative to the conduct and character of Dr. John C. Bennett, who has lately been expelled from the aforesaid Church; that the honorable part of the community may be aware of his proceedings, and be ready to treat and regard him as he ought to be regarded, viz: as an imposter and base adulterer.

See, the little notice said nothing about this. Now they have to get into the facts. It mentions that,

...a communication had been received at Nauvoo, from a person of respectable character, and residing in the vicinity where Bennett had lived. This letter cautioned us against him, setting forth that he was a very mean man, and had a wife, and two or three children in McConnelsville, Morgan county, Ohio; ...the above letter was kept quiet, but held in reserve.

They didn't trust the information in the letter. But they knew it much earlier on, it's just that Joseph had the problem of John Bennett, and he was always willing to accept repentance. They dealt with him, "finally threatening ...to expose him if he did not desist. ...He only broke off his publicly wicked actions... ...He went to some of the females in

the city, who knew nothing of him but as an honorable man, & began to teach them that promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, was a doctrine believed in by the Latter-Day Saints." He "persuaded them that myself and others of the authorities of the church not only sanctioned, but practiced the same wicked acts; and when asked why I publicly preached so much against it, said that it was because of the prejudice of the public, and that it would cause trouble in my own house."

The females that he was trying to persuade to participate with him said, okay, but why is Joseph always denouncing this in public? Oh, that's a sticky piece of pone because he doesn't want it to get up.

He "persuaded [them, his victims] that there would be no harm if they should not make it known." He seduced an innocent female "by his lying. Not being contented with having disgraced one female, he made an attempt upon others, and by the same plausible tale, overcame them also[.]"

"[I]t was a fact that Bennett had a wife and children living, and that she had left him because of his ill-treatment towards her. This letter was read to Bennett, which he did not attempt to deny; but candidly acknowledged the fact."

"Dr. Bennett made an attempt at suicide, by taking poison. ...Without any government over his passions, he was soon busily engaged in the same wicked career, and continued until a knowledge of the same reached my ears." I [Joseph Smith] "publicly proclaimed against it, and had those females notified to appear before the proper officers that the whole subject might be investigated and thoroughly exposed." And was, and it goes on.

John Bennett signed an affidavit. It says:

John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith: that he never was taught anything in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel, or of virtue, or of the laws of God, or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith; and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever, even in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illegal and illicit intercourse with females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others.
JOHN C. BENNETT.

Sworn to, under oath, in an affidavit.

Then, the members of the City Council, in this same edition of the *Times and Seasons* also signed an affidavit saying – this is them, quoting Dr. Bennett in his testimony when he came before them, quoting him:

I publicly avow that anyone who has said that I (John Bennett) have stated that General Joseph Smith has given me authority to hold illicit intercourse with women is a liar in the face of God, those who have said it are damn liars; they are infernal liars. He never, either in public or private, gave me any such authority or license, and any person who says it is a scoundrel and a liar.

Joseph asked him (Bennett) in front of the Council, "Will you please state definitely whether you know anything against my character, either in public or in private?" General Bennett answered, "I do not. In all my intercourse with Gen. Smith, in private and in public, he has been (entirely) virtuous."

Then there are affidavits that are signed by George Miller.

The subject gets taken up again. Almost the entire edition of the August 1st *Times and Seasons* contains more affidavits, more public statements, more acknowledgements. This time William Law goes on the record, and William Law testifies in an affidavit that is really quite striking in defending the character of Joseph and in condemning what John Bennett attributed to him.

If you go to the Nauvoo City and High Council minutes and you look at the trials that went on in connection with this, you find out that three days previous to May 14, 1842, Bennett resigned his mayoral post because he had been accused of "adultery, fornication, buggery and miscegenation." Buggery was the euphemism used in that time for homosexual relations. Miscegenation was the legal status of a white person having intercourse with a black person, because that was mixing the races. He was accused of those things according to the newspaper account at the time.

So when you get to the minutes of the trial before the (Nauvoo City) Council for July 20, 1842:

John C. Bennett was not under duress at the time he testified before the city council, May 19, 1842, concerning Joseph Smith's innocence and virtue and pure teaching. ...there was no excitement at the time, nor was he in anywise threatened, menaced or intimidated. His appearance at the city council was voluntary; ...Joseph Smith asked him if he knew anything bad concerning his public or private character. He then delivered those statements contained in the testimony voluntarily, and on his own free will, and went of his own accord, as free as any member of the Council.

WILSON LAW, GEO A. SMITH, JOHN TAYLOR, GEO W. HARRIS, WILFORD WOODRUFF, NEWEL K. WHITNEY, VINSON KNIGHT, BRIGHAM YOUNG, HEBER C. KIMBALL, CHARLES C. RICH, JOHN P. GREEN, ORSON SPENCER, WILLIAM MARKS.

That is signed in that setting by both Wilson Law, William Law, and William Marks.

In the fallout from that, "[charges were preferred] as they tracked down what had been going on in Nauvoo. By May 21 of 1842 the High Council met. "[A] charge [was] [preferred] against Chauncey [L.] Higbee by George Miller for unchaste and un-virtuous conduct with the widow [Sarah] Miller, and others. Three witness[es] testified that he had seduced [several women] and at different times [had] been guilty of unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with them and taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and also taught that Joseph Smith authorised him to practice these things &c".

On May 25 a charge was preferred "against Ms. Catherine Warren by George Miller for unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with John C. Bennett and others. The defendant confessed to the charge and gave the names of several other [men] who had been guilty having unlawful intercourse with her[,] stating they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practiced it[,] ...learning that the heads of the church did not believe of [the] practice [of] such things[,] she was willing to confess her sins and did repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her." She furnished names.

On September 3, 1842, "[A] charge was preferred against Gustavius Hills by Elisha Everett[,] one of the teachers of the Church[,] for illicit intercourse with a certain woman by the name of Mary Clift by which she was with child[,] and for teaching the said Mary Clift that that the heads of the Church practiced such [doctrine] & that time would come when men would have more wives than one &c".

"Esther Smith gave evidence that [the] defendant told her that it was lawful for people to have illicit intercourse if they only held their peac[e] ...it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the Church."

Another court is held on August 12, 1842. I'm not going to bother reading more of the charges. You get the idea. They round up a significant number of people that are involved in this practice. John Bennett then, in response to the treatment that he received by the Church, sets out to tell another story. I'm reading now from John Bennett's book, *The History of the Saints, or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*.

...I was, at least for some time, a convert to their pretended religion. This, however, is a very [grievous] error. (He's saying that he's been accused of being a member of the Church but it's an error to think of him in that way.) I never believed in them or their doctrines. This is, and indeed was, from the first, well known to my friends and acquaintances in the western country, who are well aware of my reasons for connecting myself with the Prophet; which reasons I will now proceed to state. (He writes:) ...It at length occurred to me that the surest and speediest way to overthrow the Imposter, and expose his iniquity to the world, would be to profess myself a convert to his doctrines, and to join him at the seat of the dominion. ...the course I was resolved to pursue would enable

me to get behind the curtain, and behold, at my leisure, the secret wires of the fabric, and likewise those who moved them.

Then he addresses the obvious problem that should present itself to any one of us: Why would we believe a liar on any subject when he's telling us that he lied in order to get there?

"What confidence can I place in your statements, when I know, by your own confessions, that you once played a part of the hypocrite?"

He answers that: "Suppose that by going to them, and professing to be their friends I could find out something that will help deter the evil that they have in mind, then isn't it worth lying to get in there and doing so." He explains that he's really telling the truth this time, in this book, even though he admits in this book lying to the Mormons to get their confidence. That was a necessary lie, in order to be able to furnish you with the truth.

He goes on to explain the system that he attributes to Joseph Smith. Now, I don't believe that John Bennett, having invented the system that persuaded a number of people to participate in this sexual licentiousness in Nauvoo would invent still another system to talk about in his book, I think the system that he describes in this book is actually what he was preaching.

He has three orders of women from the Relief Society.

The "Cyprian Saints;" this is the first order, it's the lowest order. She takes the white veil. "[H]er name and failing are stealthily promulgated among the trustworthy members of the Church, at whose command she is, for licentious purposes, forever after."

The lowest order is the Cyprian Saints, and she's disgraced, and she just gets to be used, but is given the white veil.

The next higher order is the "Chambered Sisters of Charity".

Whenever one of the "Saints," (as the Mormons style themselves,) of the male sex, becomes enamored of a female, and she responds to the feeling by reciprocal manifestation, the loving brother goes to Holy Joe, and states the case. It makes, by the bye, no difference whatever if one or both parties are already provided with conjugal helpmeets. The Prophet gravely buries his face in his hat, in which lies his peep-stone, and inquires of the Lord what are his will and pleasure in the matter. ...generally, the reply permits the parties to follow the bent of their inclinations, which they do without further ceremony, though with a strict observance of secrecy, on account of the Gentiles, who have no right to the blessings and privileges so liberally granted to the Latter-day Saints.

The Chambered Sisters of Charity are the Saints "of the green veil". He's got three orders and when you finally get to the highest order, these are the "Consecratees of the Cloister", or "the Cloistered Saints."

...by express grace and gift of God, through his Prophet the Holy Joe, are set apart and consecrated to the use and benefit of particular individuals, as secret, spiritual wives. They are the Saints of the Black Veil, and are accounted special favorites of Heaven. ...Their spiritual husbands are altogether the most eminent members of the Mormon Church... When an Apostle, High Priest, Elder, or Scribe, conceives an affection...

Then he goes on to describe the licentiousness and wickedness of Mormons.

Those who have grappled with the subject of polygamy, looking back at Joseph Smith, do so through this lens. He devotes a considerable effort in this book to attribute to Joseph Smith improprieties with Sarah Pratt while Orson Pratt was on a mission to England. John Bennett says while that Orson Pratt was on a mission, that Joseph Smith approached Sarah Pratt, and that Joseph solicited Sarah to be a plural wife of his, and that he compromised her. There is another story that got told at the time. That other story was that Sarah Pratt was one of John Bennett's conquests, and that she did in fact prove to be unfaithful to Orson while on a mission but that she had been unfaithful, not with Joseph Smith but with John Bennett. Sarah Pratt was a loyal wife to Orson, an active member of the Church and a faithful member. She appeared to support everything that was going on until Orson Pratt decided that instead of giving his primary time to her that he was then going to divide his time equally among six wives, and that she would only receive one-sixth of his time. That was too far for her, and Sarah Pratt divorced Orson. She apostatized from Mormonism, and she became the founder of the Anti-Polygamy Society in Salt Lake City.

However, before she left the Church and became an enemy to plural marriage she had a correspondence with Joseph Smith III. Joseph Smith III wanted to know about his father, and he obviously knew about what John Bennett had said about Joseph compromising Sarah Pratt. So Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith, wanted to know from Sarah what was going on. She answered his questions. She died, and in the *Saints Herald*, a newspaper that was printed by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith [III] published this account. These are the questions:

"Did he ever at such time, or in any other time or place, make improper overtures to you or to proposals of an improper nature? Begging your pardon for the apparent indelicacy of this question." To this Mrs. Pratt replied quietly but firmly, "No. Joseph, your father, never said an improper word to me in his life. He knew better." "Sister Pratt, it has been frequently told that he behaved improperly in your presence, and I have been told that I dare not come to you and ask you about your relations with him, for fear you would tell me things which would be unwelcome to me." "You needn't have no such fear," she repeated, "your father was never guilty of an action or proposal with improper

nature in my house, toward me, or in my presence, at any time or place. There is no truth in the reports that have been circulated about him in this regard. He was always the Christian gentleman and a noble man."

Later, after she's disaffected, she adopts John Bennett's accusations. Later she tells a completely contrary story. Just as John Bennett says that he was a liar at one point but he's telling the truth now, Sarah Pratt adopts his version of the events and there are many people who, because of the integrity with which she had lived her life before, once she decided to tell the contrary story, accepts her story and does something with that. She founded the Anti-Polygamy Society. She was an enemy to the perpetuation of polygamy. She was saying what she needed to do to try and end the order. She had been hurt by the actions of her husband. When people have an agenda you have to realize that that's going to color what goes on. So you have the interpretive problem of John Bennett.

The second big problem that we have is that Joseph Smith was dead in 1844 and in 1852 the public was told *we do this stuff*. Beginning in 1852 the Mormons decide that they're going to publicly advocate it. Orson Pratt, the husband of Sarah Pratt, moves to Washington DC to advocate for the acceptance of polygamy in the nation's capitol. Orson Pratt is the one who was asked to get up and give the talk. Orson Pratt's talk is preserved in the *Journal of Discourses*.

Brigham Young spoke immediately after Orson Pratt and he added this to the story:

The revelations will be read to you. The principal spoken upon by brother Pratt, this morning, we believe in. and I tell you—for I know it—it will sail over and ride triumphantly above all the prejudice and priestcraft of the day; it will be fostered and believed in by the more intelligent portion of the world as one of the best doctrines ever proclaimed at any people. ...you need not think that a mob is coming here to tread upon the sacred liberty which the Constitution of our country guarantees for us, for it will not be. The world have known, long ago, even in brother Joseph's days, that he had more wives than one. One of the Senators in Congress knew it very well. Did he oppose it? No, but he has been our friend all the day long, especially upon that subject. He said pointedly to his friends, "If the United States do not adopt that very method—let them continue on as they now are—pursue the precise course they are now pursuing, and it will come to this— that their generations will not live until they are 30 years old. They are going to destruction; disease is spreading so fast among the inhabitants of the United States, that they are born rotten with it, and in a few years they are gone." Said he, "Joseph has introduced the best plan for restoring and establishing strength and long life among men, of any man on earth; and the Mormons are very good and virtuous people." Many others are of the same mind, they are not ignorant of what we are doing in our social capacity. They have cried out, "Proclaim it." But it would not do, a few years ago, everything must come in time, as there is a time to all things. I am now ready to proclaim it.

Interpreting that, while they were still in Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas, the senator, he was not a senator at the time, he become a senator after. He was a senator at the time of this talk by Brigham Young. Stephen A. Douglas, senator in the United States, encouraged them to go public with polygamy because everyone would see the common sense of it. The health, the people dying, the people being born, that was venereal disease. He was saying, yes, if they could marry more women then they wouldn't catch venereal disease with the prostitutes, so it will contribute to public hygiene if we can get rid of all of the prostitution by making wives of the women. This is the thinking of Stephen A. Douglas, commended to Brigham Young, repeated by Brigham Young on the day in which the announcement was made.

Both the talk given by Orson Pratt and the seconding made by Brigham Young says "the Constitution" – the Constitution protects it.

Orson Pratt went to Washington, DC and he founded a newspaper that was called *The Seer*. In *The Seer* he says:

The doctrine of *Celestial Marriage*, or Marriage for all eternity, as believed and practiced by the Saints in the Utah Territory, will be clearly explained. The views of the Saints in regard to the Ancient Patriarchal Order of Matrimony, or Plurality of Wives, as developed in a Revelation given to JOSEPH Smith, the SEER, will be fully published. ... [That's the purpose of this newspaper.] It is hoped that the President elect, the Hon. Members of Congress, the Heads of the various Departments of the National Government, the high-minded Governors and Legislative Assemblies of the several States and Territories, the Ministers of every Religious domination, and all the inhabitants of this great Republic, will patronize this Periodical, that through the medium of our own writings they may be more correctly and fully informed in regard to the peculiar doctrines, views, practices, and expectations of the Saints who now flourish in the Mountain Territory. Orson Pratt, December 21, 1852 in Washington DC

The *Seer* was published and it went in publication from 1852 thereafter for a number of years. All of those have been gathered now into a single volume that is published in a book called *The Seer*. I don't know if it's still in print but in there he advocates it. In the first edition published following the announcement it says: The Constitution and laws of the United States, being formed upon the principles of freedom; [allow for the practice of] ...Plurality of wives. He makes this constitutional argument in the first volume of it. It was important to protecting the ability to practice it. It was important for them to establish as a matter of public practice that they did it, and it was an integral and important part of the religion. If it was not a fundamental part of the religion the First Amendment would not protect it. Therefore, beginning in 1852, in order to practice it and in order to win the anticipated legal argument, it was necessary to advocate for it in a way that was wholly beyond anything that Joseph Smith had ever said or done. But for the next 38 years in public what the leadership of the Church did every time they were given an opportunity to do so, was to emphasize that plural wives was an essential part

of the religion because they knew if it was not so regarded then they could not be constitutionally protected.

This is another distortion in the lens of trying to figure out what Joseph was up to. If you take what was said during that 38-year time period and you say, that is exactly what Joseph Smith meant, you're going to reach a conclusion about what Joseph Smith meant that should not be attributed to him. You can attribute it to Brigham Young, you can attribute it to Stephen A. Douglas. You can certainly say you know what Orson Pratt thinks about plural marriage. You can say all of that. But what you cannot say is that they knew what Joseph was doing. They can't do that.

A great deal more could be said about all that but I want to keep this to a reasonable time period and I want to ask the question: What was Joseph really trying to accomplish?

Briefly, by the time you get to 1890 and the Manifesto, what the Manifesto did I think only makes it more difficult for understanding what Joseph Smith was up to. The 1890 Manifesto was not mirrored in LDS conduct. The 1890 Manifesto was a public relations press announcement saying that they were taking down the Endowment House and that the president of the Church was going to use his influence to discourage the continued practice of polygamy, but polygamy continued. Polygamy and plural marriages did not end. What happened with the Manifesto actually serves the purpose of persuading the Fundamentalists that it needed to continue, even if you have to go once again underground, and even if you have to lie, cheat, steal, and deceive, even if you've got to avoid the law, you still need to honor and practice it.

There is a seven-volume history of plural marriage that's been assembled by a polygamist, Arnold Boss, in which he walks through the history of what went on. Most of the information that he has assembled in his seven volumes of the history deals with the fact that there was more to polygamy than people knew about before it was announced publicly in 1852. And there was a whole lot more to the continuation of the practice after 1890. The formal LDS Church organization continued to practice plural marriage and to marry additional wives after 1890, including at least one Church president and members of the First Presidency and the Twelve, from 1890 until a second Manifesto in 1904; during the Reed Smoot senate confirmation hearings in which, as a witness, Joseph F. Smith was summoned to Congress, sworn under oath and then interrogated by a congressional committee in which he was asked about the practice of plural marriage, among many other things. I have the transcript of that here too, and those are useful and good reading. He denies that it was going on but he returned and then sent out a second Manifesto to make sure that what he testified to under oath was, in fact, true, and therefore he ended it because he was cornered.

If you read the diaries and you read the journals of those that were directly involved during the time that the Manifesto was going on, and I've got a number of those but we don't have the time to read all the excerpts, the fact is that when the Manifesto was adopted it was adopted really as a ruse and when the testimony was required by the

Special Master, Wilford Woodruff went far beyond where he thought he was going to go before he went in. But they had a game plan going in. The Special Master before the Magistrate Judge in the Federal District Court didn't give him any wiggle room. They were caught and they had to abandon plural marriage, but the way that they abandoned it was a ruse, and it remained a ruse until 1904. In 1904 Joseph F. Smith sent out a second Manifesto when two of the members of the Twelve were later caught by the Salt Lake Tribune in continuing the practice; the two of them were excommunicated. Well, one of them was excommunicated. Both of them lost their positions in the Quorum of the Twelve. That signalled essentially the end. If you want to know whether or not it continued thereafter then there are commentaries that will relate to you the history.

Another source of material about the continuation of the practice is the collected works of Ogden Kraut. His son, Kevin Kraut, has given me the first five volumes. It's anticipated it will be seven in total. What the fundamentalists do is that they come and they tell you about the history that the LDS Church denies. They make it seem as though there is more to the requirement of plural marriage than there ever was, but they have a lot of history that we deny. The continuing splinter groups including Arnold Boss's works, Ogden Kraut's works, and others that are out there working to preserve the Fundamentalist polygamy practice have done a job of defending the practice using material that is authentic, it is real, and that justifies the practice. All of which, when you put it together, doesn't help understand what Joseph Smith was doing or why. You can take all of that stuff from John Bennett. You can take everything that has been said, written, preached. You can take the entirety of *The Seer* by Orson Pratt. You can read and study it all and it still doesn't tell you what Joseph Smith was doing or why.

I read you the statement from Hales. The women who were involved didn't tell you anything. And Joseph told you nothing. And what you're left with at the end of all this is Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants which is not an easy section to understand.

I went to some effort in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* to show that it is actually not one revelation but several, and that the exalting, eternal principle of marriage is dealt with in the first part of the revelation in which it talks about marriage between a man and *a wife*, singular, a wife. The revelation is about the eternal nature of the marriage covenant which exalts. Secondarily it answers the question about what happened with David and Solomon and Abraham and these others who had many wives, and then it lists the extremely narrow criteria in which that's permitted. We don't have any proof that Joseph Smith had sexual relations with any woman other than Emma Smith. He didn't produce children with anyone other than her.

Nauvooan Eliza Jane Churchill Webb wrote in 1876: "Joseph never had any living children by his polygamist women." When asked on November 1, 1879, "Why did Joseph Smith the Prophet have no children?" Joseph F. Smith responded: "Because it would have been against him and the law of the state against bigamy. The children would have been proven to be his or the mothers would have been condemned for illicit intercourse, polygamous marriages not being considered legitimate marriages."

Joseph F. Smith says he didn't have children. You could not have intercourse before Griswold v. Connecticut without risking having children. Therefore, what Joseph Smith was doing with plural marriage may be something altogether different. If you're going to try and understand what that was about you're going to have to throw away everything you think you understand about plural marriage and allow some things from the scriptures to penetrate.

Joseph Smith was doing something which did not just put together a man and a wife. He was doing something that put together families. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a mock-up of a family. It's a mock-up of the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the First Presidency, and the twelve sons of Jacob in the Quorum of the Twelve, and the seventy descendents who went into Egypt when they migrated into Egypt when Joseph was counselor to Pharaoh that you can read in Exodus 1:5. That's the church. It is a mock-up, it is an imitation, it is a facsimile of the family of Abraham. It is not the family of Abraham, but it is a powerful evidence that the family of Abraham is, in fact, something Joseph Smith was interested in restoring. Eventually that which is a mockery is going to give way that which is the family. First you have a schoolmaster and then you have the reality. Joseph was headed to the reality but he didn't get there in his day.

In the immediate aftermath of Joseph's death and the completion of the Nauvoo temple there were a lot of questions that could not then be answered because they simply no longer had the keys with which to get the answers to the questions that were pressing upon them. If they didn't have the ability to ask and get an answer then they couldn't get direction. And they couldn't. Therefore, what Joseph was doing was left without a culmination.

You can go out, and there is physical proof in the restored Nauvoo Temple. You can see this on the website where the photograph was taken and put up, bear record where there's a place where the brick size changes in the construction of the Nauvoo temple. They were making small bricks and you can see how far up the small bricks run on the outside of the temple. When Joseph was killed, in order to complete the temple in greater haste, the size of the bricks increase and so there's a point in which the size of the bricks go from small to larger when they are hastening the work in which they're trying to get the building done. The level at which the temple had been completed at the time of the martyrdom essentially was a repetition of what had been built in the Kirtland Temple. It is the Solemn Assembly room.

Joseph never lived to tell anyone how to build the top of the Nauvoo temple. So when they got to the point that they were finishing the Nauvoo temple they didn't have any plans for what happened in the attic area other than the rooms around the perimeter in which the priesthood was supposed to meet. And so to create the ceremonial setting in which the Nauvoo temple endowment companies were taken through they took canvas that Joseph had ordered for a bowery so they could get it out of the weather, and they took the canvas and they made partitions in the attic area to divide the rooms up in

which to present the endowment in the attic of the Nauvoo temple. Had Joseph lived he would have been able to finish out that space. He didn't live, and so they did it with canvas. They did it as a temporary thing, and they administered the endowments in that setting.

In the process of administering those things there was something that went on that they were trying to imitate what Joseph had been talking about. Brigham Young makes an explanation shortly after they abandoned. The same month that they abandoned Nauvoo and they're heading west he gives a talk in Winter Quarters in February 1847. This is the 16th of February. They walked out of town on the 9th, so this is a week later. He's talking about a subject that really defines what the entirety of this topic is really involved with:

The Lord introduced the law of adoption for the benefit of the children of men as a schoolmaster to bring them back to the covenant of the priesthood, not as some have supposed to add anything to his glory. This principle I answer is not clearly understood by many of the Elders of this church at the present time as it will hereafter be, and I confess that I have had only a smattering of these things; but when it is necessary I will attain to more knowledge on the subject and consequently will be enabled to teach and practice more and will in the meantime glorify God, the bountiful giver.

The rest of that talk is interesting, and I would comment on it but we don't have time. This is on the 16th of February. On February 23rd, another week later, Brigham Young gives another talk. This talk is pointed to for one purpose. I want to read you a more fulsome account and suggest to you the more important purpose. This is that great occasion on which Brigham Young went to sleep and had a dream in which Joseph Smith appeared to him. Let me read you the account. I'm in the part where he's already introduced that he's dreaming, that he's seen Joseph, and that Joseph is now talking to him:

I then discovered there was a hand rail between us, Joseph stood by a window, and to the southwest of him it was very light. I was in the twilight and to the north of me it was very dark;

Joseph is in the light, Brigham is in the dark.

I said, "Brother Joseph, the brethren you know well, better than I do; you raised them up, and brought the Priesthood to us. The brethren have a great anxiety to understand the law of adoption or sealing principles; and if you have a word of counsel for me, I should be glad to receive it."

Of all the things about which Brigham Young could be talking to the Prophet Joseph Smith, on this occasion the thing that comes thundering to the foreground that he would

like to know about is the law of adoption. He wants to know that, standing as he is in the dark:

Joseph stepped toward me, and looking very earnestly, yet pleasantly said, "Tell the people to be humble and faithful, be sure to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small voice; it will teach you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it. They can tell the Spirit of the Lord from all other spirits; it will whisper peace and joy to their souls; it will take malice, hatred, strife and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good, bring forth righteousness and build up the kingdom of God. Tell the brethren if they will follow the spirit of Lord they will go right. Be sure to tell the people to keep the Spirit of the Lord; and if they will, they will find themselves just as they were organized by our Father in Heaven before they came into the world. Our Father in Heaven organized the human family, but they are all disorganized and in great confusion.

Joseph's answer to the pressing question of how do we go about getting these sealings right, is to say, "Oh, go get the Holy Ghost, and let the Holy Ghost guide you. God will get you organized." In other words, Joseph punted on the answer. It would do no good for the answer to be given if the authority with which to administer the answer was something that wasn't there. Therefore, rather than to tell him so that some solemn mockery continued, it was time to bring it to an end. And although they made an effort to continue in that vein for a short while, as I pointed out in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* everyone talked about they didn't understand it. And in fact, some of the leading brethren said, "I didn't believe it when I first heard it and I don't believe it now," and the practice of adoption came to an end.

I want to go back for a moment to what we do know from Doctrine and Covenants Section 132, that comes from the Prophet Joseph Smith because that's it. That's the entirety of what we have from him. In verse 7 of Section 132 it says:

I have appointed on the earth to hold this power and I have appointed unto my servant, Joseph, to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.

And so on. *There is only one. Only one.*

When we go to D&C 107 it talks about the order of this priesthood. I'm reading from verse 40:

The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made. This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and

came down by lineage in the following manner: From Adam to Seth, who was ordained by Adam at the age of sixty–nine years, and was blessed by him three years previous to his (Adam's) death, and received the promise of God by his father, that his posterity should be the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth; Because he (Seth) was a perfect man, and his likeness was the express likeness of his father, insomuch that he seemed to be like unto his father in all things, and could be distinguished from him only by his age. Enos was ordained at the age of one hundred and thirty–four years and four months, by the hand of Adam. God called upon Cainan in the wilderness in the fortieth year of his age; and he met Adam in journeying to the place Shedolamak. He was eighty–seven years old when he received his ordination. Mahalaleel was four hundred and ninety–six years and seven days old when he was ordained by the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Jared was two hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Enoch was twenty–five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam; and he was sixty–five and Adam blessed him. And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God three hundred and sixty–five years, making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated. Methuselah was one hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. Lamech was thirty–two years old when he was ordained under the hand of Seth. Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah. Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adamondi–Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

When you go to the story in Moses chapter 5 and you read about Adam and Eve and their posterity, Adam and Eve have children, and the children are seduced by Satan and persuaded to be led astray. Then they have a son to whom the birthright was going to be granted because he appeared to be interested in the things of God, so much so that he was willing to offer sacrifice. That son, the older one, was named Cain, and the next son born was Abel. But Abel was more attentive to the things of God. Both Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to the Lord. However, the Lord approved the sacrifice of Abel.

At this point in the history of man, if that right of priesthood passed from Adam to Abel it would have displaced Cain. Cain sought for the right where unto he would be the one to hold that priesthood. He was the one who wanted it. The first murder that was committed was committed against the one who would inherit the birthright, done precisely for the purpose of eliminating the posterity of Abel, so that Abel, having no posterity, could not be the one through whom the birthright would be perpetuated. When Cain sought to take what God had instead appointed his younger brother to receive, Cain was deprived of the right of priesthood and it passed over him and his descendents so that Cain did not obtain the birthright.

And Eve conceived and she bore a replacement son, and that son, Seth, became the one through whom the promises would be given. And Cain was driven out from the people. Now you have to understand that – this is in Moses chapter 6:

And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth. And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years, and he begat many sons and daughters; (Moses 6:10-11.)

Adam begat many sons and daughters, but the son named Seth was the one to whom this priesthood went because there is only one appointed.

Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos, and prophesied in all his days, and taught his son Enos in the ways of God; wherefore Enos prophesied also. And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat many sons and daughters. (Moses 6:13-14.)

Seth begat Enos and many sons and daughters. But the right of the lineage and the priesthood went from Adam, to Seth, to Enos.

This is a description of that priesthood which was briefly restored in one person, Joseph, to be given to Hyrum, because it goes to the oldest righteous descendent. And when it was first restored through Joseph Smith, Hyrum was not yet qualified. But when Hyrum became qualified by January of 1841, in the revelation given then, Hyrum is the one to whom the birthright went, being the eldest and being the one who was qualified. This is why it was necessary for Hyrum to die before Joseph, so that in this dispensation Joseph and Hyrum can stand at the head. Because if Hyrum had not died first but Joseph had died first, Joseph would have died without having had the passing.

Notice that Seth had many sons and daughters. Then you get to the next, Enos. He lived and begat Canaan. Enos also has many sons and daughters but Canaan was the one upon whom the birthright – this follows all the way down. You can read it in Moses chapter 6 how it descends through the line. This pattern repeats over and over again.

As I'm talking about this I'm making reference to a diagram that appeared first in *The Millennial Star* on January 15, 1847. But what you can see in the *Joseph Smith Papers* on page 298 where they reproduce the same diagram of the "kingdom of God", the only difference being that I have filled in the names on this chart so that you can see where the names go.

We get to the point in the history of the world in which, after the days of Shem, who was renamed "Melchizedek", people fell into iniquity. They fell into iniquity and they lost the birthright. There was no continuation of this. It was broken by an apostasy and it had to be restored again, which ought to give all of us great hope because Abraham sought for this. He sought for a restoration of the kingdom of God. He sought for a restoration of this, which only one man on the earth can hold at a time. Abraham 1:2:

And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

When you are in possession of that you have no problem asking God and getting an answer. It is the right belonging to the fathers. After a period of apostasy, and the break of this line, Abraham received it by adoption. Therefore, this power has the ability to cure the break. This covenant making through God has the ability to restore the family of God, even when wicked men kill in order to destroy it, even when a substitute needs to be made, even when the fathers turn from their righteousness, yet God is able to cause it to persist. Joseph Smith was doing something which no one else either understood or had the right to perpetuate.

This continued through ten generations from Adam to Melchizedek, but through Abraham it continued five generations. It appeared again once on the earth in a single generation that included Joseph and his brother Hyrum.

Now even the mockery of it has come to an end, because there is no such thing as a perpetuation "in honorable mention" of the descendants of Hyrum Smith in the office of Patriarch in the Church. There have been many signs that have been given by God that He was about to do something new from the time of the death of Joseph Smith till today. All that was left at the end was for a witness to be appointed, to come and to say, "It now has come to an end." In the last talk that I gave in the 10 lecture series I said, a witness has now come, and I am him. It has come to an end. One of the signs of it having come to an end was the passing of Eldred Smith. There are many other signs that have been given if you are looking for them. You can see them all along the line.

Emma Smith once said that without Joseph Smith there is no church, and you know what, Emma Smith was right. Because as soon as you remove Joseph Smith out of the picture what you had essentially was a complete overthrow of the church by the Quorum of the Twelve. The Quorum of the Twelve substituted themselves in the place. The First Presidency under Joseph Smith was a quorum that the Quorum of the Twelve may be equal in authority to. But there was never a single apostle taken out of the Quorum of the Twelve moved into the First Presidency by Joseph Smith. These were two independently existing bodies. The Quorum of the Twelve did not occupy the First Presidency, and the First Presidency filled itself without regard to the Twelve. Similarly, the Quorum of the Seventy formed a quorum equal in authority with the Quorum of the Twelve and therefore with the First Presidency also. None of this survived Brigham Young! The High Councils of Zion, the standing High Councils formed a quorum equal in authority with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. All the "keys" to rule

in Israel, one hundred percent First Presidency, one hundred percent Quorum of the Twelve, one hundred percent Quorum of the Seventy, and one hundred percent in the High Councils. After Brigham Young took over that was destroyed and it became an oligarchy in which the Quorum of the Twelve runs everything, even through today. But they don't run this and they can't run this, and for this, God alone is in charge.

There is more to this than you can even begin to imagine. In the last revelation I received on the subject I recorded:

It has puzzled me how the Lord could go to visit the dead, the dead could greet the Son of God in the Spirit World where He, "declared their redemption from the bands of death. Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy," (Doctrine and Covenants 138:16-17) on the one hand; but Christ did not go to preach to the wicked, instead, "from among the righteous he organized his forces and appointed messengers clothed with power and authority and commission them to go forth." Therefore, the very SAME spirits who rejoice at the deliverance from the grave were left in the grave and it was by them "was the Gospel preached to those who had died." (D&C 138: 30-32). I had wondered how they could be raised from the dead and yet remain to preach to the dead. After inquiring about this matter diligently, I have learned that when the Lord declared the resurrection, He did not resurrect them. He assured them it would come, but comparatively few were resurrected with the Lord at the time He came forth from the grave. This then puzzled me to know who, then, was taken from the grave, as recorded in Matthew 27:52 ("Many of the bodies of the Saints which slept, arose") and prophesied by Samuel and confirmed by Christ (3 Nephi 23: 9-13). Who arose that were called "many Saints" by both the New Testament and The Book of Mormon. I was shown that the spirits that rose were limited to a direct line back to Adam, requiring the hearts of the fathers and the hearts of the children to be bound together by sealing, confirmed by covenant and the Holy Spirit of Promise. This is the reason that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob "have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and sit upon thrones and are not angels but are gods." D&C 132:37. The coming of the Lord in the future will not bring an immediate resurrection— just as the resurrection of Christ did not empty the world of spirits of even the righteous dead. Those who will be prepared at His coming will remain comparatively few still. Hence, the great need to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the fathers to the children—and this too by covenant and sealing through the Holy Spirit of Promise.

It was abundantly clear, according to Joseph, that the only way in which this kind of a welding link could be accomplished required a temple to be built. Not the temple that was built in Kirkland that was accepted by the Lord, but something different.

There are at least three stages in the process of restoring knowledge. The first stage is to receive it but that's just receiving it. Receiving it is not the same thing as the second stage, which is to comprehend it. It is possible that man receives something without understanding what it was that he had received. Time and careful and solemn and ponderous thoughts are required to untangle what has been received in order to comprehend what it is that you have been given. But it is altogether something of a different order of magnitude completely separate from that to teach it. You can receive it, you can comprehend it but you may not be able to teach it.

When it finally does get taught undoubtedly it will be taught in the manner that Joseph Smith was beginning to work on in Nauvoo that he never finished at the time that he was taken. That is by ceremony, by covenant, and this too by something given by God, and it to be established in a house that is acceptable to Him. If you want to know what Joseph Smith was doing in his efforts apart from the Church in a whole new effort, talking about something involving potentially the plurality of wives, you have to understand the birthright, you have to understand the sealing power, you have to understand he was trying to organize again on the earth the kingdom of god. He was trying to bring back the actual family but he was taken from us at the incipient stage because all that he was sent here today was to lay the groundwork, to lay the beginning, to come as an Elias. To come and to call to the world and to give to them, if they will pay attention to it, a basis upon which they can study and learn and potentially qualify for the Lord to resume the restoration and bring it to a completion.

All of the work that gets done for the dead, where you seal yourself to your ancestors like they are going to get you anywhere, is the inverse of the model that Joseph was establishing. Joseph had people sealed to him because he had formed a link to heaven. Sealing your kindred dead to be your superior puts you in the spirit world, living among the dead, unredeemed, unresurrected, unreturned to the flesh, where you, like your kindred righteous dead can preach to the people that are in prison but it will never get you up Jacob's Ladder back to the presence of God. It won't even get you out of the grave. If you're going to be part of the family of god there has to be a link and the link has to form in an unbroken chain.

Joseph was doing something very different than what became essentially a vast wasteland of adulterous relationships unapproved by God, unsanctioned by Him, unmeriting preservation, and essentially hedging up the kingdom of god. I know there were men who received blessings under the hands of Joseph, and that Joseph held the priesthood, and that those people have blessings bestowed upon them by the authority that Joseph held. They had blessings of the priesthood even if they didn't hold it. He blessed them. I know that Wilford Woodruff received a revelation that insisted on continuation of celestial marriage. So too, the 1886 revelation that John Taylor talks about, he will never revoke the command to practice celestial marriage.

What is celestial marriage? It's the first thirty-three versus of section 132. That's where "a man" and "a woman" are sealed together for eternity. The practice of polygamy was never authorized and the way in which it was taught was not proper. Joseph Smith

restored a covenant by which a family could be restored that belonged to God. He did not do it for the reasons that Brigham Young practiced it. What was done was in error, and the perpetuation of it is in error, and those who are in polygamy, who are now being baptized and coming out of it, need to end the practice with them. I do not think it is pleasing to God to tear a family apart. Therefore, no one should be abandoning the responsibility as parents of children or as members of the household, but the children in those families need to be taught that this is not pleasing to God, that it must end in this generation, because the time to end the error has come. If we don't end the error how can we possibly expect that God will be pleased enough with us to restore the covenant to allow the connection that needs to be made back to the fathers.

A lot more can be said but I hope that what has been said is enough to point you in a new direction. Because what God is about to do can include a return of that work that Joseph and Hyrum got to. It will not happen if we go charging out, attempting to hasten what is so deadly a proposition that an aspiring man at the beginning of the world murdered in order to interfere with it. There is no reason to charge into that path and be destroyed by the beast that waits there. The best we can and should do, is wait patiently and prayerfully on God and allow Him to determine when we are prepared to receive what He has said so many times: He would gather us as chicks under the wings of Him if we would but respond. Part of responding to Him is to allow Him to do His work in His way, in His time, by His means.

I bear testimony to you that Joseph Smith was not a wicked man. He was a prophet of God. He was a man who was worthy before God. He condemned adultery, promiscuity, improper sexual relations; he condemned lust. In all of the bible passages regarding sexual transgressions, Joseph Smith in the Inspired Version either left them untouched or strengthened their condemnation and strengthened their advocacy of sexual purity, morality, and avoiding improper sexual relations. Joseph Smith was not the author of what has been adopted in his name.

No matter how much you may respect Brigham Young, no matter how much you may admire the pioneers in all that they went through, and no matter how much you may respect the sacrifices that were made by good women who were trying to obey God, and put their hearts on an altar, who have earned my respect for what they did. The men were responsible for those errors, not the women, and the men will be held to account for those errors. Women did what they could. They raised their children in righteousness. As has been so often the case, men apostatize from their responsibility and women remained true and faithful to theirs. Mothers were mothers still, even under that pernicious system. But it needs to come to an end. It needs to end in order for something ever so much better to finally return.

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

2105.05.13 A Visit with Denver Snuffer

May 13, 2015

Sandy, Utah

Tim Malone: In a recent talk (3-22-15) on plural marriage, you said (page 39),

"There have been many signs given by God that He was about to do something new from the time of the death of Joseph Smith till today. All that was left at the end was for a witness to be appointed, to come to declare, 'Now it has come to an end.' In the last talk in the ten lecture series I said, the witness has now come, and I am he. It has come to an end with something new now begun. One of the signs of it having come to an end was the passing of Eldred Smith."

Will you elaborate on the significance of the passing of Patriarch Eldred G. Smith on April 4, 2013 and how or why we should take this as a sign that something has come to an end? In particular, what has come to an end? You are declaring you are a witness of an end-time event. This seems vital. What is that event, how are you a witness, why is it important for us to recognize this event and how should we, or how do you think God expects us to acknowledge such an event in our own lives?

DS: In a word, the fullness of the Gentiles is ending – one of the last signs of that was the passing of Eldred Smith in 2013 and with him the office of patriarch to the church. That office was never well understood. And I've never been told it was necessary to fully explain the significance so I've left most of the details unexplained. But to what I've said already I would add the following. The LDS church makes enthusiastic claims about their priesthood. And those claims would be much more accurate if they were dialed back some. If they were considerably more modest. They claim to have Melchizedek priesthood which has the following list of things associated with it, when it is described for us the first time in scripture in Genesis chapter 14, Joseph Smith translation: the authority 'to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn waters out of their course, to put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God.' I pointed out that it's not necessary to do all these things. But any one of them is sufficient to show the authority is present. But this priesthood does have signs.

The ordination of Hyrum in 1841 was and, I'm reading from the scripture, to "the office of Priesthood and Patriarch." That's in section 124 verse 91. What was intended with that ordination was so that, and again I'm reading from the same revelation:

"His name be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever." (D&C 124:96)

There was a colorable claim to priesthood while Hyrum and his descendants remained in office. That ended. So far as the LDS church was concerned, it was good riddance. Because they found the office was troublesome. It was not part of the twelve, yet it claimed the status of prophet, seer, and revelator while it was part of the general

authorities. It was uncontrollable because only the descendants of Hyrum were holders. That gave them independence and leaders wanted the office to be discarded and it has been. There are many prophecies that foretell the Gentiles will reject their invitation to have the fullness of the gospel. Christ said that this would happen in 3 Nephi 16:10. There have been many signs Christ's prophecies were fulfilled. Only one thing now remained to be done, God needed to send a witness to be the final required sign – sent by God to declare his intention to begin something new. The signs include, but are not limited to, the condemnation of the church in 1832, which is in D&C 84:54-58. The expulsion from Missouri that happened and was explained in D&C 101:1-2. The forced winter exodus from Nauvoo. The suffering during and following the exodus. The afflictions, judgments, and wrath of God at the saints. All of which was foretold in D&C 124:44-45. Their pride, lying, deceit, hypocrisy, murders, priestcrafts, and whoredoms. All of which Christ foretold in that 3 Nephi 16:10 verse. There has been inquisitorial abuse of the saints once they were isolated in the wilderness. As part of the Mormon reformation the population was interrogated to root out heresy, sin, and root out disbelief with a threat of blood atonement – which was slaying the sinner to save them from hell – then being taught. There were mass murders. Over 200 non- Mormons were executed at Mountain Meadows to vindicate an oath to avenge the death of the prophets. Originally that was aimed at those who slew Joseph and Hyrum, but news of Parley Pratt's death and slaying arrived just at the time that the Mountain Meadows crew was going through Utah. And since Parley Pratt was regarded as a prophet by the saints it included him also. Brigham Young traditionally has not been directly implicated, but everyone including LDS church assistant historian, Richard Turley, admits that his rhetoric – during the Mormon reformation – coupled with the temple oath of vengeance that Brigham Young added to the rites of the temple...

And just as an aside, an oath of vengeance for slaying the prophets could not have been put there by Joseph Smith because he and Hyrum Smith had not yet been slain. And so the oath of vengeance was necessarily the product of the mind of Brigham Young. But it was part of the temple rhetoric and everyone admits that the blood atonement and the oath of vengeance and the Mormon reformation, and Brigham Young's fiery rhetoric, and Jedediah Grant's fiery additions on top of that, were responsible for creating an environment in which the slaying took place.

Other signs are contradictions in what are called fundamental teachings for example plural marriage was once required for exaltation, now it will result in excommunication. Ordaining blacks would once forfeit all church priesthood, now it is unequivocally condemned as false. Adopting a well-paid professional ministerial class. In Alma, the Nehor incident included Nehor advocated that priests should not labor with their own hands, that they should get supported with the believers' money and this was something the Book of Mormon condemned being guilty of priestcraft. Alma, on the other hand, ordained priests in Mosiah 18:18 and he instructed them that they must labor with their own hands for their own support. In Mosiah 18:24:

"And he also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands for their support."

King Mosiah adopted this standard as the law. In Mosiah 27:4-5:

"That they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support. Yea, and all their priests and teachers should labor with their own hands for their support, in all cases save it were in sickness, or in much want; and doing these things, they did abound in the grace of God."

See, I could raise money if I wanted to. I could raise a lot of money if I wanted to. And if I raised money off of the religion I preach I could get a lot more done. Instead I labor with my own hands and I work nights, evenings, weekends. The amount of work that is going into the book that will come out next – that includes not just me, but my wife, and practically every spare moment that we have – involves enormous sacrifice. But it has exactly the effect, "we should esteem our neighbor as ourself laboring with our own hands." We should not think that we are better than anyone.

If you take money from someone in order to advance your religious purpose. The mere act of doing that creates an inequality. It creates an arrogance. It removes the burden of sacrifice. It removes the humiliation of having to lose sleep, and to fret, and to worry about things, and to face an uphill battle, and everything that you do in order to please God. But you can't please God by taking advantage of your fellowman. There have been changes to the ordinance. Isaiah 24:5 warned:

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."
(Emphasis Snuffer)

Those changes include the most single radical change to the temple endowment in 1990. In 2005, they eliminated washings and anointings. Before the January 2005 changes, washing and anointings were literal. The change made them only symbolic thereafter. That has significance, and I leave it to people to query why it has significance.

There was a reason why Christ was anointed preliminary to his death, by the woman that blessed and anointed him. It was to preserve him into the resurrection. Now we don't do that.

There's a quest for popularity. Gordon B. Hinkley was the original employee and secretary for the, what was then called the radio, publicity, and missionary literature committee in 1934. The predecessor to the public communications department. By the time he became the 15th LDS church president his work had hardwired public relations to the institution. Another problem has been the centrally controlled, tightly correlated rejection of teachings. Which David O. McKay predicted would lead the church into apostasy. I discuss this in "Passing the Heavenly Gift," you can read about it there, if anyone is interested.

The history of gentile Mormonism has been a long downward path. I laid that out in "Passing the Heavenly Gift." The gentiles have walked away from the light and increasingly embraced darkness and foolishly trusted in men. All Mormon sects are now ruled by traditions contrary to the scriptures and commandments of God. They are asleep, and cannot be awakened. God is now leading something new and has left the leaders of all the various Mormon sects to find their own way.

Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and William Marks said that without Joseph Smith there was no church. That comment was preserved by William Clayton in his diary in August of 1844, because to William Clayton that was offensive. The election had taken place on August the 8th. So when Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and William Marks said that without Joseph Smith there is no church, he recorded it in his journal because he thought that was inappropriate and offensive. But they were right.

Following Joseph's death there was a complete overthrow of the church by the quorum of the twelve. The quorum of the twelve substituted themselves in the place of the equal distribution of power established by revelation. The first presidency and the quorum of the twelve are supposed to be equal in authority. That's in 107:24.

Joseph never moved a single apostle into the first presidency. They were independently equal bodies. Likewise, the quorum of seventy was equal with the twelve. That's in 107:25-26. And therefore should be equal with the first presidency also.

The standing high councils of Zion were also equal in authority. That's in 107: 36-37. All the keys, to the extent that there were any, were and are held one hundred percent by the first presidency, one hundred percent by the twelve, one hundred percent by the quorum of seventy, and a hundred percent by the high councils. There was no primacy in the twelve – when originally organized by Joseph Smith according to revelation. In the years before Joseph's death the twelve were away from Nauvoo doing missionary work as their calling required. Joseph spent his final three years in close association with the Nauvoo high council, as the Nauvoo high council minutes reflect. Following Joseph's and Hyrum's deaths Emma remarked:

"Now as the twelve have no power with regard to the government of the church and the stakes of Zion; but the high council have all power, so it follows that on removal of the first president the office would devolve upon the president of the high council in Zion. The twelve were aware of these facts, but acted differently."

Emma was the wife of Joseph Smith and I know that she's taken a lot of bad press from LDS Mormonism. At one time I enjoyed that same opinion. But these are comments that she made in the immediate aftermath of Joseph Smith's death.

None of the equality of these four different bodies survived Brigham Young. When Brigham Young assumed control all equality was destroyed and the church became an oligarchy run by the twelve. This continues from Young until today. Now, the senior

apostle automatically becomes the church president. An unscriptural and unwise system for consolidating power.

Equality among many has been replaced with the dictatorship of one. Here's another quote:

"Emma bore testimony to Lucy Massur that Mormonism was true as it came forth from the servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith, but said the twelve had made bogus of it."

Bogus is another word for counterfeit. Bogus was always a reference to counterfeit money. Joseph cautioned the saints about violating God's trust. As he put it:

"His word will go forth in these last days in purity. For if Zion will not purify herself, so as to be approved in all things in his sight, he will seek another people. For his work will go on until Israel is gathered. And they who will not hear his voice must expect to feel his wrath." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 18)

To the same effect, during the Mormon reformation, Heber C. Kimball said:

"We receive this priesthood and power and authority – if we make a bad use of the priesthood do you not see that the day will come that God will reckon with us and he will take it from us and give it to those who will make better use of it." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, page 125)

George Albert Smith said essentially the same thing, Brigham Young said essentially the same thing.

We should expect God's house to be ordered around only one principle – repentance. When the pride of a great organization replaces repentance, the heavens withdraw and when they do amen to that portion of God's house.

The restoration through Joseph Smith will always remain, even if God chooses to order it differently before his return. It is his to do with as he determines best. He's now sent me as a witness.

The passing of Eldred Smith was a moment in time that reflects the cumulative effect of a lot of decisions – including and beginning with the initial overthrow of the government of the church by the twelve at the passing of Joseph and Hyrum. Culminating in the final overthrow of the priesthood itself, by the death of the discarded Eldred Smith and the discontinuation of the authority that was supposed to have been kept in honorable remembrance from generation to generation. God will bestow that authority again and it will go forward. But it will go forward without these organizational pretenders that amass wealth and practice priestcraft.

TM: In the lecture on Christ, the Prototype of the Saved Man given in Ephraim (6-28-14), you said,

"...either I am a liar, and you ought to forget everything I've said, or I have been sent by someone greater than I am. If I have been sent and you reject and quibble over the things I declare to you, it is at your peril! It ought to be that way. I ought to be damned if I'm a pretender, and I ought to be damned and rejected by God if I'm saying things about which I know nothing! But I bear witness to you I know what I'm talking about. I have no reason to lie to you. I have no reason to pay to reserve a place to speak to you, and ask nothing of you but to listen. It requires a sacrifice to do what I am doing. I have no other reason to do this than to tell you the truth. Joseph Smith testified to these things and I am come as a second witness. Therefore you now have two proclaiming the same doctrine."

You bring up Joseph Smith. Joseph testified the heavens are open. He bore witness of God the Father and His Son as two separate and distinct personages possessing glorified and perfected bodies. He also testified he was an instrument in the hands of Christ to bring about a restoration of things hidden since before the foundation of the world. You say you know what you are talking about. Do you mean this in the same sense Joseph Smith declared his knowledge, that it was received through revelation, vision and the visits of angels? As a second witness, how is the Savior working through you to continue the restoration He began through Joseph Smith?

DS: The answer to that question is yes. If that were not the case, I would not be doing anything. What I do, teach, and write is a product of contact with heaven. I've not elaborated on all the contacts, messengers, and visitations I have received because that would be, in my view, very counterproductive. It would suggest I am more important than I am. God matters and men do not. God can save you and I cannot.

The most important issue involves the substance of what is taught. The most important individual is whoever hears what is taught. When Christ appeared on the road to Emmaus, to announce his message, he did not bother announcing who he was. All he did was announce his message which was to expound the scriptures beginning with Moses and all the prophets. In order to show how in all things it was testified that he needed to suffer and he needed to die.

All I'm doing is modeling the one I serve. That is, by taking Joseph and all the revelations of the restoration and showing how in all things it is necessary for exactly what has and is happening to occur in order to fulfill the word of the Lord.

If I started talking about all the visits and visitations immediately what people would say is that, 'this is a great man. He has stood in the presence of various angelic personalities, he's had various interviews and instructions. Oh my! Isn't he wonderful?' And the fact of the matter is, I'm not wonderful. I labor for my support. I have a hard time making all of my ends meet. I have a very difficult time meeting all of the responsibilities my wife and I have. She and I work together on a lot of problems that deal with family, that deal with money, that deal with budget, that deal with just life's challenges. I am no better than the next guy. To say something other than the content of the message is to

inspire either adoration or envy. It's foolish, it's unnecessary. But the answer to your question is: Yeah. If it were not so I would keep my mouth shut.

TM: As a second witness then, which you have proclaimed you are, how is the Savior working through you to continue the restoration, he began through Joseph Smith?

DS: God could, does, and will work through anyone who awakens and then pays attention. There's an army of witnesses and awakened individuals that are being assembled by God. It's required to know him, and I know him. I've been taught and understand his gospel. The first task is to assure people that he lives and that his gospel is an authentic method for saving souls. The second task is to remember the restoration Joseph gave his life to begin.

We're ungrateful when we fail to remember and practice it. At the moment, there is almost no clear understanding of that gospel. I'm working to set that out in a comprehensive way. It's never been completed. There's a great deal prophesied to roll out as part of the restoration that has not even commenced! Do we have Zion? What about the lost teachings of the brass plates? Do we have the rest of the Book of Mormon? Do we have the testimony of John? Do we have restored knowledge of the Jaredites? The list could be very long. But the fact that there is a list, tells us that the restoration must resume at some point in order to be completed. We don't have it on the table, but we've forgotten what we once had.

So the first job is to show that we are grateful enough to remember. And to remember it in a fulsome, comprehensive way. Before God is going to say, now I will permit it to move forward. We haven't gotten to the point of remembering yet. Which is why we ought to be studying a lot more diligently the material we got in the restoration. We ignore it at our peril.

TM: In the Phoenix or Mesa lecture (9-9-14), you stated,

"The Lord has said to me in His own voice, 'I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you.' Therefore, I want to caution those who disagree with me, to feel free, to feel absolutely free to make the case against what I say. Feel free to disagree, and make your contrary arguments. If you believe I err, then expose the error and denounce it. But take care; take care about what you say concerning me for your sake, not for mine. I live with constant criticism. I can take it. But I do not want you provoking Divine ire by unfortunately chosen words if I can persuade you against it."

In Genesis 12:3, The Lord said unto Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." Abraham was further blessed to be the father of many nations, that in him "shall all families of the earth be blessed." Abraham was a prophet. Isaac and Jacob were prophets. Abraham referred to the Fathers going back to Adam. You spoke about that in the talk on plural marriage and elsewhere. It seems there is something significant about connecting to the Fathers. Abraham was a patriarch. The

LDS Church no longer has a presiding patriarch, or even such an office. Is there a patriarch on the earth today who can connect us to the Fathers?

DS: The simple answer is that there is always one on the earth. That has been true from Adam to the present time. Remember that in Nauvoo the Lord offered to connect the saints. A clearly defined condition for that to happen was necessarily an acceptable temple where he could come and restore the connection. The reconnection is ordinance based and will require an acceptable temple before it goes beyond the single representative.

First, ideas need to be advanced and accepted. Second, we need to act on the ideas. Primarily by repenting and opening ourselves to the influence of God. Third, we have to be humble and patient and willing to practice the religion before we can have any hope of God deciding to gather us. Practical experience is absolutely necessary. Theories and pretensions are not going to get us anywhere. Everyone can theorize the virtues that are necessary to gather people together and live in harmony. Everyone can envision themselves as one of the residents of the city of peace. But the practical experience required to iron out our selfishness and competitiveness so we can actually live in peace is another order of magnitude harder. In the Nauvoo city council minutes you see them grappling with a society that is trying to be composed of Saints. The practical problem solving goes on. There are moments when I'm reading the Nauvoo city council minutes that I'm laughing. Because they go to solve one problem, but the solution creates another.

Basically people are discourteous of one another. And because they're discourteous of one another, they adopt an ordinance in order to drop one discourtesy only to create another discourtesy on top of that.

For example, one of the problems that they had was Nauvoo was organized as a city in which everyone had a garden plot. But because the garden plots were not fenced, horses and foot traffic would go through the gardens. The result of that was the destruction of needed food stuffs. So they couldn't get people to build fences around their gardens. The solution to the problem was to turn the hogs loose. Because when the hogs are loose the hogs are going to go into the gardens. So they adopted an ordinance and the ordinance let the hogs in Nauvoo go free, and that produced the required fences that they wanted at the expense of the hog wallows in the middle of the streets in the middle of Nauvoo until finally some guy, tired of the hog problem, went out and killed and butchered and ate a couple of guys that another guy said belonged to him and he sued him and they had the public fight over it.

The point of all this isn't hogs in the Nauvoo city council, the point of all this is we need practical experience, not theory. The way in which the practical experience can be had is in gathering in fellowships of societies collecting our own tithing. Then grappling with the fact that there is a pile of money sitting there which is ever a temptation and to deal with that in a responsible way that forces individuals to confront their own self will, their

own pride, their own desire, their own jealousy, their own envy, their own ambition, their own covetousness.

In the fellowships that have been organized there have been moments of profound breakthroughs in the kind of attributes that you would want for Zion. One group, when they begin their meeting they gather all of the needs and they put all of the needs together. Then they gather the money and the money is always cash and in a container that they don't know how much cash there is. Without opening the cash then they open the needs and as a group they reason together and agree on what the priority of the needs are. So that they have a list of the most compelling and on down. Once they know what the most compelling, the second, the third, the fourth are they open it up and they count their money. There have been occasions, on one occasion the person whose need could be satisfied – because there was enough money there – looked at the person next in line in the priority behind them. And concluded that in their heart they thought that need greater than their own. If they satisfied that need there would be nothing left for them. So they voluntarily passed on their priority and took none of the money and let it all go to the next person behind them. That is a person that I would willingly add to a community because they've learned self-sacrifice.

Someone who advocates incessantly, 'we have got to live the United Order. We have got to have consecration,' because they intend to benefit from that, is unfit to be gathered. They would destroy Zion. Someone who says, 'what can I give? At the cost of my own self-sacrifice.' And who is willing to live the law of consecration in order to bless and benefit others. Not expecting themselves to be blessed or benefitted, but instead for themselves to carry a burden. Those people can be gathered and they represent no threat. But the way in which those people get identified is by practical experience, which is what the fellowshiping communities are designed – by the inspiration of God – to allow to take place. Every one of us theorizes that we are a great candidate for Zion. Go out and get some practical experience and see how great of a candidate you truly are. You'll be disappointed in yourself. Most of us would be anyway.

TM: In the same lecture, you quoted from your journal, describing the disciplinary process you went through, your appeal and the significance of section 121 which contains the phrase, "Amen to the priesthood of that man." You then read,

"Last general conference (April 2014), the entire First Presidency, the 12, the 70, and all other general authorities and auxiliaries, voted to sustain those who abused their authority in casting me out of the church. At that moment, the Lord ended all claims of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to claim it is led by the priesthood. They have not practiced what He requires. The Lord has brought about His purposes. This has been in His heart all along."

This is an astounding declaration. It has been the subject of much discussion on the forums and blogs. It was and is a difficult thing for many LDS members to hear or read. FAIR and other apologetic sites have fallen all over themselves to show how impossible such a claim can be. The idea of a modern, living prophet, authorized and in possession

of all priesthood keys held by Joseph is the bedrock of the LDS Church claims to be God's kingdom on earth today. Your claim evokes emotional distress in some who consider it. It's been a while since this declaration came out. Is there anything you would add now to help multi-generational members of the LDS Church deal with such a devastating, all-encompassing foundational claim?

DS: I would add that it's a mistake to focus on me when you think of this issue. The issue is larger than a single man. And the issue deserves careful consideration of everything that was covered in that first answer.

I am no happier than others are about this. Does anyone really think that this doesn't upset me? Does anyone believe that I have pride in this or it makes me pleased to say what I have said? Those who think that have no idea who I am or what's in my heart. I'm probably more broken hearted by the things I've been told and commanded to teach than the audience could be.

I have spent days mourning. Unable to speak about some things, even with my wife as this has unfolded. There have been times when I have been so upset that I've not been able to carry on a conversation. It's required two and three days to adjust. I could give you an example, but I'll pass on that. Well – I will give you the example. The section I read of my journal was written months before it was read to an audience. And when it was written, I thought that writing was only for my family, my kids.

There are some times when the Lord gives you the words to write and there are some times when you compose it yourself. That was given to me to write. But I considered it extremely private. I considered it extremely personal. Outside of my wife alone, no one was aware of that until the talk.

Every one of the ten talks were given to me in outline form before they were given. On the day that I began to prepare to give the talks, I sat down and in one sitting I wrote all of the notes for the first five talks because I ran out of time. I didn't bother putting notes down for the next series until after I delivered the first two because they were in fairly rapid succession. Then I went on from the sixth, seventh, eighth, and then finally the ninth talk. I never got anything for the tenth talk. And understand that these were prepared months, months, in advance. And I had a long hiatus between the first and second parts of the year during winter we didn't drive. And so I had all nine talks and I had nothing for ten. Nothing. My conclusion, because it had been given to me on one through nine, my conclusion ultimately was all the tenth is going to be is a summary of the first nine. So literally I began to go back through the notes and to highlight what I was going to use as a summary in the tenth talk.

I prayed about it, nothing happened. Finished the talk in Saint George, so the ninth talk was given and on the night that the ninth talk was given, that night the tenth talk was revealed to me. If I had known – if I had known anywhere along the line the content of the tenth talk, I would have done something to prepare the audience for what was coming. I didn't know what was going to be in it. When I got the content of the tenth talk

it was so distressing to me that I told my wife the next day on a walk in Saint George, we stayed in the area for a while, that this was not going to be good. This was not going to be a pleasant thing.

I wrote out all of the notes. I transcribed what needed to be said, but I didn't give the talk to her, unlike the other ones. I just continued to try and change the Lord's mind about the content. She heard the talk for the first time during the audience. She knew how upset and distressed I was about what I was saying. During the first break she got up and came up to me and said to me "I now get it." Because it wasn't easy. That was not easy.

People who think that I'm enjoying this and that I look out and say, 'Good. Now I'm giving the Mormon church their comeuppance,' don't realize anything about what it takes to get up and say this stuff. Or how extremely difficult it is. I'm not happy about it.

Multi-generational families may have a family tradition but I was converted at the age of nineteen and I invested my heart and soul into the church. I was the single most successful missionary in the mission that I got baptized in as just a lay member of the church. When I was sent down by the military to Texas I was called to be a stake missionary. We had through one missionary waiting for a visa to go to Brazil, we couldn't get a visa for him. Every night when I came home that missionary showed up and he and I were missionary companions. And we went out and we tracted, and we taught, and we baptized. We had a young couple, the husband was studying to become a minister for the Church of Christ. And we began teaching him. We got them to the point of having a testimony. They got an answer, they had a testimony. But they were faced with the crisis of losing his profession and of alienating his family. So they concluded, despite the fact that they had been converted, they concluded that they couldn't pay the price. They told us they didn't want to have us come by anymore.

I taught Gospel Doctrine for nearly three decades. I was on the high council, when I spoke in the high council in my stake the bishops announced in advance who the high councilman was, because attendance would go up. Because I loved the gospel and I was devoted to the church.

To say it was more distressing to multi-generation families than it was to me is incomprehensible to me. It's a tragedy. I'm just on the scene, to focus on me is ridiculous. Forget about me.

TM: That multi-generational reference was in regard to my wife and how strong and powerful that tradition is. How devastating it is.

You have proclaimed God has ended the way he works with his children on the earth today. You have announced yourself to be a witness of this fundamental change. You have declared yourself a second witness of the many works of God through the prophet Joseph Smith. You have reaffirmed the importance of the Patriarchal Priesthood, the law of adoption or sealing to the Fathers in the family of God. You have announced the

LDS Church can no longer claim to be led by the priesthood of God, virtually making it no different from any other church today.

Yet the title and focus of the last lecture in the series "Forty Years in Mormonism" is "Preserving the Restoration." You have counseled those who have accepted this message and you as the Lord's servant, witness or messenger in this great change, to be baptized. Specifically, you quoted 3 Nephi 11:26–27 and said,

"I am telling you in the name of the Lord that commandment is renewed again by Him today, to you. This is His command ... confirmed again today."

Thousands of individuals have been baptized at your invitation. Will you elaborate on how your declarations and baptismal invitation preserve the restoration, as opposed to tearing it down?

DS: All – universally – all of the various iterations of Mormonism are less and less like the foundation and we need to return. If you go back to what I said about baptism you will find that on the topic of baptism there is an example taken from the Book of Mormon in which Alma, who had been ordained in the court of King Noah. He was chosen precisely because he was wicked. Alma, who probably had a line of authority that was compromised by wickedness that had intervened, went out to baptize Helam. Before he did so he asked heaven to give him the power to baptize. He got the power to baptize and he baptized Helam.

What I suggest in the talk is that everyone who has been ordained in the LDS tradition, who fits in the category that President Boyd Packer, in general conference, lamented that we've done a good job of spreading the authority of the priesthood but we've done a poor job of getting power in the priesthood. Go out and obtain from heaven the connection that gives the power in the priesthood. Those who get the power from heaven, let's have them go out and baptize again, so that we know it is done with power. And not done merely with an authoritative tradition lacking in power that cannot be accepted by heaven.

The evidence of Alma's authoritative baptism was the outpouring of the Spirit. There have been those who have been baptized, and spent their life in Mormonism, or some other sect – Mormon related, who say they never felt like they had the confirmation of the Spirit. They have gone out, sought for, obtained power from heaven, baptized, and the ordinances had an effect upon people.

The purpose of renewing baptism is to take what may be a hollow gesture, performed by people who have authority with no power and turn it into an event with power that connects people to heaven. So that we can renew the restoration like it was renewed in the days of Alma through Alma and in the model of the Book of Mormon; which answers so many doctrinal, imponderables for us today. 'Why do we have authority and now power?' as the president of the quorum of the twelve apostles in general conference lamented to the church. It's because we're not doing what we should be doing. It's not

necessary to have a revolution that divorces us from the restoration. It's necessary to have a revolution that connects us back to the restoration and its beginnings.

TM: You proclaimed Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to you. You declared you have seen Him, embraced Him and have been given specific assignments of things to teach, which you have done at your own expense in publications and lectures. The focus of these teachings is the establishment of Zion. You have counseled those who wish to prepare for Zion to institute fellowships for gathering and practicing the principles of Zion, specifically to use tithing as a means to help the poor. You have taught there is to be no new church, no legal entity to receive and centrally manage funds and property, yet you acknowledge the need for a temple.

A new website has been established for a central recorder, where those who have been baptized are encouraged to submit their names. The purpose of this gathering of names is to present them to the Lord in a temple. You said in Mesa,

"We do not need numerous temples, but we will need one to which Christ can come. We will not need to perform endless work for the dead until first there has been a covenant made for us. We must be first connected to the fathers in heaven. Only then can we do something to liberate the dead."

You have already taught much on the sealing to the fathers, but will you take a moment to elaborate on the difference between the visit of Christ to an individual and the visit of Christ to a temple yet to be built?

DS: Individual salvation and promises of eternal life are just that, they are individual. A restoration of the family of Israel requires more – including cooperation and interrelationships that will be formed by God himself. Promises made to individuals give the individual hope.

If you take the vision of the redemption of the dead – that we find in D&C 138 – he saw a vision where they were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality. And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in the redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. All of them. These were the righteous. They were in paradise and all of them were worthy, they had hope, and not only did the Savior give them hope before death, he visited with them in the spirit world during the time between his death and his resurrection. But that did not get them reconnected to the fathers in heaven. Nor did it even get them resurrected because it goes on to say in the same vision, 'from among the righteous he organized his forces and appointed messengers clothed with power and authority and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness. Even to all the spirits of men, and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.' So the righteous who departed this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, who had offered sacrifice in the similitude –

many of whom had seen him in the flesh, who witnessed him and were ministered to by him, and given authority by him in the spirit world, remained in the world of the dead to preach to the dead.

Only the organization through a temple and associated rites results in finishing the family of God in the house of order, following the results achieved – or allowing the results achieved – by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Which are described in D&C 132:37.

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation according to the promises. And they sit upon thrones and are not angels, but are Gods.

In D&C 138:41, Abraham, the father of the faithful, Isaac, and Jacob were also there. In verses 41 and 42 of D&C 138 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were there, but in the revelation given in 1843 they're sitting on thrones. They're not in the spirit world proselytizing. They're sitting on thrones. The difference between these two categories are the differences between individual salvation, which can come, and reorganizing the family of God, which must occur by an ordinance in a temple, to be acceptable to God.

This is why the command was given to build the temple in Nauvoo. And why God offered to restore to them the fullness that they did not achieve. We need to let God take the lead and we need to patiently await each step along the way. This is the stuff of which the prophecies speak. And it is the stuff that will be fulfilled. But the rites and the ordinances necessary to accomplish that – people in this generation don't even have a clue how that necessarily has to roll forth. But rest assured, it will. It will.

TM: I have heard you say, and read in many places in your books and on your blog, you dislike the public attention received as a result of performing the assignments given you by the Lord. You've been emphatic we should not replace one idol with another. Yet the people look to you for leadership. For example, in the Phoenix lecture you provided some direction on tithing, the sacrament, ordinations, worship or fellowship groups, and in particular, the requirement that the approval of seven women is needed to sustain a man in performing ordinances in public. You also said a man was unworthy – the Lord's word – if his wife will not sustain him.

In the Jewish tradition, when questions arise, everyone turns to the Rabbi. In the LDS Church, local leaders consult the handbook or turn to a General Authority for help with difficult procedural questions. You have stated you don't like the term used by some – Snufferites – to describe those who read your writings. You have made it clear every man should have a sufficiently strong relationship with the Lord to get answers to procedural and doctrinal questions. Yet, you are the one the Lord sent as a servant, witness or messenger to declare the orderly dismantling of the established hierarchy. Does that not make you a prophet and de-facto leader?

DS: Let me say and clarify, because I think it is an important point to clarify. I view my role only to be a teacher at this point. But I would hasten to add that if you search the scriptures to look at what role was occupied by Enoch and the success that he had in his day. The only thing he claimed to be was a teacher and a preacher of repentance. That's it. The success that he had was not because he was some great dictator. It was because he was a teacher that provoked people to repent.

Melchizedek, Joseph Smith clarified, was not a king of a city or a king of a country, he just preached. He was a teacher. He was a preacher. He preached and the people, according to the Book of Mormon, who heard him – Alma clarifies they were wicked people, but they repented and because they repented they were able to gather and live the principles that brought them together.

I think the idea of a strong central leader is no more likely to succeed in our day than it was in Joseph's. I mean, in the end when Joseph was lamenting that they were depending too much on the prophet and therefore they were neglecting the duties that were devolving upon themselves. And they were darkened in their minds. It was too late. In 1842 when he made that comment, in the meeting with the Relief Society, it was too late. The moment had passed. They were dependent upon him.

The responsibility in preaching the gospel is to take the burden and put it upon the individual and have the individual connect to God. One man being saved and saying, 'I've got a pipeline to God and so now I get to be your boss,' won't save him nor those who listen to him. But someone who says God is willing to speak and does speak to every one of you and who encourages you to use the gifts that God gives every one of us. Every individual, though curious some of them may be, all of us have some kind of gift. Use it to reconnect to God. And then build upon that to have your life filled with light and truth.

I really think it is unnecessary to build a new canon of scripture, when we haven't paid enough attention to the canon of scripture we have already. We need to plumb the depth of the volumes that we have been given and figure out what they are saying. Because they say a whole lot more than we have drawn out of them as of yet.

What I have talked about in the ten talks and the fourteen books I have written is the scriptures. Hopefully it served to remind people of what the scriptures actually do contain. Because they are plentiful and I think the only role I would carve out for myself is a teacher.

TM: A follow-up to the last question about the need for leadership in this movement can be illustrated by a recent post from Keith on the Recorder's blog. In there he noted some people are submitting names of children baptized as young as five years old. The scriptures specifically teach the age of accountability is eight years old. He also noted the fact that some baptisms are being submitted for recording as having been performed by a woman. He quoted, again from the Phoenix lecture, your statement about priesthood being confined to men because of the Fall. You elaborated much on

the idea there are so many opportunities for believers to go off the rails. I see it all the time when we discuss doctrinal questions on my blog.

For example, the worship of Mother in Heaven is a subject about which some people feel very strongly. They advocate a practice – a sacred dance – in which the objective is for a manifestation of divine favor. Specifically, they look for, expect, and report they have experienced the presence of Heavenly Mother in their ritual. This is similar to what happened with the children of Israel when Moses was up on the mountain for forty days communing with the Lord. In the end, Moses wore himself out because he had to judge every little thing that came before the people. What is the right way? How will the Lord provide leadership for His people who are awaiting His return? I'm looking for a practical answer here, not idealism.

DS: For those who think they can please and appease Heavenly Mother by that sort of innovation, I think they will be very surprised when they finally have an opportunity to meet her. She may not at all be the soft, kindly, genteel, little old lady that people imagine. She may be tougher by far than our Father. Do you imagine for a moment that Lucifer would have been cast out of heaven without the Mother consenting, approving, and advocating? Do you think for a moment that would be the case? Do you think that those who were cast out with him had some weak-willed woman weeping at their departure? Do you think she wasn't protecting and approving? I don't talk about her, but I think there's a lot of imagination that needs to be reined in.

Gifts are an open conduit. What flows through the gifts will include opposition. Just because you have a gift doesn't mean that that gift is not equally accessible by the opposition as it is accessible by God. It must needs be that there is an opposition in all things. You can't bring about righteousness without there being an opposition in all things. So how do you avoid mistakes when you allow something to influence you through your gift that actually comes from the adversary who pretends to be the source of light, the bringer of light, the light-bearer which is Lucifer's name's meaning.

Well, to avoid mistakes, first of all I would look to the scriptures as a standard against which measure. If you look at Christ on the road to Emmaus and you look at Moroni's lectures to Joseph everything they did was scripture based. I've given a greater restatement of the restoration than anyone since Joseph, but have almost entirely confined it to the scriptures and statements attributed to Joseph. That measuring standard is where you first find the anchor. People who don't read their scriptures are subject to all kinds of foolish presumptions about things that aren't there. If you go back and look at the exact wording sometimes the foolish presumption is not justified by the actual language and content of the scripture you think justifies what you are doing.

Secondly, personal worthiness – we have to live our lives in conformity with the light that we have. We cannot ignore or excuse ourselves and expect that we can avoid deception. If we're willing to disobey and excuse ourselves then we become unable to distinguish the light from the shadows. It's just the way it is. If we lie to ourselves we love a lie. And if we love a lie, we are going to be deceived by lies. We make ourselves

open to them. We make ourselves willing to accept them. We have to rely upon light and truth and the Holy Ghost.

D&C 45 beginning at 56:

"And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins. For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived – verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day."

The way you do that is by knowing what's in the scriptures, with some considerable care, living according to the truth that you have, and allowing the Holy Ghost to become your guide even when what you hear from the Holy Ghost challenges, disappoints, or even frustrates you in what you learn.

TM: Did you want to address the part about leadership? I know it was kind of an add on, it didn't quite fit there. What I added at the end?

DS: Yeah, in fact the narrowness of the question at the end was really kind of delightful because it allowed me to avoid that. (Chuckle)

TM: Very good. (Chuckle)

DS: Yeah. But I do think that the work that I have been doing, the lectures that were given as part of a single talk, the stuff that I have been trying to remind people of, it's all in the scriptures. It's all in the foundation of the restoration. I don't think that leader as micromanager is an answer to anything. Teacher, as someone who brings material to your attention, allowing you the freedom then to choose is good. If people engage in a sort of inordinate wickedness that Moses found when he came down from the mountain is practiced anywhere among those who are responsive to this they simply won't be gathered. They'll be left behind. Those that are patient and humble and those that inspire the confidence of angels that are going to do the gathering, they will be gathered. It won't be because some boss manages to whip them in line. They need to be given the freedom to get out of line. Then once they're out of line, be allowed to go their way.

TM: You have declared we have an opportunity to bring about the conditions for Zion. You had proclaimed the Lord is willing and ready to help individuals and groups prepare themselves to become the kind of people who can be sealed to the Fathers, join with the City of Enoch when the Lord comes and not be burned at His coming. Joseph tried to accomplish this in his day. The people, he said, were too thick skulled to accept the things he wanted to teach them. They would fly all to pieces, he said, at the first hint of something not held in their orthodox tradition.

The response to some of the things you have tried to teach has been similar, even though you have taught them from the scriptures. Change is hard for most people, especially when it involves changing long-held beliefs that are mostly tradition. One of the most difficult things for the LDS people to accept is the idea that the Lord could possibly have had in mind what you have declared has taken place. In particular, Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream is interpreted by most LDS folks to mean the LDS Church IS the kingdom of God, that it IS Zion and that they are the chosen people. How do you help closed-minded people who are steeped in tradition open their eyes to the idea of non-traditional possibilities?

DS: I can't, but if they will pay heed to the scriptures, the scriptures can. That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth through disobedience from the children of men and because of the tradition of their fathers.

One of the tools used by the enemy of your soul is to take away light and truth through the tradition of your fathers. If the tradition of your fathers is what governs you then you can't be saved. You just can't be saved. You have to become childlike. You have to be humble. You have to be teachable. The theme of the book, "Come Let Us Adore Him," is how very offensive, revolutionary, and difficult it was for those who heard Christ to recognize who they were hearing. The test is exactly the same. If people will not hear what I have to say they would not have listened to Joseph, nor would they have listened to Christ. The test is exactly the same. I'm not saying anything that Joseph wouldn't teach in our day.

TM: I'd like to end this first section of questions with something near and dear to my heart and that is the pursuit of personal spiritual communication with the Lord. I have delighted in your focus and emphasis from your first book that we can and should seek an audience with the Lord. You have declared He is willing to come to us in a literal, physical sense and that we can come into His presence, embrace Him and be taught by Him personally. If there is anything that gives more power to your teachings than your declaration you have seen Him, I don't know what it is.

In my own pursuit of an audience with the Savior I rely on a sacred dream received shortly after I read The Second Comforter for the first time. Without going into any detail, the dream satisfied my desire to know when I could expect to enter into the presence of the Lord. In interpreting my dream, which I prayed to understand, it is not soon. I have years of work ahead of me – years of faithful and diligent effort to do as the Lord asks. And He has asked things of me, some of them very difficult. I note some people looking to unusual sources for inspiration and help – Shamans, questionable scripture, etc. I know you're asked this all the time, but if you don't mind, what counsel would you give for my readers who are anxiously seeking an audience with the Lord, and have become weary with the length of the process?

DS: The fact is, it requires patience, and patience is an absolute necessary virtue that even Christ was required to accomplish. He thought he was ready at age twelve and eighteen years later he finally had the day come when he was allowed. He wanted to be

about his Father's business and his mother told him to get back home. The fact is, there are those who, including our Lord himself, find the most difficult virtue of all is patience. It was twenty-seven years in the coming for me. Godliness, is a gradual thing. Even what is revealed is not necessarily going to be immediately understood, as that last talk I gave mentioned. It's one thing to receive, it's another thing to comprehend. And it's still another order of magnitude difficult to teach. They are a gradual process and to think that you can leap, that's remarkable, because I don't see a precedent in scripture where that was the case. What did the apostle Paul take? Fourteen years? From the encounter on the road to Emmaus before he began to preach? What did it take, forty years, from the date Enoch was ordained at twenty-five before he walked with God at sixty-five? And that was a remarkably quick accomplishment. Moses forty years in the wilderness before he had his encounter with God at age eighty. If you think you can rush it, you are probably going to be deceived.

TM: May I share something? This is from a fellowship community member in Arizona. It's called "River Church." I'd like to know your impressions after hearing it if this is what you had in mind when you talked about organizing:

"What a beautiful day. The water was so clear I could see the bottom. The sun was bright and warm. I arrived at the Waters of Mormon about 4pm. As I walked down the bluff, I could see many people going in the water. So many were gathered at the edge of the water cheering and clapping. It was a magnificent scene for sure.

"As I arrived, so many of you greeted me with warmth and kindness. It was like the first time walking through the veil into the celestial room with loved ones there to greet the newly endowed. Such a feeling of peace and acceptance. Thank you. I counted about 33 members of our community there.

"The most wonderful part of the afternoon was right after the bread and wine were blessed and passed. There was such a wonderful feeling in the group. It was so quiet, just children playing in the distance and toddlers cooing. The rest of the group sat earnestly as the waters rushed by.

"Right then I was in the moment. I pushed myself to take mental note. A wonderful experience to hold in my memory. For all my life I will remember that wonderful moment. This morning a word came to me to describe the feeling of that moment: 'solemn'. I hope many more of you will join us in the future. I love River Church."

DS: To me, the description sounds heavenly. It's in nature, it's worshipping God. It describes fellowship and worship, both of which are godly. It's necessary to allow creative solutions to the independently functioning among different groups. There was not a single "New Testament church." There wasn't one. There were churches.

Each of the twelve and Paul established different churches with markedly different emphases. Petrine churches emphasized authority and order. Johanian churches emphasized love. Pauline churches emphasized both evangelical fervor and gentile participation. Jacobian churches emphasized charity. They were all adapted to teach of Christ. There wasn't a central hierarchical command and control.

In fact, there is a book, and the title of the book really says it all. It's The Churches the Apostles Left Behind. The idea of a universal Catholic church was imposed some centuries later and it was adopted as the title Catholic, or universal, in order to try and achieve a missing ingredient of diversity. The fellowships ought to have diversity. We should not think it is impossible to have godliness with diversity. Nor should we assume that a one size fits all solution is going to work among different groups.

There's some groups in which there are a lot of children. And the emphasis needs to be directed toward the needs of the children. There's some groups that are primarily childless adults. They need to emphasize what suits them. Every one of them needs to adapt to whatever the local conditions are and have the freedom to do that as was once the case with the churches. At the beginning of the restoration they were called churches – plural, they were not called a church. They were societies of believers in different locations and they governed themselves differently and locally.

TM: Daryl's group is just one of dozens of communities organized in a tithing and fellowship group. However, as far as I can tell, most of these fellowships are only along the Mormon Corridor, specifically in the areas where you presented the lectures. I know some have created web pages to help interested people connect to one another in a specific geographic region. In my case in Southern California, our fellowship is very, very loose with participants ranging from Alaska to San Diego.

I see the movement growing. I imagine you get a lot of emails from people asking about organizing and fellowshiping. You gave good counsel in the Mesa lecture when you suggested our time would be well spent if we did nothing more than read the scriptures – printed version – to one another and pray together. Will you share a little more about why fellowships are so important in bringing unity to the church?

DS: We cannot bear one another's burdens without fellowshiping with one another. Bearing one another's burdens presumes that you know what the burdens are that someone else carries. Which means that I have been patient enough, I have been attentive enough, I have been friendly enough, and I have been trusted enough that I can find out what the burden is that they bear.

I have a very good friend, went to elementary, junior high, high school with him and I've kept in touch with him for many years and he has recently contracted a terminal form of cancer. He called me to talk about that without telling his family, without telling his neighbors, without telling his friends because he and I have a friendship that is built upon the kind of trust that allows me to share that burden with him because of the relationship.

We're supposed to help one another get through this ordeal of mortality. And it is an ordeal. It is not easy. Even the people that you think you envy. If you were living inside their world you would find out that they have burdens they are carrying as well.

Fellowshipping allows us to carry one another's burdens, and bearing one another's burdens implies a whole universe of connectivity, trust, confidence, friendship, and affection between one another before you get to the point that you even know what the burdens are. But that is supposed to be a blessing and part of what it means to worship together. Worshipping together, by assisting one another allows all of us to feel a great part of what it is that Christ is and does. It allows us to know who we worship. It allows us to know how to worship him. It allows us to know what makes us one with one another. Now, it's really hard to accomplish that across state lines, but it still can be done.

The example I use of that friend, he and I have spent a lot of time on the phone since I learned of the illness about a month ago. That's because I care and that's because he needs to talk to someone and because he finds it a relief to be able to do that with me. It can be done. It can be done across any barriers.

All of us are victims of institutional abuse. Many of us can sense it when the slightest hint of abuse appears. One recent writer on your blog has identified it as paternalism and that's not an inappropriate designation for it. We should learn how to be loving and equal with one another. The idea of equality is resisted by a lot of skeptics, who accuse me of wanting authority and control, when I despise control, but I absolutely welcome fellowship, equality, and worship with one another. This isn't easy, but it is godly to pursue. We're going to make mistakes and there are going to be a lot of institutional habits that we walk in and we want to 'whip this into shape.' The idea of a whip – when Christ resorted to the scourge to drive them out, he didn't drive them out to organize them. He drove them out to cleanse the place. If we're going to whip anything, we're going to drive them out. We would be better off practicing the kind of patience, and kindness, and to realize that in terms of Mormonism almost everyone is a refugee suffering post religious trauma syndrome and they're going to think you're abusive. They're going to think they want to be used as a tool for someone else's power base. Someone wants to use you. The idea that there is someone who doesn't want to use them, or abuse them, but wants to fellowship with them, and help them bear a burden – that's the idea of Christianity at its core and that's what is really alien in this world. We need to bring that back again.

TM: I love the heading on your old blog,

"The content of this blog presumes you are already familiar with Denver Snuffer's books. Careful explanations given in the books lay the foundation for what is contained here. If you read this blog without having first read his books, then you assume responsibility for your own misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the

writer's intent. Please do not presume to judge Mr. Snuffer's intentions if you have not first read his books."

From the Wikipedia page created about you:

"Snuffer claims his intentions are faith-promoting: 'I have loved every minute of being a Mormon since I joined the church in September 1973 in New Hampshire,' he says. 'I am actually advocating activity and fidelity to the Mormon church.' Snuffer claims that he intended Passing the Heavenly Gift and his other works to promote loyalty to the LDS Church."

Have your intentions changed? Do you still advocate LDS Members stay faithful and active in their wards and stakes? How can they do that and yet accept the invitation to be baptized which was renewed at the conclusion of the lectures?

DS: My wife edits everything, so whatever it is I wrote it turns into something useful after she applies her editing skills to it.

Here's the problem, since that talk, the LDS church has behaved poorly. I wish they would allow people to worship God and still be allowed in fellowship within the LDS church. That seems to have been a naïve expectation on my part. The LDS church simply will not permit it if they can find it out. Therefore, I'm not certain it is possible. But that having been said, I think it ought to be attempted.

I attend LDS services. Sunday I was at sacrament meeting, then I attended a high priest's group, I talked to two members of the stake presidency in the hallway. I contributed in high priest's group. I'm not sure how long the church is going to continue to tolerate that. But from my end I don't have any animosity. I'm not argumentative, but I have to say the fellowship groups that I have attended offer – I'm seeing prophecy and miracles. I'm seeing gifts that are evident. I'm seeing things in fellowship groups that I don't see when I go to an LDS meeting.

I wish it were possible to not only co-exist peacefully but to import some of the blessings from the one into the other. But there seems to be a hostility there. There seems to be a desire not to permit that kind of coexistence to take place.

I actually think that a Catholic could be baptized and join one of these fellowships and be better accepted in the Catholic church, than a latter-day saint could in an LDS church. Same for Presbyterians, Methodists, and others. And that is coming, but right now we're still focused on the Mormon corridor and the Mormon community. But eventually it's going to spread. There are actually right now people who have been baptized in Iran, who are putative Muslims that have been rebaptized a member of this restoration movement. It will go worldwide. It will penetrate every clime. It will cross every barrier. It will do so in a non-institutional way and it will do so in a way that cannot be controlled. Because an idea cannot be taxed, cannot be regulated, cannot be overcome by the cares of this world. You cannot prohibit an idea. Even if you make a

law against it you can't shut an idea down. This assumes a form in which man has no ability to resist it. It will spread.

The stone cut out of the mountain without hands is an idea. And it is virtue, and it is individual. It resists all opposition.

TM: From page four of the Mesa lecture:

"The Holy Ghost does not thrill you, it informs you. It gives you understanding. ... thrilling music can rouse you. A great TV show can get you thrilled and feeling goosebumps. That is not the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost enlightens your mind, it enlivens your senses, it brings light into your life, and you understand something anew. There are some people who have the Spirit with them in such a degree, that to be in their presence is to understand things better. Understanding, comprehension, light and truth—these are the Holy Ghost, not emotion, thrills and goose bumps." (See DS blog 1-21-15 for more)

I can't tell you how many times I have been in LDS Church meetings and heard the individual offering the invocation say, "Please bless that we will feel the spirit in our meetings today." I can't begin to recount the number of testimonies I have heard where the person sharing their thoughts becomes emotional, and states they are feeling the spirit so strongly. I suppose this is based on our interpretation of D&C 8:2 (mind and heart) and D&C 9:8 (bosom shall burn). Are you saying the Holy Ghost NEVER causes one to feel emotional? I have felt strong emotion in prayer that I attribute to the presence of the Holy Ghost. Isn't that the comforter?

DS: The Holy Ghost is informational. Its purpose is to enlighten the mind and to inform you. It is a revelator. Our reaction to the information can be very emotional. How we react is up to us. I've had very strong emotional reactions to some of the things revealed by the Holy Ghost to me. Those aren't always those positive, warm feelings. It has been sometimes dread. It has been sometimes fear. It has been sometimes anxiety. And being troubled in mind, body, and spirit.

If I were to liken the Holy Ghost and its function – imagine that you were sitting in this room. Imagine that this room is absolutely pitch black, so much so that you can't even see your hand in front of your face if you put your hand there. It is just black. And you want to go about determining what is in this room. You begin by feeling. And you may be able to feel enough to determine that there is in front of you a table. You may be able to determine how wide the table is immediately in front of you. But you're going to have to get up and move around in order to find out how long the table is, because your arm will not reach to that other end. If you're going to explore that, between here and the other end of the table, you've got a lot of obstacles, including as we said here a chair that you occupy, a chair that is unoccupied, another chair that is occupied, several empty chairs down further still, and you're going to have to feel your way through all of that. And it is a long, arduous process.

Let's assume that the Holy Ghost is a light. And let's assume that the light is initially a candle, and you light the candle and set it in front of you. The first thing that you begin to realize is that sitting in front of me is not only a table, but there are papers on the table, and there's a book on the table, and there's a glass of water and a watch on the table. And that the table is actually made of wood. I can see that, because I've lit a candle, but I still cannot see the far end. I don't know what's down there, because the candle does not produce enough light for me to perceive that. It has been lost in the shadows.

The Holy Ghost illuminates something. When you get the fullness of something revealed to you, you turn the light switch on and you no longer have to feel your way to the far end of the table. At a glance you can look and you can take in the fact that there are a dozen chairs around this table, that it's probably twenty or more feet long. The ceiling in the room is vaulted and there are four lights overhead. There are windows on two of the four walls and a door through which you can enter and exit. There's wainscoting in the middle of the room. Different colored wallpaper between what is below and what is above. You can take that all in and I think I can recognize Pennsylvania Avenue and the capitol building in a painting on the wall. All because someone turned on the light. Nothing more than someone turned on a light.

I got a phone call, from a fellow asking me a question about a matter that I knew nothing about and I cared nothing about. I was about to tell him, 'stop calling me with stupid questions. I'm not interested in that. If you're interested go search the Bible and see if you can find an answer to this rubbish.' Instead, I had the impression that I ought to say, 'I'm not going to talk to you about it on the phone. Why don't you come in?' So I said, "I don't want to talk about this on the phone, why don't you come in? Let's get together in a couple weeks." Hung up the phone and I thought, 'you know I'm not even interested in this subject. But if I'm going to talk about it I probably ought to look into it.' So I spent a few minutes until I was distracted by work. Looking into it I found nothing. The two weeks came and went. I'm a busy person. I didn't have any time to look into it. The fellow arrived for the appointment. When he arrived, I thought to myself, 'oh crap, I was going to look into that and have an answer. This guy has come. I told him to come, and now he's here. I got nothing. I have absolutely nothing.'

So I went out, in fact it was two instead of one, he brought a friend with him. Brought them in, sat them down in my office and I was shutting the door to my office and taking a breath to say, 'I'm sorry I made you come in. I don't have anything to say to you.' In the time it took to take that breath, in that instant, a light came on. And I knew everything there was about the subject. I knew where it was in the scriptures. I knew what the answers were. I knew what the explanation was. I even knew nuances and details about the scriptures that are only implied that you have to tease out of them but they're not there. Because a light went on. When the light went on, I turned and for the next forty-five minutes, using these scriptures that I've got in front of me, I found and read from the scriptures the examples that proved the answer to the question that he asked.

The Holy Ghost illuminates. Your reaction is your reaction. The purpose is to enliven and enlighten and to reveal. That's what it does, but how we respond to that is up to us.

2015.06.15 KUTV Interview

June 15, 2015
Salt Lake City, UT

QUESTION: I know your name, but in case any producers do this, could you say and spell your name for the record?

DENVER: It's Denver Snuffer, D-E-N-V-E-R S-N-U-F-F-E-R.

QUESTION: You've been an attorney how long in the Salt Lake area?

DENVER: Thirty-three years. Actually, it's 2015, so thirty-five years. Thirty-five years now.

QUESTION: And prior to your excommunication, how long had you been a member of the LDS church?

DENVER: Forty years to the day.

QUESTION: You were excommunicated on the day...?

DENVER: Yes. I was baptized on September 10th, and I learned of the excommunication forty years later on September the 10th.

QUESTION: And what year was that, the excommunication?

DENVER: 2013. Yeah, September 10th, 1973 to September 10th, 2013.

QUESTION: Interesting.

DENVER: Yeah.

QUESTION: Interesting timing.

DENVER: Serendipitous [laughter].

QUESTION: You're... I am sure you are aware of the meeting that was held in Boise over the weekend. Elder Oaks went up there with Elder Turley.

DENVER: Yeah.

QUESTION: What do you make of that?

DENVER: Apparently there is some concern in the Boise area justifying that level of attention by church leadership.

QUESTION: What do you think prompted those remarks? I mean, they were pretty specific.

DENVER: They were, and I was mailed a recording by email of the meeting almost as soon as it ended. I listened to it, and I understand why people are saying that this may be in response to some of the things I've said, but it's such an ill fit. What they were talking about and what I have written or spoken about are like two ships passing in the night. They're really not a good fit with the things I've written. So, I have questioned whether that's intended to be provoked by me or if it is, instead, something that is provoked by local things happening in Boise. I know there are a lot of people that have been rebaptized. I know that there are people that are blogging in the Boise area and talking about meetings that are taking place up there and fellowships that are forming. The baptisms are not under the auspices of the Church, and the fellowship meetings are being held without church sanction, and I think that the Church, for some reason, feels threatened by that. I don't think they **need** to feel threatened by that but apparently they do and this is, I think, in response more to **that** than directly trying to respond to anything I've said or written.

QUESTION: Yeah, obviously your name wasn't mentioned in the whole...

DENVER: Wasn't.

QUESTION: ...in however many minutes that meeting went on, but...

DENVER: Hour and six minutes was how long my recording was.

QUESTION: Right. Who do you think, though, that there... I mean, Elder Oaks brought some very specific questions and criticisms of the Church and responded to them, many of which you've brought up. I mean, who do you think he's referring to when he says, "Some say..."

DENVER: It could include me, but it certainly includes others. There are a lot of questions that have been raised about Church history, Church teachings, continuity of leadership... I'm not originating a list of issues. I'm taking issues that exist, and I'm trying to deal with them in what I hope is a constructive way, but certainly I try to deal with them in an **honest** way. Some of the answers make the institution of the LDS Church look less-than-candid with its members, and some of the answers to those questions, I think, make the LDS Church look very good. But whether it cuts for or against 'em, I'm trying to deal with the very same issues that the Church is dealing with, —and the Church is having a lot of problems dealing with—but I'm trying to do it without regard to whether some authority says it is this way or some authority says it is that way. I would like to try to get to the bottom of the issue and discuss it in a way that is candid and forthright and does the best job that I can do of marshaling the information to come up with what I think is the best conclusion.

QUESTION: For those unfamiliar with what you've spoken about or talked about, what is the crux of your positions that you've spoken about that got the Church (obviously) upset enough to excommunicate you?

DENVER: One of the things that I think is obvious from early Mormonism and from the canon of Mormon scripture is that beginning with the Book of Mormon and the teachings of Joseph Smith and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, there has always been this emphasis upon the salvation of man through the knowledge of God that they obtain while they're here. Knowledge of God includes—according to Joseph Smith and, for example, D&C 93:1—it includes coming into His presence, and that is, in the Mormon vernacular, referred to as the Second Comforter. It was surprising to me that in the talk that Elder Oaks gave, that he dealt with and was dismissive of the idea of a relationship with God, including the Second Comforter.

The first book I wrote was titled *The Second Comforter – Conversing With The Lord Through the Veil*, and it lays out the teachings of the Church, the scriptures. At the time that I wrote that I was a member in good-standing. Subsequent to writing it, I was called to be on the High Council. It was, I believe, an orthodox statement of Church belief. I submitted it to Deseret Book for them to publish. They took seven months to evaluate it, and when they were done, they had no criticism of the book. They just expressed—in a discussion that I had with the head of publishing—it was too sacred a subject for them to feel comfortable publishing under the title of Deseret Book; but they encouraged me to go get it in print, which I subsequently did do.

QUESTION: So you've got to wonder, if Elder Oaks brought up, say, that point, that this meeting was, at least in some respects, responding to what you've taught.

DENVER: May have been, may have been. Certainly dealt with a subject that, in my view, is foundational to the Restoration, and I was surprised that Elder Oaks was dismissive of it. I don't think that that can be **justified** if you go back to Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants. It is possible to justify that with **later** policy changes that were made (and he spoke about policy changes that the Quorum of the Twelve govern themselves by). I suppose that if you put anyone into that position they abide by the policy. I'm not in that position. And I'm interested in trying to get to the bottom of what was the religion restored to accomplish? What are we supposed to be doing **with** it? I don't think we can ever do enough with it, frankly.

QUESTION: Do you feel that in the last—what? Two years?—almost-two years since you were excommunicated that your following has increased? Decreased?

DENVER: Well, I don't know that I have a following. I know that there is a group of people that is discontent—for a whole host of reasons. Many of them are discontent about issues about which I don't care, and I don't agree. There is a progressive and liberal agenda that would like to see the Church take on more social popular issues.

QUESTION: How about the other end of this?

DENVER: I don't care about that. I don't think that the social issues matter. I think that what matters is: What is the religion attempting to do, and what is it attempting to cause in the lives of its adherents? That, I think, cuts across all of the social issues and ought to be a more foundational question. We ought to be able to agree on what the fundamentals are even if we have **vastly different** political points of view. And so, I don't think I have a following. I think there are a lot of discontent people. I try to articulate what it was that the Restoration was originally intended to accomplish **and look like**, and I believe there are a number of people that look at what I have written and the source material that I draw from and who reach the same conclusion. No one has to accept anything that I've said, and I don't want a following. What I'm trying to do is get to the bottom of the truth, and if it persuades someone, then fine; we're in agreement. If it doesn't, then I'm interested in hearing the disagreement. I'm interested in hearing what the contrary view is.

But I believe that there is more discontent, I believe that there is more alienation, and I believe that there is more disaffection in the institutional Church today than there was two years ago. I think there will be more two years from now than there is today, but I don't think that is driven by an individual—not by me. I think it's driven by a whole host of things, and the primarily responsible party is the Church itself because they are doing an inadequate job of dealing candidly and forthrightly with questions. They ought to be more open. They ought to be more willing to put things out there that actually reflect where we began, in some cases in stark contrast to where we are today. I think it is perfectly fine for them to account for the gap between where it started and where we are today by saying, "There were a series of decisions made; this is the person who made it; this is why they made it; and that's why we look so different today than we did back then." But to say we are a continuous preservation of exactly what was there before... There've been too many changes. I was a member for forty years, and it was not the same church in 2013 as the one I was baptized in in 1973.

QUESTION: You've got a website, right?

DENVER: I do, yeah.

QUESTION: How many people check that out?

DENVER: I had a blog; now I have a website. At the blog, it had about a three-year history, and there were about three-and-a-quarter million—3,250,000—visits. The website, I don't have the same...

QUESTION: Analytics?

DENVER: Yeah, the same analytics. But I know that it's averaging about 8,000 separate visitors per day and about 75,000 page views a day. However, apparently a lot of people **do** think the Boise event was related because I looked last evening, and there's been a spike. There have been over 10,000 a day and...

QUESTION: Since the meeting?

DENVER: Since the meeting, and it's been running about 17-18% new visitors. Now it's running over 20% new visitors, so apparently there is a lot of new visiting going on.

QUESTION: I guess, really, my final question is: You had spoken in Boise, right, during...? Help me understand... You did sort of a lecture circuit?

DENVER: I gave a series of ten lectures that constituted one talk, delivered in ten different forums. The first...

QUESTION: Before your excommunication?

DENVER: The first talk was given in Boise, Idaho. I received the phone call as I was driving to Boise, Idaho on the morning of September 10th. The stake president called me on my cell phone. He told me on the morning of September 10th that the decision was to excommunicate me. I gave the first talk that evening in Boise.

QUESTION: So you... That was where, sort of where your lecturing began?

DENVER: Yes.

QUESTION: I guess, what my final question, really, would be: What do you make of Elder Oaks choosing to go to Boise to address these subjects?

DENVER: Not much, but if he then goes to Idaho Falls, and then to Logan, and then to Centerville, and then to Orem (which was the order in which I started the ten talks), then I'll make something of it. But the fact that he went to Boise, I think, is a reflection. That... I have learned, for example, that there were 24 people baptized on a single Saturday morning in the Boise River. Those were Latter-day Saints renewing baptismal-covenant-making between themselves and God. They didn't intend, I think, by that to depart from membership in the LDS church, but they did intend to reconfirm their commitment to the Lord, and I think there's been some activity up there. There's been a blogger who was excommunicated who was in Boise, and he's a fairly well-known blogger. He's talked about his excommunication. I think...

QUESTION: And the rebaptisms, just to be clear, you've talked—advocated—for that as well, correct?

DENVER: I have, and I believe there's Book of Mormon precedent for that. The President of the Quorum of the Twelve, Boyd Packer, lamented in a General Conference talk that the Church had done a good job of distributing the **authority** of the priesthood, but the Church had not done a very good job of distributing **power** in the priesthood. One of my talks... I used the example of Alma and Helam from the Book of

Mormon, in which **Alma**, who had been ordained in the absolutely corrupt court of King Noah (he was ordained precisely because he was one of the priests that would be wicked with King Noah), decided that he was going to repent, and he was gonna renew his covenant. Before baptizing Helam, he prayed and asked God to give him the power to baptize. It was poured out, he baptized him, and despite the fact that the ordination was defective (from an institutionally corrupt place), the baptism was honored, and both of them received an outpouring of the Spirit.

In the talk, I suggested if you are unconvinced by your original baptism, have someone renew their priestly ordination by petitioning to heaven to give power to them. When the power is given, then go out and get baptized again, this time not just by the authority of the priesthood but also by the authority of heaven—the power of heaven—to renew a covenant. And I... In that talk, I suggested **anyone** (whether they're Latter-day Saint, RLDS, Community of Christ, FLDS, Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian—it really doesn't matter—Catholic...) renew the covenant of baptism as a sacrament between you and God and then attend whatever church you will. It's just that the Church, apparently, feels so proprietary over their right to supervise ordinance-making that they're not happy with people being rebaptized, even if they're willing to serve faithfully in the Church thereafter. I don't...

QUESTION: You were excommunicated, then, officially for apostasy? Am I in error or is that...?

DENVER: I was told to withdraw the publication of a book titled *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and to not go on the ten talk lecture series. I attempted to withdraw the book. It was problematic. There were contracts in place—decided I wasn't gonna breach a contract; the book was not taken out of publication. I went ahead, and I gave the talks. The official reason that I was given is that I refused to withdraw publication of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and I had to not go on the ten talk series. If that constitutes rebellion, insubordination, apostasy, I don't know... But I've never received from the Church a substantive objection to the content of the book. We talked **about** it.

One of the complaints that—in discussions with the stake president—that got articulated was that I was denigrating the past presidents of the Church. I pointed out that I really didn't take a position, and I really didn't denigrate. I quoted from diaries. I quoted from talks. I quoted from journals. The most critical person was the **mother** of Heber J. Grant

Heber J. Grant recorded in his diary that his own mother was accusing him of caring more about business than caring about the members of the Church. That was his mother talking about him. And so, he recorded it (and I believe that it was an honest journal because he recorded criticism), I took his own journal and put it into the book, weaving it into a narrative about the presidency of Heber J. Grant. I do not believe I denigrated Heber J. Grant. Either his mother or he (in recording what his mother said) denigrated him. I reported it as what he said about himself to help me understand him and, quite frankly, is giving him credit for the candor of his journal. I think his journal is a

reliable source. When you do something or say something that makes you look undesirable in your own record about yourself, I think you're being honest, and I think Heber J. Grant was being honest. And I commended him for that.

I don't think the book denigrated anyone. I think it quoted people; it quoted their diaries; it quoted their journals; it set forth the events—and I think, quite frankly, members of the Church having a problem with Church history who read the book to try and solve their dilemma are **benefitted** by the book, are **benefitted** by its contents. Members who are unaware that there are a host of historical issues encounter a discussion trying to solve them by discussing them candidly, and it could be upsetting if you've gone through life with your eyes closed. But the Internet... Eyes are being opened in a lot of quarters. I believe many of the men who were responsible from the top-down for my excommunication from the Church are going to have children, grandchildren, they're gonna have in-laws, they're gonna have friends who, going through a faith-crisis, would have been well-served if they took *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and they gave it to them and said, "Take a look at this, and see if it doesn't aid you in your crisis of faith." That was the intention of the book; that's why it was written. That's the effect that it had. I had many letters that said that was the effect it had, but they were uninterested in that at the time of the court.

QUESTION: Just to wrap up, when Elder Oaks said, "Beware of false prophets," do you think he was including you in that?

DENVER: He never provided a definition of "prophet," unless the definition that he provided was someone that got sustained by a body of saints. If getting sustained by a body of saints is the definition of a prophet—ergo, every single person who has not been sustained must necessarily, therefore, be a false prophet under his definition... And I suppose I haven't been sustained, and I haven't asked anyone to sustain me, nor will I ask anyone to sustain me to be a prophet—because I believe the term "prophet" to be a sacred term, and it doesn't involve an audience, and it doesn't involve a vote. I believe it's not campaigned for; it's not elected. I believe God decides who is and who is not, and I don't think that the definition that has been provided by him would **match** Christ or Peter or Daniel or Isaiah or Nephi or Helaman. I don't think it would match a whole host of people. But yeah, in his vernacular, based on his definition, I suppose I would be included within the crowd of people. But just a few years ago, we were being **encouraged** to post on the Internet. So, you post on the Internet, and you deal with troubling issues, and they don't like the way in which you address the troubling issue... That means that somehow you are an opponent of them? I view myself still as a friend of Mormonism, a friend, even, of the LDS Church. Heavens, I'm a BYU graduate! I'm a Cougar! [Chuckle.]

INTERVIEWER: All right, well, thank you very much for sharing.

2015.08.01 The Mormon Legal Mind

Sunstone Panel Discussion

August 1, 2015

Salt Lake City, Utah

Brad Cramer: It's a couple of minutes early but I guess it can't hurt to get going on this, especially since I have to give introductions. Thank you to Sunstone. Conference is coming to an end but I want to – I'm sure she's not here, but I want to especially acknowledge the work that Lindsey has done. This has been a really phenomenal conference and she deserves tons of credit [audience applause]. I can't say enough about how impressed I am. I'm very honored to be a part of the panel even though I'm not presenting. I think we've got the potential to have some really good conversation, really good issues, and just to moderate and to be with this group of people. Thanks for asking me, David. David did the lion's share of work on putting the panel together. My name is Brad Cramer. I am actually a colleague of Daymon's more than anything else, but David and I grew up together.

I'm just going to jump to introducing each of the panelists. We're going to hear from them in the order that I'll introduce them. We're going to be having a conversation about... The title is *The Mormon Legal Mind*. We're going to be talking about issues, in particular in legal entity, legal organization, what does it mean for a church to be a corporation or a series of corporations, or other kinds of legal entities, how does the particular relationship or configuration that these entities have with each other, what implications does that have for how the church operates, for deeper moral or ethical questions. I think it's a very potentially fruitful topic and we have very gifted scholars, very outstanding experts, both theoretical and practical experts. This is going to be a great conversation.

We begin with David Read, who as I mentioned, convened the panel. David and I were in Young Men's together growing up in a ward in east Millcreek here in Salt Lake. David then went on, I don't remember where you did your undergrad but he did his Master's degree in Political Theory at the London School of Economics and then came back stateside and did a Law degree at University of Houston. David now teaches Business Ethics and Law at Weber State and he's been doing a lot of really important research that we should all put lots of pressure on him to publish soon because it's really good stuff, in particular, on these questions. We'll begin with David.

After we hear from David we will have Daymon Michel Smith. Daymon and I have been friends for about a decade. We're both anthropologists. Daymon studied at Penn and I studied at Michigan. Daymon is smarter than I am and studied with the preeminent scholar in his field. Among other things, Daymon is the author of a tremendous dissertation on the history of correlation in Mormonism. He's also the author of *The Book of Mammon* and a series of books called *The Cultural History of the Book of Mormon*. He's a prolific blogger and a provocative blogger, and a very good friend of mine. We'll hear from Daymon after David.

Then we're going to hear from Denver Snuffer. Denver is a practicing attorney in Salt Lake and a very prolific writer, also not without some controversy. He has had quite a bit to say on this subject over the years and I think that he has played a really important role in stirring conversations about these kinds of questions over the years. I think we're all excited to hear what Denver has to say.

Bryndis Robertson is also a practicing attorney from the Atlanta area. Of note, her law partner is her ex-husband, who is also a very good friend, her best friend. Bryndis' practice is contract and corporate law. In addition to being an incredibly smart and researched scholar on these kinds of issues, also has a wealth of practical experience. Some of her clients are churches or religious organizations, religious—what would you call them—religious associations. She's seen, in a very hands on way, what it means for a particular religion to have a particular kind of corporate structure as compared to another religion, what some of the practical or even ethical implications of that might be, so I think we will all benefit tremendously from hearing about her experience and hearing her think critically about these kinds of questions.

We will hear from each of the four panelists and then, assuming we have time, I'd imagine there'll be any number of audience questions and hopefully we can have a really good discussion. For now I'm just going to turn it over to David. [audience applause].

David Read: Thanks, Brad. I'm just going to dig into this, just a quick little background. Been doing research on the corporate entities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and fortunately the state of Utah, because I work for a state entity, has given me an exemption to do the research and the total number of documents, it was a small binder here, is about eight of them now filled with legal documents that have now been pulled. It would have cost probably around \$10,000-\$15,000 to do that, an enormous amount of corporate activity all driven by Church attorneys and so forth.

What I will do is just give a little background of the development of the Church structure corporation. I'm going to gloss over pretty quickly. The way it works is that you have Joseph Smith—some work has been done with Joseph Smith and his legal papers—Jack Welch down at BYU and a few others. Then what we have is what's known as the Trustee-in-trust, and that is typically the president of the Church but not always. Before that, before the Trustee-in-trust, it's the bishop of the Church, Newel K. Whitney, so forth earlier, that manages property, real property, personal property, assets of the Church. At times it's not Joseph Smith, it's not Brigham Young, but briefly, when people are appointed as Trustee-in-trust, it's largely after Joseph/Brigham Young, anyone that is appointed as Trustee-in-trust is usually a presiding bishop or they're typically the assistant Trustee-in-trust. They hold and manage the real property and personal property of the Church. 1875 George A. Smith dies, it reverts back to Brigham Young. After Brigham Young it continues on to John Taylor.

The purpose of the Trustee-in-trust initially is to hold title to property and distinguish it between the financial affairs of the Church and Joseph Smith, and then it is to

distinguish it between the financial affairs of the Church and Brigham Young. Of course, the government under Brigham Young, they're going after the Church, various legislative acts by Congress are passed, 1863 the Anti-Bigamy Act, 1882 the Edmunds Act, 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act. But Joseph Smith, in 1841, the first time is put in as the sole trustee for said Church, that's what the document says. But it's not always the president. Church presidents have been sustained as the Trustee-in-trust up until President Kimball, and then that was discontinued.

Just recently I learned why that was discontinued and it set forth in legal memoranda in the H. Michael Marquardt papers here at the University of Utah, and there is a memorandum prepared. It's from Robert Dyer to Francis Gibbons of the First Presidency in 1980. In this document the Church lawyer argues that there's no need to sustain the president as Trustee-in-trust and so it's discontinued. What we see is the language, the purpose of the Trustee-in-trust, we get it from the Illinois Act, "Receive, acquire, manage, or convey property, real, personal, or mixed, for the sole use and benefit of said church." And then the office of Trustee-in-trust is superseded by the creation of the Corporation Sole.

Another legal memorandum explaining to the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve apostles exactly how this works. They're not quite sure how this works in 1980 and then Wilford Curtin, who is general counsel, outside counsel of the Church, writes and prepares a brief to James Faust, May 21, 1980. At that point we have the Trustee-in-trust, and then we move onto what's known as this legal fiction called the Corporation Sole. In Utah the legislature enacts this in 1901. Franklin S. Richards, legal counsel for the Church beginning in 1880, pushes hard for the Corporation Sole and the reason is that before 1901 corporations have to have a board of directors. It's going to be jointly managed, it's going to be a collaborative effort, and then in 1901 we have a Corporation Sole here in Utah and in a number of other states that allows one person only to hold and manage all property, real and personal. But it's not until 1931, interestingly enough, that they transfer the rest of the property to the Corporation Sole. In 1916 we have the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Since then, as you can imagine, a number of corporate documents being filed with the state of Utah describing how the Corporation is to be governed.

A couple of things that are interesting, and there's a number of things that are interesting, but for the sake of time I'm just going to give you a couple of them. Article Three of the Articles of Incorporation state this, "The estimated value of property which I hold the legal title for the purpose aforesaid at the time of making these Articles of Incorporation: \$16,000." I don't know what that means. Is that \$16,000 that was just put into the Corporation Sole? It must be, because there were hundreds of thousands, and millions of dollars of value at the time. Interestingly enough, one year later, here's this, this is important. 1931 report, legal memorandum to the Church authorities. Here it states this and Franklin Richards says that "Fred Bush had been in charge of the ward and stake corporations which now, in 1931, number between 700 and 800, and are constantly increasing." What they had done is they incorporated for each ward and stake so as to shield each other from liability. But in 1931 alone, 700 and 800 different

corporations. And of course, the number of \$16,000 seems to be misrepresented in the case of the late corporation in 1890 where the Church did uphold the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Estimated Church property would be at least 3 million dollars, 2 million in real property and a million in personal. I put up here that the government, Utah attorney, had seized only \$381,000 of the total amount.

Another article, and this is important, it's important to the development of these corporations under the intent of what the Church is trying to do. "The object of this corporation shall be to acquire, hold, and dispose of such real and personal property as may be conveyed to said corporation for the benefit of the members of the Church." That's it, very similar to the language of the Trustee-in-trust. We have an amendment one year later and it adds this language, and I will abbreviate this underlined, "And this corporation shall have power without any authority or authorization from the members of said Church or religious society." I'm not sure quite yet, I assume there's some lawsuits at this point, I've not found them. I assume that's what's happening and they're changing their charter.

The Corporation Sole of the President of the Church, so you have the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Corporation of the President. Here again Franklin S. Richards states, "The primary purpose of this is to create a corporation wherein they are able to have perpetual succession so that little title would not be affected by death, resignation, or disqualifications of any person holding title." They want to have clear succession.

Today, at least in Utah alone, what I see is there's about 103 legal entities that I can find governed by the Church. I found all of these through the search online which is restricted and it has a stiff fee to do this. A few weeks ago, a month ago, doing research at home, I didn't have my documents. I went online to find a few documents and I can find them through outside counsel Vaughn Keach's name because he was the agent of service and you can find that, but he was just made a general authority in the last conference and they've changed the agent of service to a corporation to receive service, and so it's almost impossible to find these documents now. 103 legal entities at least at this point, but I think this summarizes it, and I'll finish with this.

This is in 1921, Franklin S. Richards. He says this, "The Church has always been much broader than that ordinarily conducted by religious organizations in that it has owned, bought, sold, and exchanged large quantities of real and personal property, and has engaged in business concerns which are unusual in conducting the affairs of religious bodies." Nothing has changed. It's at a level unprecedented compared to any other church, not only in this country but around the globe. That's what I got, thank you.

Daymon Mickel Smith: Thank you, David. This question of the legal status of the Church has been something that I was interested in for a while but I didn't have any training to do it whatsoever so it's good to have finally somebody who actually knows what any of this stuff means, sort of on the job at this point. Thank you, David.

My experience with the law is pretty minimal so I'm just going to draw from what I know. A lot of that is, of course, satire and using dirty words and things, so that's probably what mostly you'll find in this talk.

In the Beginning, we might as well re-translate the old stories into consumables delivering best practice solutions, In the Beginning The Chief Exalted Managing Executive of Executive Management said in an inter-department memo, Let there be the word Light, and let me trademark it. Let me brand all that is, and was already before the Beginning, with this word that I own. Now it is Good for something.

On the second day the Chief Executive, from his time-share in Voidland, where he was attending a conference titled, "buying and selling souls: the investment basics," did text unto his Vice President of Growing Growth, and he commandeth, "Let no thing that is not sealed by my brand circulate in my market," and the Vice President reporteth, "No thing that is not of our brand is now circulating in our market."

And it came to pass they did meeteth for brunch, and boasteth, and did lispeth in this manner, "We Brethren, the Impostles, Be-ers, and Drivelators, are now masters of Growing Markets, and owneth all that iseth of the True Light." And to some they gave more, and to others less of this trademark, promising that should they do as commanded, they would receive more sealant, in payment. And they called that sealant Good for something. And they who doeth all that is commanded, they promised to give unto them a quarterly evaluation in the range of "exceedeth expectations."

And so on, until their market was grown, did they demand of others to do something good for something, and yet out of nothing. But because that growing is of a proprietary nature, being patented, copyrighted, mystify-patent-righted-copy-gurgle-blah-blah-nada-fied, and also servicemarked, and that moreover the Gods have all signed Non-Competes, and the Prophets did signeth Non-Disclosures and thus their mouths are stopped up, even as the ass with a donkey up it, the secret of the marketization of the Light, and to the buying and selling of souls, remaineth, as Proverbs says, for kings only, and surely not queens, to revealeth. But all might profit thereby.

Yet Kolobians understand that the Light was before the trademark, and that false gods ever claim to owneth and to give the thing, when they give only the word for the thing; and give not the thing itself, for they do not hold, never possess, nor own it in any manner. Priesthood they would call a power, when it is in truth only a word for a collection of priests. For they have no power other than the collection and the words muttered by these collectives to their collective deception, fools imagining a vain thing.

How do we move things? That seems like a question we can reduce the recondite matter of the Mormon Mind down into. How do we move things with our words?

One of many overlooked details of Greek mythology concerns the absence of simple machines being put into use by the Gods. In our own day, can you imagine Superman or comic book Thor relying on a lever to lift a car from its side, and thus to save the

day? The Gods don't use levers. An airborne, be-cap-ed being lifting the yellow bus across some collapsing bridge to Babylon? Not by working against gravity, he doesn't. Whatever leverage these beings bring about, it comes from them: from their being, from being what they are; from are-ing what they be, and so on. It is beyond our words to point at it, apparently. And what sort of world does that look like, a world without leverage? How do we move things without levers? Both things lacking levers, like machines, and things moved, yet without any lever? These are questions answered by what the word Zion means, I suppose.

Now, let me loosen up a little bit and be somewhat less formalified. When I first proposed, now half a decade back, that there was no LDS Church, I was confronted with mockery and scorn, and confusion. The confusion may still exist, but even the blogosphere high priests of Mormonism and givers of its incoherent laws, who initially scoffed and pointed their lips at the claim, and shook their heads, have since unfleeced their eyes to the existence of the corporation sole. How else could God have organized his kingdom, in order and wisdom, they now half-heartedly half-inquire, but as a corporation sole? What wisdom, what vision have our prophets and seers, to build a kingdom around profits and speculation! How else to leverage scripture into a global church? How else, move things around by using words? What faithless, fleeting vaulting to another self fleecing; what law flouting; what vaunted flaunting; what do you mean, Daymon, why can't you just say what you mean? Okay, I'll say what I mean. Horse shit. Got it? We have it in spades, I suppose, so let's get out our spades and shoveling.

How else could we Mormons build the kingdom of God, if not with corporations designed to shake Invisible Hands, and to stroke ourselves thereby; how else but to give to it secret signs and cheap tokens, and to gain fleeting reward thereby? In the Beginning, some would have the ancient stories begin yet again, God started a corporation, and said, let there be markets for light, and there were markets, and they made existence profitable, but light became scarce. And in the beginning, you would have it said, was the Word, and that word was "For Sale," and God was For Sale.

How else to move things, without the leverage of markets and law, the leverage of leverage, or the power of the power of the priesthood power? What I'm certain of, is that "Mormon" is a word. A word someone uses to say something about a person, or an attribute of a person or a thing. It is scalable, so that one might speak of Mormon culture, a Mormon, The Mormon Mind, a Mormon mind, a Mormon thought, Mormon thought; some Mormon-ism; a Mormon whatever. Thus, we have a basic outline of the Sunstone range of presentations year after year, the ground on which we might endlessly complain, praise, queer, quarrel and bitch at an invisible, non-existing church / people / culture / whatever.

What do we Hear? Glad tidings? Listen to me shoveling. I hear People using a word in various ways, and wondering if their usage will become widespread enough that they might become briefly Leviathan, if only in some very small pond. What does it mean, when used as a noun of various classes, as a modifier, and even as a verb, say, for

instance, "I got totally Mormoned last night!" That word—like the phrase, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is trademarked, by the way.

What Mormon says or points to or picks out is entirely a matter of convention, meaning, were I to discourse on the Mormon what have you, I would also be attempting, covertly, to define—and create thereby—what a Mormon whatever was or is. This is why there is nothing Mormon that is not in reality a creation of somebody's voice, and that is why the study of Mormon culture or mind or whatever, is little more than a study of certain people speaking. Those who forget this fact may be beguiled into believing they study Mormon X, when in reality they study people talking about Mormon X, or speaking Mormon X into existence; and they themselves must be included in that group of talkers. That is to say, we create whatever we mean by Mormon whenever we use that word. Some people's words, however, have more oomph, to use a technical term, (but I don't know what I'm talking about) than do the words of others, being more durable and ready to circulate in the mouths of other speakers.

Being "powerful" in this priesthood of the voice, means your definitions are carried about by others, very often those who claim to provide contrary definitions, or who would be gadflies and bothersome critics. To create an imaginary kingdom, one must also create critics, you see, and spies and zealots; they who presuppose the reality of the thing they doubt or otherwise attempt to liberalize, purify, make more orthodox, or less so; or altered from its imaginary, invisible, intangible nature. So it is that Sunstone—like FAIR and other conferences—is parasitic on the Leviathan that is the Corporation of the President of the Church; many ticks of varying fatness, sucking on the belly of the beast. Without the latter Corporation speaking Mormon X into existence, or into being, there would be little for presenters to doubt, disbelieve, be unfaithful to, stick with, defend and attack, historicize, feminize, capitulate and stand up to, or otherwise briefly seem relevant when speaking about. I often doubt the purposes of symposia like Sunstone, but what cannot be doubted is that "Mormon" as a word carving out something, and is used frequently in these spaces. This fact is why there cannot be a Mormon Studies that is not also using that word in some fashion either aligned with or contrary to someone's Mormon; most often that someone is a large, highly capitalized corporation that owns satellites. Let me say that again: it, whatever it is, it owns satellites. Not only dishes, but the things in space. A church? For seeing stones we have screens, and for angels we have Satellites to send back our vain imaginings. Yet what father giveth pieces of torn bread, when his children ask for white stones?

Rather than comment as a spectator on whatever someone calls "Mormonism," pointing out their foolishness or wisdom, the errors of their reasoning, or praising the liberality of their conception, from this point forward I'd like to enter into the game of its creation.

How else can we move things? For do we not all desire change? We can start by reading more and advocating less. We are asked to be righteous. How so? Acting in kindness, acting justly, and extending mercy wherever we might.

Can a corporation be righteous? Is it surprising that Mormons speak of "knowing the Church is True," but seldom of "knowing the church is good, righteous, just and merciful"? Only beings embodied are just, merciful, and righteous; and corporations, despite the roots of that word, have no bodies. They are closer to Lucifer, being ripped from his body to wander as the unclean spirit, resident briefly in your imaginations. That is where churches and corporations primarily reside, not coincidentally: in your imaginations. They too can, and often, should be exorcised therefrom.

Let me briefly baptize you with something that may clean from your minds the excrement weekly issuing from that which is Wholly Without Spirit. In the context of a discussion with his son Corianton, Alma explains his understanding of various terms, given in translation in our Book of Mormon. Corianton often ignored his father and brothers, boasting in his own strength and wisdom, which pride culminated in his seeking after the harlot Isabel, thereby forsaking his ministry. Although wicked, nonetheless it was possible for him to obtain forgiveness. In the context of his harlot seeking, and the possibility of its forgiveness, Corianton is taught by Alma about restoration, mercy and justice. What he says, I think, is not currently taught in any branch of Mormonism of which I am aware. What he says, I think, shouldn't be neglected. This neglect is perhaps a consequence of using for-profit American corporations as one's model of a modern church, through which is refracted an official reading of that book. In any case, one can still find many things secretly taught in that book, although we need not call these things Mormonism. Corianton was called to prepare a people, and their children for the coming of Christ among them, for "is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming"? Angels were sent to declare salvation through Christ, tidings true then as they are today. Christ is here called God, as he is throughout the book, you'll notice. That is, before they changed it. Don't bother asking me if the Book of Mormon is Trinitarian, or Unitarian, or Pre-lapsarian, Arian, or Whatev-erian: it is its own voice, not a mimic. So it must be read, and not merely catalogued into pseudo-intellectual folders for the shortsighted and mentally shallow, by they who taketh themselves seriously, but treat lightly their reading of books.

Here's what I hear it saying, in part: The man-ification of Christ is part of what Alma calls the plan of redemption. By redemption, I mean, a re-deeming, in the sense that one might "deem" something, or by understanding it anew, judge and decree for it some new path; in short, a re-declaration of our doom, something like "fate" in a more Latin tradition. This is what the word redemption means in this text. It is not the paying for a thing, as one might speak today, in our post-Protestant market-corrupted speech, of "redeeming" a coupon to get a discounted price. Jesus is no coupon for your discounted soul.

A new deeming leads Alma to another R-word, Resurrection. All shall rise from the dead, having gathered to that God which gave them life—either to Ahman or to the Devil, born to that god by their own works, and sealed by their wickedness or righteousness as his sons or daughters or as something un-gendered perhaps. Those born in death as children of Ahman await in paradise. What are they waiting for? The

resurrection of their spirit bodies of light, at last transmuted into matter approximating the recalled flesh. And although a paradise upheld by peace where there are no guns among them, or so I'm told, they nonetheless wait with the taste of bitterness, tasting the "pain of death," that is, a longing for bodies of firmer, yet more changeable substance.

The children of the Devil, on the other hand, are cast into outer darkness, however; you will notice there is no missionary to instruct and to save them; nor a vicarious baptism for which they sit and wait. There is no such baptism for the dead. Although there is a baptism for a particular group of the Dead, who have waited since the days of Noah for the return of their brothers that departed with Enoch and his lands. But their baptism is not our work. Those children of the Devil are cast out forever, and have no redeeming of their story.

Your souls, I presume, will gather in paradise of some sort; for few among us are magnificently wicked enough to seduce the Devil, so that he might bother with our adoption; though no doubt that does not stop many of you from giving it your very worst effort. Those found in the Devil's kingdom are dead to righteousness, and can never be redeemed, being consigned by their own works to drink the dregs of a bitter cup. In our mythology, scientism, we might say their light has been perverted or bent in consuming of itself, as a blackhole in space; frozen forever into the void, being beings unbeinged by their unbelief, and at last little more than nothing. Their fate as unclean beings is set, and that setting of fate is itself damnation; for spirits otherwise, in their true nature of the Light, come of and are capable of endless creation, endless but nonetheless bounded, creation.

As with Mormons today, in the days of Alma they had a partially correct, and importantly incorrect understanding of resurrection: deeming it then a raising of the spirit but only to happiness. Given their lack of understanding that God himself would take on flesh, die, and then transmute his body of light into something approximating what we call flesh (lacking blood, obviously, to carry oxygen throughout, needing no leverage gained from muscle and bone), given their ignorance, it makes perfect sense they would understand a tradition of resurrection within the framework of their beliefs about the afterlife, and spirits pining in paradise. (Score another point for the Book of Mormon, as a remarkably consistent document, by the way.)

Alma insists resurrection means a uniting of the soul with its body. Obviously our current fleshy, and over time, increasingly inelastic and fleshier bodies, are not those bodies. If it is to be eternal, that body must never have been created, but always is. How can this be? If one's body is to be resurrected, it would seem to have been created. Yet after resurrection we are eternally in that form, as though never created. I'd say the body of light that is your spirit will be imagined into a body like unto this one of flesh, the one of greater light being drawn from the lesser. Thus the children of God shine forth in his kingdom. And never again will we suffer a separation of our souls from ourselves, as we did in the beginning, when some among us called themselves gods, being enamored by being other than they were; and so ventured into the void, and thereafter dowsed our

bodies of light with their now lessened light. This story we reenact here, briefly, in the mortal unity, and then subsequent separation at death.

Spirits cannot be made, nor destroyed, but they can be of increasingly weak and borrowed light, until nothing but unlight pervades one's being, a new darkness uncreated. Our bodies are drawn where we seek in our heart for treasures, and they are re-shaped in that seeking; dignified and warped and misshapen by the paths we take it on. Those without bodies, say, corporations sole, are not subject to the rule of light, and to its straight courses. That is why we can use them, abuse them, become masters over them, and yet, eventually, be deceived by our own creations.

In the resurrection we—these embodied—are restored to our perfect frame, Alma would say, unmarred and yet not created anew; taking us to the meaning of the word Restoration. Corporations and churches are not restored, for they have nothing to lose, and nothing to be restored to. That which is because someone says it is, has no frame independent of the saying so.

On the meaning of the word "Restoration," Alma comments that "some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray." It is just, he suggests, just that "things should be restored to their proper frame," so it is with that word; and that alone ought to mean what one means when one says "just." To be just, then, would require a knowledge of the proper frames, and that knowledge can only come from their creators. And restoration demands a freeing of the creation from its creators. This is why churches and corporations will never be restored.

If your hearts are good in this life, and your desires; and your works also good, you shall be restored to that which is good. But if evil are your works, and your heart too desires evil, and you do not repent of this evil, then what is restored is not evil (it is not a thing), but works and a realm, as Alma says, "shall be restored unto them for evil." Thus the "natural frame," as Alma is translated as saying, the natural frame for mortality is properly immortality; and of corruption, incorruption. Although decreed out of mercy, death is unnatural; and it came of our corruption of bodies of light.

The word Natural has been given undue condemnation, in Christian tradition, and of course, we've inherited this in our own restorationism, and I'd like to clarify a little bit what Alma means. "All men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity," This is Alma speaking. Now, "gall" can mean a few different things, in ordinary English. It can mean a painful swelling or lump, caused by poison or by some parasite's depositing of eggs; and bile of the liver or other bitter secretion of the organs, as well. These all might mean "gall". The term is said to derive from Old English *galla*, supposed born from Proto-Indo-European, a totally hypothetical language, **ghel*, a hypothetical verb itself, supposedly meaning "to glitter and shine," supposedly derived from glittering material, like gold that gives off a glare, glows, and by its gleam makes one glad. Giving us Old English *gloer*, their term for Amber (the name of my wife, by the way), **ghel* also is said to be the root for *yelp*, a sharp cry, and for *geld*, the castration of a horse.

There is sort of no point to what I'm doing right now.

In the language of Adam, we are given a definition from Joseph Smith, one easily mocked by know-it-alls who often haven't heard the fairy tales which place the angels as the original inhabitants of England. In this language, Anglo-man was said to be the name for angels, those glittering beings that make us glad; we being called the sons ahman, an honorific title full of hope, and being yet reserved for fallen mankind who, nonetheless, in the first days were brought here to become in time, the powers of the earth. When the Book of Mormon speaks of white and delightsome, its translator means, "shining, glittering in gladness," not Caucasian. The Old English version of Genesis speaks of elf-sheen, and I suppose that is what our Book of Mormon implies: shining, glittering, lucid being. There is no racism here, but a promise of becoming like Ahman, and to reside gladly in Ahman, the name of Him giving us the name of a realm where his children gather and find rest.

All this etymology is given to say, don't be so sure you know what something means, for even the very wise often cannot tell if one lexeme speaks of glitter, bile, or yelling, perhaps as a result of castration. So it is with nature.

From the galls of oaks one might distill ink, and thus write a new story; or cast a spell, and when a story casts a good spell, we call that, a Gospel. The nature of words is to grow into a tangle, especially if untended; or if attended to briefly by zealous and foolish gardeners.

Where was I heading, before this confounding maze of words?

Nature: Being without God in the world, going contrary to the "nature of God," puts one in a "state contrary to the nature of happiness," telling us that nature is not itself synonymous with a carnal state, but that something's "nature" is what one might call its "true state." To this state you are restored. It is your nature to be glad; for gods felt that you might be, and we are, that we might have joy. When you are in a glad state, you feel your true nature; that is, you. You feel your youthfulness. When you are glad, you feel your soul as it is, the is-ness of your soul, and your feeling is not separated from the thing felt; no longer astray, if only briefly, a happy soul is not contrary to the nature of God. This Corporation cannot reveal your soul, for it has none itself. It cannot make you happy. Only God can reveal your soul, and when you are happy, your soul is in a state of nature, its proper frame.

When you are unhappy, the soul must be out of joint. That disjuncting is our common lot here in this world, and we are here to learn pity, and mercy, thereby; as well as to justly perceive the true nature of souls, and to pursue their proper framing. If church has a purpose, it is to teach us pity, and patience, and in time, I suppose, to bring us to repentance. Repentance of what? Of building a mockery, a dead thing in the image of the living church of the Lamb?

It is the Penitent indeed whom Alma calls "the redeemed of the Lord," we mortals few who have been "taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness, and thus they stand and fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or evil." How can we be taken out and delivered from that darkness? The way is prepared, Alma assures Corianton. In our age, that preparation has been almost fully realized. It culminates in the restoration, a term too often capitalized, and thus seeming to refer us to some ongoing process and event. But Alma does not speak of The Restoration, but only of the Restoration of This and of That. "The meaning of the word restoration," he explains, "is to bring back again, evil for evil...good for that which is good," and so on for the righteous, just, and merciful as well. The word restoration, he concludes, "more fully condemns the sinner, and justifies him not at all."

Is Corianton merely to act good, in order to get goods for his reward? Is it just to punish a sinner, consigning him to a state of misery? All these laws and punishments exist, Alma says, to bring about the plan of mercy. That plan requires atonement: an at-one-ing of God and Man. When I say atonement, I do not mean what a corporation means, what those without bodies speak of, for what do they know of becoming one with another? Only possession, and of possessions redeemed.

What do I mean?

Mercy claims the penitent, and mercy comes because of this one-ing of God and Mankind. The at-one-ing began when Man was given a path undetermined by fate—call it agency—something like unto God's own course. It continued when God became Man, and we will be further at-oned, we and our gods, in the resurrection. In the resurrection of the Dead we are restored to our nature, being in the presence of God to hear his judging of all our works. Not "judging" in the sense of sentencing by decree, that is dooming, but the sort of judgment given by an art teacher, perhaps, regarding the quality of a student's corpus. And thus comes the redemption of man, the retelling by a new deeming of our story, and its happy ending, if an end it be. And Mankind will go forth creating, restored to their proper frame. Our future is not to become Gods, to rise to their order. There shall be no gods among the children of Light, for all gods will be reborn as Men and Women, glad and glittering, free of destiny, thus alive; and no mere satellites to objects of greater mass and density.

How do we move things without leverage?

Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin. If you would be children of your Father in Heaven, who sends rain on the just and on the unjust, and who blesses those who curse Him, you would do likewise as your Father.

So in a few pages I've given you a complete retelling of the mythology that I don't want to diminish by calling it Mormon. By commenting, I hoped to participate in your world; rather than merely spectate on what some people call Mormonism. I've told a story, maybe cast a spell that bewitches if none other, at least myself. So I say, it is the gospel. You are not compelled, neither are you condemned for not knowing the truth.

You are only asked to believe in a story that casts a good spell, that glittering tale of Jesus and the gladness of angels, and to let that belief lighten your soul. The only sacrifice—the only thing to set aside—is your heart; set aside in your heart a little space for God, and he will fill it with light.

There are only two churches, and the church of the Lamb has not yet descended with Enoch from heaven. You must have great faith to believe in Mammon, that's what I'd say to the priests of Mormon Incorporated; far beyond the heft of a mustard seed which God asks of his children. Have you not many millennia of Mammon's work to judge by, and your own lives as evidence? It may be our lot to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, but we can only have joy in our labor, and not only for a season, when it leans exclusively toward the immortality and eternal life of man.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin. In the Book of Mormon, Jesus asks his audience—to consider this—but only after they have been warned to not try to serve two masters.

Consider the lilies. They are arrayed more gloriously than Solomon, because that is their nature. You are not told to sit around waiting for God to feed you, nor to spend your days in idleness, lazing in various fields of lilies. We are not told to toil not, nor to pretend to be lilies. That is not what Jesus asks. Jesus says consider the lilies. Jesus seems to be telling a few chosen at Bountiful that just as God has clothed a field of grass in glittering lilies, so he might adorn your cloth and toil, and deem it glorious. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, (this seems like a pretty fundamental phrase) and the things ye stand in need of shall be added to your toil, to your spinning; even if only spinning your wheels in the seeking for God. In the creation of a church, and then its transubstantiation into a corporation sole, we have cheated ourselves of witnessing the evidence of that command's truthfulness. Awaken.

See that in 1830 the Book of Mormon was kidnapped and made to say absurd things, as kidnapped people are wont to do, and yet it remains for us to read, and to see in it another way to build the Kingdom of God. It's for Mormons to do this. His house has been ruined, and yet will be restored, someday. That is a good saying; that is a gospel.

The way is narrow, even for those warned away from strange roads; and few find it, for many are led astray by wolves dressed as sheep, in fine-twined Utah woolen mills suits, by false prophets revealing God only in Mammon's profits, that f-ing incarnation; they have their uses, do those profits; but pointing to God is not one of them. If you would be Mammon's children cast into darkness, follow as you can that thing bereft of a body—a corporation—a will o' wisp worshipped by old men robbed of reason, and yet not bereft of their jowls, nor their wagging fingers, and their naked compromises. A market driven profit does not love his enemies, neither blesses those who curse it, and cannot pray for those that persecute it. Do not follow after it.

[muffled audience comment]

After giving his advice, Jesus concludes with instruction to the faithful who would be the children of his father: love your enemies, bless them that curse you, (or those that tell you to be quiet). They that may be the children of your father who is in heaven (this is the last paragraph, actually). [muffled audience comments] Bless them that curse you, that you may be the children of your father who is in heaven, for he makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends the rain, sometimes in season and in due measure. Sometimes it floods, but in either event, we will always have our rainbows and sunsets, and sunrises, too, and the green things of the earth adorned by these lights made flesh. That is the nature of nature, I deem, to turn ever back to that which gave it shape; bent back, if briefly lost, bent back by the unmarketable, by so unbarrellable a commodity as the light, as Emerson says. In the heart of the living is the light. In the heart of corporations sole, you will find neither soul, nor corpus, nor light. Thank you. [audience applause]

Denver Snuffer: The some hundred-plus corporations that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now is comprised of is no accident. When the saints moved westward from Nauvoo the treaty of Guadalupe Hildago was signed on February 2, 1848, which conveyed to the United States the present day states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado, parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming, over which there was simply no law. In a vacuum, which is where the Church found itself, the Church began to license timber, the Church began to give deeds, the Church began to assume authority over water. This was a necessary civilizing step to be taken, otherwise people could not have the confidence to go forward and do anything. Therefore, the Church became the center of property, the Church became the center of government, and the Church became, by necessity, the entity through which all of the territory got organized. How thorough that organization became and was dependent upon the Church can be determined from where the Salt Lake Basin Meridian is located in order to determine by meets and bounds where all of the property of you people who live in Utah is reckoned from. It's the Salt Lake Basin Meridian. If you go to Temple Square you will find the marker there that was set by the coordinates determined by Orson Pratt when he said it in 1855, but he did it based upon where Brigham Young set his cane down and said, "This is the place," that defined Temple Square. We have a legacy that created the legal environment that begins with the western migration.

On July 10, 2015, the Church announced that it was going to develop, on 133,000 acres in Florida, a new development that would include buildings to house 500,000 new residents. To give you an idea of how big that project will be, it would require you to take all of the populations of Salt Lake City, West Valley City, Provo, and West Jordan together in order to come up with residential housing for 500,000 people. It's not housing alone because these people need gas stations, these people need sewer systems, these people need everything that goes on in order to have that many communities. Think of the engineering and development, think of the building and housing, think of all of the opportunities for commerce, employment, school, church, think of everything that would be required in order to establish right now, from scratch, enough development to fit in Layton, St. George, Ogden, Sandy, Orem, and West

Jordan, and you have some idea of the scope of what this development in Florida is going to entail. The youngest member of the current Quorum of the Twelve is a year older than me. He will not live to see this project through to completion. Do not think for one moment that the development of property by an owner is simply a discharge of responsibility to architects and engineers because there are numerous decisions that have to be made all along the program in order to turn ground into a development. I know because, as a lawyer, I have done a great deal of that.

Take, for example, just the engineering issues that are involved in sewer systems. The state of Florida is overwhelmingly below 60 feet in elevation above sea level and it is essentially flat. If you are going to develop a sewer system for a half million peoples, residences, businesses, and everything else, you are going to have to make a lot of engineering decisions along the way. There is no architect, there is no engineer, that's going to assume that responsibility. They're going to require the owner to assume the responsibility and to answer all of the questions. Which means, you are going to be baby sitting a development for the next 50 to 65 years in order to see it through to completion.

Now, as an example of how decisions made early on occupy the attention of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, I want to read you from some minutes in January 1891, a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It's held at the Gardo House because the temple would not be completed until 1893. Between the time of it beginning and the time of the temple being completed, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve met in the Gardo House. These are minutes taken by one of the members of the Twelve, Abraham Cannon. "January 23, 1891, 11 a.m. At this hour I went to a special Quorum meeting at the Gardo House. Present: Wilford Woodruff, George Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Franklin M. Lyman, John Henry Smith, Heber J. Grant, and myself. The question of the sugar industry was discussed and each expressed his view of the matter. President Woodruff was very anxious to see it established and felt it was a matter which should interest and engage the attention of all. Joseph F. Smith felt that a success should be made of this labor because of the evil results which would follow a failure of our endeavor." They go on from there, ultimately deciding, and in light of the hour I will spare you those minutes, ultimately deciding to go forward with it in part because one of the large gentiles in the valley predicted the Church would fail in it, and the Church didn't want him to be vindicated, so they decided they were going to get into the sugar industry.

Now, if you go forward 40 years later, the decision to start the sugar industry comes back in minutes that I take from the diary of Heber J. Grant on December 23, 1930. "George [Spencer] said he thought it would be a mistake for Orville Adams or myself to go on the sugar board. It would create comment that it might not be favorable to the banks, and Brother Ivins seemed to agree with him. I said that it is a Church institution and we must save it. Brother Ivins said he was opposed absolutely to the Church attempting to save it, that it is not a Church institution. I disagreed absolutely with him in my feelings. It is more of a Church institution almost than the two banks, and should

anything happen to it, it would affect the banks ten times more than anything else that could happen, because the Church originally called people practically on a mission to invest in it. I delivered letters signed by the presidency of the Church asking for investments. It is looked upon as a Church institution. The Church owns 72.5% of the preferred stock, and if we do not protect it, it will weaken the credit of the Church all over the United States, in my judgement. We were jeopardizing not only a great institution but the credit of the Church if anything happened to the sugar company, as it would injure the three banks in which the Church is interested, Utah State National, Zions Saving Bank, and Utah Savings and Trust Company, ten times more than if they were to put up a lot of money and actually sustain a loss." So now, in order to protect the credit of the Church and the banking institutions, the sugar enterprise that was undertaken needed to be bailed out and needed to be supported.

But that's not all. The issue of sugar and the sugar industry affected even General Conference talks. This is on April 5, 1932. "Brother Lorenzo Elggren called and made an appeal to me as he is representing a big candy company; that in my conference talk, (this is the Church President's proposed conference talk) "that in my conference talk I do not discriminate against the candy people. He told how many carloads of beet sugar they thought they bought for candy and that McDonalds and Sweets used a lot of cane sugar, that the company he represents is four or five times as big as both of them, and has never bought anything but beet sugar, thus sustaining home industry. I told him I would forget to make a strong appeal for home manufacturing, although I said, "You know, Brother Elggrin, it would really be better for the people if you could not sell any candy here, because it would furnish that much more employment." So he dropped out of his General Conference address anything that related to the sugar industry and home industry.

If you think that the meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve involve something that you believe Jesus would want to attend... [audience laughter and muffled comment]

President Woodruff- This is on April 03, 1899, these are minutes from the secretary to the First Presidency, L. John Nuttall. "President Woodruff called up the misunderstanding between Brother Moses Thatcher and George Q. Cannon on the Bullion Beck and Champion Mining Company matters, which he wished to have settle. I read all the correspondence between the parties and President Woodruff since this affair was brought up by Brother Moses Thatcher on December 03, 1888, after which the brethren spoke, Brother Cannon having submitted a very fair proposition for settlement. Brother Thatcher was very persistent in his views. The matter was left over to give Brother Thatcher time to examine Brother Cannon's position. Each of them expressed themselves as not having any feeling against each other so strong but what they can attend to the general business before the council."

As you go through the minutes of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, what you learn is that, that corporate enterprise that the Church has found itself owning, owns the Church. You can't have a multi-billion dollar business enterprise and neglect it. Those 105+ corporations demand attention and they receive attention.

This is a Thursday meeting in the temple on December 28, 1893. "In the afternoon was in the temple until 5 o'clock. There were present at our meeting all of the presidency and Brother's Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, Heber J. Grant, and myself. George Gibbs was clerk. The matter of purchasing a coal mine in Iron county, and the constructing of the railroad to the Pacific coast was next considered. Father made a statement of his labors in the East recently and said it was proposed by the manufacturers of the rails and so on that the Church endorse the bonds of the proposed road, in which case they will bring 30% more in their sale than if they are placed on the market unendorsed. The proposed coal mine purchase is a mine owned by Wooden Jensen by Cedar City, and which contains an inexhaustible quantity of coal. The price proposed is \$32,000 for a section of coal but it is believed that a little reduction can be got on this figure. The whole matter was fully discussed but it was becoming late and we adjourned until tomorrow. The next day, all were in attendance today who here yesterday. It was decided that the presidency be authorized to take all necessary steps to carry the project through to successful completion. Whether this means the using of Church funds for this purpose, or the endorsing of the bond, so as to place them on the market and obtain the highest price for them."

The business of the Church is business. The ownership of the kingdom requires that the kingdom be maintained, and if your kingdom is of this world then the worldly concerns related to your kingdom necessarily require your attention. At the end of the day one of the product lines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is owned by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one of the product lines is the religion called Mormonism. That religion can under perform and not produce the revenue stream in tithing that you would like it to see. That's a good revenue stream because from it, all revenue is untaxed. The way to stimulate that revenue stream is to get out in General Conference and to talk about the necessity for increasing the performance of that part of the product line. But if it underperforms consistently you can always diversify by investing in and improving, for example, a mega mall, a condo project, an office and retail space in Salt Lake City in City Creek or in Philadelphia, as they decided to do, or a massive project like the one that is currently done in Florida. But when you undertake those projects it's going to require the continual babysitting by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It's going to occupy, as it has for nearly two centuries, the meetings that are held in the Thursday get-together of the Brethren. Thank you.

[audience applause]

Bryndis Robertson: Good afternoon, everyone. As Brad said when he introduced us, my name is Bryndis Robertson. I am a practicing attorney in Atlanta, Georgia. A number of my clients are churches, clearly not the LDS Church. The churches that I represent range in size from about 200 members to 30,000 members, which in an independent church, is considered a mega church. I think the difference that I see in what I do, and what my panel members have been talking about, about the LDS Church, and I think Denver captured it when he said when the Church came out to Utah

the Church was the center of everything. In Georgia we have over 10,000 churches but no church is the center of everything in Georgia.

When I started preparing for this session and I was reading about the Church and the Church being a corporation sole, I thought, I've never heard of that in Georgia. Can we even do that in Georgia? I went back to the corporations code, and I shook it, looked at the pocket part, and I shook it a little bit too, and I saw nothing in the corporations code about a corporation sole. I said, then it must be a creature of common law, and so I need to look in the case law. One of the few cases that I was able to find was an 1882 case, and it involved the Catholic Church. So I'm pretty sure that in Georgia, if there are any corporations sole, they all relate to the Catholic Church. Most of the churches that I represent –and I would venture to say that most of the churches that are represented by any of the attorneys in Georgia –they form themselves into three things; they are either an unincorporated association, a nonprofit corporation, or a charitable trust. Generally they are not a charitable trust, it's really the other two, an unincorporated association or a nonprofit corporation.

The church that my 86–year-old mother attends, Mt Venus Baptist Church in Gay, Georgia, with about 200 members, is an unincorporated association. In that form they don't exist as with papers and documents and charters, they don't have any of that. They have a church creed which hangs up on the wall that basically says, we believe in God the Father, we believe in God the Son, we believe in God the Holy Ghost, and then it says a few other things. That really is the operating document for my mother's church.

I also represent some churches that have about 30,000 members. Those churches have chosen to be nonprofit corporations. I can tell you, I cannot imagine any of those churches who would be trusting enough of any one individual, or any one office, that they would let themselves be formed as a corporation sole. They've got to have board members, [audience applause] they have board members and ways to remove those board members, all sorts of things.

The question I think we ask as members when we're saying, would Jesus Christ be attending the meetings that Mr. Snuffer was talking about, what really would Jesus Christ be looking for the church to do? What would he be looking for the 21st century church to be doing? I submit to you that he would still be looking for the 21st [century] church to be feeding the hungry and clothing the naked [audience applause].

He also would want churches to be good stewards. If a church is taking in money from its members, and growing up Baptists we had all sorts of collections. We had the general collection, we had what was the benevolent collection which we call the Poor Saints Offering, and that means exactly what it says, it was for the *po' saints*. I think Jesus Christ would also want us to be good stewards of the money that we take in. When I am representing my clients and they come in with whatever idea they may have—they come in and they want to buy this plot of land in Dekalb County, and they want to build a senior citizen's center—the first question I say to them, is how does that

help you do what Jesus Christ would want you to do? I also say to them, do you not remember the last time you wanted to build whatever it was you wanted to build, and then as Mr. Snuffer says, all of your time was taken up administering whatever this was that you wanted to build and you didn't have time for doing the things that Jesus Christ would have us to do.

I think it's not really the form that our church has decided to operate within, I think the problem is that as we have grown larger and larger, that we somehow have forgotten what it is that Jesus Christ would have us to do. What I would say to each one of us as members, the way I define a church, it's not the church office building, it's not even the Corporation of the President of the Church, it's not the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church, but the way I define a church; **we** are the Church. If you believe that with me, that we are the Church, then we can change the Church. It may take us—I don't know exactly what that would look like, so don't come up to me afterwards and ask me, "Bryndis, what will that look like?"—but I think until we decide that we are not just so dissatisfied that we want to have symposia and talk about what the Church is not doing, but we actually want to change what the Church **is** doing, and until we, in the words of an old deacon in my mom's' church, "Until we get up off of our rusty dustys and actually get about the business of changing what the church is doing, nothing is going to change." If you are concerned, if we're concerned, that we have somehow, or that we have gotten away from what Jesus would have us to do, I submit to each one of you that it is on **you** to change that. [audience applause]

When my clients come and talk to me they're usually concerned about three things; they are concerned about taxes, they're concerned about litigation, and they're concerned about succession. Unfortunately, the world in which we operate, you cannot be a church and not worry about those things. If you start doing things that the IRS views as unrelated business income then it's going to tax you on that. If you do things that are not in keeping with good practices you are going to get sued. If you don't put forth some sort of plan for when the people who started the church are no longer here then the church is not going to continue to exist. My challenge as someone who approaches my practice as a Christian, who is wanting to help my church clients do the things that they want to do in keeping with the way Jesus Christ would have us to do those things, my advice to those clients is always based upon the premise that we've got to keep things as simple as we possibly can, but still protect ourselves from those worldly things of taxes, litigation, and succession. I am constantly amazed, and I know the people who represent the Church are probably a lot smarter than I am, but I am constantly amazed at the things that I see when I walk around my ward building that I never would approve of, or if my clients asked me about them, that I would be jumping up and down if I saw some of my clients doing those things.

One big example that leaps out to me are the ecclesiastical interviews that the bishop holds with young men and young women. If one of my church clients came to me and said that our pastor, our bishop, or apostle, whatever they want to call them—because in the Baptist church you can just kind of pick yourself a name—but whatever you want to call them, that when all of the young people turn 11 or 12 he's going to start interviewing

them, and he's going to do that in a room where it's just him and one young person by him or herself, I would be like, that's the craziest thing I've ever heard of. I would be asking them, "Are you wanting to get sued? Do you want every lawyer in every county in Georgia to be lining up at every courthouse in Georgia to be suing you every day?" Again, I think as members we owe it to ourselves to get off of Facebook, get off of Twitter, get off of Instagram, and spend some time actually looking at what our Church does and what it does not do. If there are things that we do not like, we owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our ancestors, to get up and do something about changing those things. Thank you.

[audience applause]

Brad Cramer: I want to thank the panelists again. I think that the Q&A is going to be interesting. I would like to say that as an anthropologist who spent some time studying corporations, studying churches, studying religion, and studying the LDS Church, I think that this entire discussion is circling around a really central question. Anthropological theory and other disciplines, including legal scholarship, have been trying to think critically about what a corporation is, and how to make sense in terms of the world that we live in, in terms of the social reality; what a corporation is. A question that often is neglected in this conversation, and scholars of religion love asking the question of what religion is. What is religion? It turns out it's very difficult to define, especially in a kind of anthropologically neutral way.

The question that doesn't often get asked is, what is a church? What does it mean to be a church? What *is* a church, what does that word pick out, what does it refer to? Does it refer to a building, does it refer to a membership roll, does it refer to an ecclesiastical structure, does it refer to a corporation and incorporate some sort of legal entity? What is a church, and the related question of what should a church be or what should a church be doing?

I think that among other things this panel has posed a set of important questions for us, those of us who are interested in Mormon stuff, and that is what happens when you think about these questions of what a church is, and what the LDS Church is, and whether the LDS Church even exists, Daymon? What does it mean to have the kind of history that the LDS people have had? This is something that I think especially came out in Denver's talk. Most of us instinctively think of a church as something that just coexists along a whole range of other things, of other kinds of entities, right? A church doesn't do everything, it just does church stuff, and other things do other things, like ball parks and city planning and education and farming, and what does it mean for part of its history the LDS Church did everything, was the center of everything? And how is that reflected in what David described for us in his presentation about the more recent history of the different legal entities that are collectively known as the Mormon Church.

I know we have a couple of people in line here. Let's go ahead and ask and answer some questions, and we will try to get them answered.

Audience member: Thanks, Brad. Very quickly, David, my son-in-law interned at Curtain Law Firm all three years he was at BYU Rulon Clark Law School, and did not take the job they offered him for the reasons you just said. Thank you.

I'll never try to snuff a Snuffer, thanks.

Daymon, the largest client I have worked with in the last three years is an international privately held massive corporation named Daymon International. You are a spell-binding poet, you cast a spell. Your logic was at least entertaining and for the most part, compelling. If you want a job I can get it for you Monday in New York.

But I have a question. How does the Supreme Court decision that defines a corporation as a person affect your comments? Thank you.

Daymon Smith: I think everybody heard, but the question is; how does the Supreme Court's decision, essentially declaring corporations as a person, affect my analysis or the story that I'm trying to tell? What I would say is there is a priesthood of the boys and certain people in robes have certain kinds of power that we call in linguist anthropology the ability to performatively create things. They created this thing out of their voices. It doesn't change the dynamic of imagination. By imagination I don't mean it's not real, it is real, it is definitely a real thing. Anybody who is here today knows corporations are real. They are absolutely real, but where are they? This is a question I ask my anthropology students on the first day; where do these things exist? Well they are in many places but one of the places they are in, is in our imaginations.

Things that have bodies, of course, can get into your imagination. Celebrities, maybe something you think about frequently, or some sports athlete, or something like that. Corporations in this sense have become humanized in many ways. Part of the problem is we haven't developed a framework for talking about corporations as, say, theological people. We have them as legal people but we don't have them within this framework of, how do they fit inside salvation? How do they fit inside resurrection? How do they fit inside these things that we as humans are deeply concerned about?

Part of what I was trying to say here was to say, where is the place for this thing in the bigger picture. It's one thing just to use the word Corporation as a dirty word, and sometimes people accuse me of just doing that, but I wasn't just doing that. I've never just been doing that. My reasons have always been fit inside a larger concern about humans. We have bodies. I can be tortured. I can be imprisoned. There are things that I can do as a person, that can be done to me, that can't be done to a corporation—yet. I'll try to torture them as much as I can, I suppose, but only through the voice. They're entities of the voice so they can only be addressed that way. Great question.

David Read: One way they can also be addressed is in litigation, right?

Daymon Smith: This is a peculiar genre of speaking, right?

David Read: It's a very peculiar genre of speaking, but it's a genre of speaking that's actually capable of addressing a corporation as a person, right? So if, for example, somebody wants to sue because their teenage daughter has been inappropriately interviewed by an ecclesiastical leader, do they sue the bishop? Or can they sue the corporation? They can sue the corporation, right? Could they if corporate personhood didn't exist? [muffled audience comments] I'm asking that because I don't know. Can the corporation, can the Church as an entity, be sued in the absence of corporate personhood?

Bryndis Robertson: You can sue an unincorporated association. I know with the Catholic Church, with a lot of the abuse cases, it has started breaking things down. No longer is all of the property owned by the Diocese. It's breaking the property up and putting it with the individual parishes. That is not so much to change who gets sued, as it is to change how much money is in the pot that's available to the people who sue. An unincorporated association can be sued, because a corporation sole is something I've never really worked with.

David Read: I'm not asking specifically about a corporation sole, I'm just wondering about the legal personhood.

Bryndis Robertson: If someone came to me talking about suing a church that I did not represent, if it were incorporated we would sue the corporation and we would sue the board of directors.

Mike: Corporations exist for a variety of reasons. They all revolve around this notion of ownership of real property and financial resources, and to protect the liability of the individuals who incorporate this entity.

David Read: And are managing it.

Mike: So, if we look at the corporation sole and there are this vast army of all of these corporations that have been incorporated, they all feed up to the ones at the top that are held and owned by the Corporation of the First Presidency, so I'm trying to wrap my head around the implications here. This says to me that every single piece of real property, bank deposit, and financial asset of the Church is under the direct personal ownership of Thomas S. Monson. If he chooses to write himself a personal check and liquidate 100% of all church assets and put them in his own personal account, once he deals with the IRS and the other liabilities, there's not a damn thing any one of us could do to stop it. What does that have to do with the law of common consent, which the D&C says we are required to use in all things?

Denver Snuffer: You could get a group together and you could unanimously vote out all of the leadership of the Church, and Thomas S. Monson could lock all of the chapel buildings and lock all of the temples and say, "Okay, go ahead, but I own it all." He would own everything. There would be nothing that Mormons would take ownership of

themselves but they couldn't even use the name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, because it is a mark that is owned by the Corporation of the President.

Brad Cramer: Can either the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop or the Quorum of the Twelve exercise a check there, do you have [cross talk]

Denver Snuffer: They are owned by the Corporation of the President.

[Audience comment, inaudible]

Denver Snuffer: Would not change the ownership.

Brad Cramer: Would it change who owns the property? No.

Denver Snuffer: There is one owner, there is one member, and he owns everything. It is always the senior-most member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and he owns everything. It's not subject—the words are up there, he put them on the board. It's not subject to a vote or approval by anyone.

Audience comment: Even when he is mentally incapacitated?

Denver Snuffer: If he is mentally unable to serve then it moves on to the next who is senior most.

Brad Cramer: They have auto pens to do that, to sign documents.

Denver Snuffer: Right. They never dispossess him because of the ability to keep going.

Bryndis Robertson: Which is the point I was making when I said, none of the people I know in Georgia would ever set this up, because they would never trust anybody that much.

Brad Cramer: That is a unique facet of Mormonism, right? This is a complete trust of the President of the Church?

Denver Snuffer: At the end of the day there is one Mormon, there is only one Mormon.

Daymon Smith: So it simplifies the matter of common consent considerably.

Denver Snuffer: Yes. [audience laughter and applause]

Brad Cramer: I think we have time for one quick question.

Audience comment: So if John shows up then he's the senior apostle and automatically takes them. That's not my question. I did a dissertation on corporate

diversification and all the down sides of corporate diversification seemed to be present in the LDS Church. Businesses get funded long after the market would have long shut them down. We call it corporate socialism. The managerial distraction that it takes time to run multiple businesses and so you don't have as much to donate to the core business, which presumably would be feeding the flock and all that. My question is, what would be the optimal governance form for God's church? One option would be you could break it up and say, because the question remains, who owns the meeting houses, who owns the temples, you could have stakes own the stakes, that kind of stuff. Given the situation that we're in, what would the optimal governance form be? And the other question would be, let's say we had a real Zion, and Zion was still subject to the laws of the United States, how would that be worked out? Who would own the property and such for the group?

Denver Snuffer: In the early Church everything was done through conferences. At every conference that was held someone was elected by common consent to preside at the conference. Usually if Joseph Smith was there they elected him but they could have elected anyone. If a conference invited everyone it was called a General Conference. If instead of inviting everyone, it was for a specific area, then it was some kind of local conference. They'd elect someone, then that someone would conduct the business. It would all be done by common consent and anyone that had any business could bring it up, and anyone that had any complaints or suggestions could bring it up, and if anyone needed to be disciplined they could bring it up, and the purpose of the conference was to take care of the business, to make sure that the community was cohesive, and that issues were dealt with. They even used conferences to get revelation. One of the brethren early on wanted to know whether or not he should go on a mission moving to Missouri, and so the conference was called to address the issue. Everyone discussed it, and then they took a vote by common consent and they unanimously decided on whether to go or not go or send him on a mission.

Brad Cramer: So common consent is an answer here. Anybody else want to add? Daymon?

Daymon Smith: It's important not to idealize the early Mormons. They screwed up a lot of things. If you read the meeting minutes, these are meetings most of us would want to be a part of.

Brad Cramer: Or Jesus, for that matter.

Daymon Smith: Yeah. There was a lot of people being wrung up on things that were pretty petty. Again, this is a problem where if you don't have a standard foundation that everybody agrees upon, that this is what we are supposed to abide by, if all that is completely flexible and invented on the fly, anybody can come up and bring charges against you for virtually anything they would like to bring charges against. There are a number of problems that still haven't been resolved, going back to that. But in terms of what would be the ideal form, it seems like the only form is to have no form whatsoever, to have no incorporation whatsoever, have no ownership of property. If nobody owns

anything they can sue something but that thing doesn't have anything to take. I would say that's the only way to actually do it. It doesn't seem like no matter how big and strong you are, you're ever going to be free from litigation. There's always a state which is larger, it seems like. The only way to go invisible is simply to not engage in the things that it knows are real and that's things that can be passed around, like property.

Denver Snuffer: The most enduring thing there is, is an idea. You can't tax it and you can't confine it. There's no law against it and there's no way to suppress it. The most durable thing of all is an idea. Paul on Mars Hill, giving a talk advancing an idea, is still with us and influencing us today. The Roman Empire that looked so formidable, when he gave that talk, is nothing but dust. There's only one building remaining in use from the entirety of the Roman Empire. But Paul's talk still resonates.

Brad Cramer: David and Bryndis, I think we would like to hear from you on this question too.

David Read: Before the Edmunds-Tucker act was passed, which is the act of Congress to take property from the Church, which they did.

Daymon Smith: And they disincorporated the Church.

David Read: They disincorporated the Church, and then there was a case following up that in 1890, the court case affirmed Congress, and five months later polygamy ended. But Franklin S. Richard was very involved with the courts, with Congress, and he knew that this was going to happen, and he was consulting with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, and he says this. He's trying to advise them to put all property into local wards and stakes to avoid liability so that they can not take the property. His comment is this, in 1920 he writes, "There was considerable reluctance on the part of the First Presidency and the Apostles to take the titles from the Trustee-in-trust and vest them in local corporations." The reason is, is because there would be boards of directors and there would be shared governance, and they did not want that to happen.

Brad Cramer: Bryndis.

Bryndis Robertson: I don't know with a world-wide church, if you want to have a centralized world-wide church. I don't know how you don't have some form of organization, it just simply would not work. You're trying to take something that's manmade or government made and apply it to something that's supposed to be really spiritual, and so there's not going to be any really good thing to do that. With the clients that I've represented, that have been the most successful at trying to keep their mission focused on what Jesus would have us to do, the nonprofit corporation has been the organization that has been most helpful for them with boards of directors. Now again, recognize I'm representing individual churches, not a world-wide organization. If you are talking a world-wide organization you still would have hundreds of corporations. At least in my mind, all of those hundreds of nonprofit corporations would make more sense than what we have right now.

Brad Cramer: Can we give our panelists, and Sunstone, and Lindsey, another round of applause! [audience applause]

2015.09.20 Big Cottonwood Canyon Conference

September 20, 2015

Impromptu Q&A, Salt Lake City, Utah

...They were gathered together in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, where, and it outlines the names of those who participated. This is a series of High Priests, one in each generation (because you can only have one in each generation) the total of seven generations from Adam being gathered together there in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman with the residue of the posterity who were righteous, and the Lord came and administered comfort to Adam. Adam, being filled with the Holy Ghost, gets up and he predicts all things that are going to happen to his posterity down to the latest generations of time. That's in the same section of the Doctrine and Covenants that describes the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and so on. In fact, what Joseph was doing was preparing and using the church as an incubator. The incubator was supposed to produce a product. The end product of that would literally graduate from the church, and it would be a King and a Queen, a Priest and a Priestess, the idea being that those would go off and they would establish their own kingdom. They might use "churches" to prepare and incubate their groups. But they would be fully equipped to go off and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. It never happened.

They had one dry run. The one dry run occurred in the Counsel of Fifty in a meeting in which Joseph and Emma were made a King and a Queen, a Priest and a Priestess. It was not done in a way that systematized or regularized it and therefore it got lost. In the post martyrdom era of the church what has happened is we've adopted the phraseology of "King and Queen, Priest and Priestess" and have incorporated it into a temple endowment. We've said, "There it is." It is owned by the Church and the Church administers it. When you're done with that you're supposed to be a good member of the Church, and that's it. You never do graduate.

But Joseph had turned the church over to Hyrum. He was moving on to be and do something different. Hyrum was the one who was taking over and running the church. Joseph got up and complained to the members that the members were not paying attention to Hyrum the way they ought to be paying attention to Hyrum because Hyrum had essentially taken over and was now running the thing, not him. But all of that has been lost. It never had a fulsome enough development while Joseph was still here for us to be able to reconstruct even what the objective was. We don't have the capacity to complete that process. To the extent that there is any description of that, or any vocabulary that relates to that, everyone assumes that that has been adopted and is incorporated into the Church or the ordinances of the Church.

So there is a lot of work left to be done, if the restoration is going to be completed.

We know that Joseph prophesied there would be another Adam-ondi-Ahman event. Except that one, instead of it being prospective with the history of the world yet to occur, and with it being reflected by prophecy from Adam filled with the Holy Ghost, in the next one it will be retrospective, in which what has happened returns, and keys and

accountability for what has happened are the subject matter of the future meeting in which the term "Adam-ondi-Ahman" means "Adam in the presence of Ahman", or in the presence of God. It is a description of an event. It is an occurrence. It's like BYU/UCLA football game. BYU/UCLA football game happened yesterday in the colosseum in LA, but it also happened a few years ago in the LaVell Edwards stadium in Provo and it was still the BYU/UCLA football game. The fact is that if there was a flood or some other problem you could play that football game anywhere. You could even play that in a bowl game somewhere in Louisiana; it would still be the same event. Adam-ondi-Ahman is a description of an event, and it will happen at a location that is not owned by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, because quite frankly they don't belong in that meeting and they won't belong in that meeting. When it occurs, it will occur on different criteria and on a different basis.

How you get from where you are now to the point where it would be suitable and appropriate for an event like that to even be considered is a long, long effort, because we have a restoration to complete. We have prophecies to fulfil. We have things that need to be done and we have covenants that need to be renewed.

All of that begins again in embryo at the very basic level of faith, repentance, baptism, fellowships, collecting tithing, assisting one another and acting like we are Christians, acting like we care about one another. In fact, stopping with the notion that climbing up and having authority over someone is a "good thing" and recognizing it for what it is: it's an Evil thing. No power or influence can or ought to be exercised by one man over another. The only way that you should exercise influence is by meekness and gentleness and persuasion. If you know more than I do, then enlighten me. Persuade me. Teach me, that my heart will resonate with what you have to say. But don't presume that you have the right to "call me" and afflict me and tell me that if I don't bend my knee at this particular moment then you're going to use some compulsory means in order to get from me exactly what you hope to extract from me. No one should be imposing upon anyone else.

I heard someone comment about how all these fellowships that are gathered here are remarkably diverse. That is because people are diverse. God went to the trouble of making every tree here absolutely unique. There isn't one that is like the other. There isn't a snowflake that is like another. I would venture to say that when we finally get the mechanism with which to measure and recognize we will realize there isn't an Adam that is the same. We are all humans. There is not one of you that are the same. Should a fellowship be put together with a cookie cutter that says, this is what you must do, and this is what you must not do, when in fact the needs are so diverse from one to another? There ought to be diversity. There ought to be uniqueness, there ought to be recognition of what each group has in terms of contributions and what each group has in terms of needs. It ought to be flexible enough to do that.

I was reading in the *Times and Seasons* a bunch of conference minutes of conferences that were held in the early church. This was in 1841, so we're quite a ways into the restoration at this point. They were still ordaining elders by the voice of the

congregation. In other words, there wasn't this concept of marrying together priesthood and priesthood lines of authority. The office of elder was filled pretty much the way the office of relief society president is fulfilled. "Can we all agree to support her as the next relief society president?" And we all raise our hands and she just became that. We've ordained her just by that act. Well someone set her apart. But she's already been ordained and the congregation did that. They ordained them to offices. Offices were not priesthood. We've conflated priesthood and office together in such a way that we don't even appreciate the rudiments of priestly authority. Priestly authority comes down in a line by men, but it isn't empowered until the man connects with heaven. If you go to the scriptures and you look at what I've written, I point it out. It's in there, over and over again.

The ordinations had two features, had two facets: The laying on of hands by someone that is in that tradition, and then secondly connecting to heaven and God empowering you. And so here we have this long standing tradition. There's probably not a guy here, including someone as young as 12 years old – there's probably not a male here that hasn't had someone lay hands on their head and give them some form of priesthood. The second part of that, that is connecting to heaven and having heaven animate that, is not considered necessary by those who don't understand priesthood but is considered vital by those who do, and when God is the one that completes that process.

I saw an article. The church is now building a memorial where they are claiming Peter, James and John came and restored "Melchizedek priesthood" which had to happen before the Church was organized. Except that as I point out, citing Joseph Smith's own history, his ordination to the priesthood did not happen until June of 1831, when the voice of God as Genesis chapter 14 that he translated in the Joseph Smith version, that's when then got permission to do the ordination. Peter, James and John are referred to by Joseph only – not in Section 27, that was added by a committee, that wasn't Joseph's work. All of that additional language was added by them. He refers to Peter, James and John in his letter that's in [Section] 128. There he says, Peter, James and John who came and "declared themselves as possessing the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times." I am in possession of keys to my office [Denver shows keys in his hand]. Do you have the keys to my office? Do you have the keys to my office? I declared myself as possessing the keys to my office. Oh, cool. Great for Peter. Great for James. Great for John.

I will tell you what that means, and I will tell you it only means this: It does not confer upon Joseph or Oliver authority. But it does connect them in a line of patriarchs to the fathers. If you're doing a genealogy chart and you're asking, unto whom then would Joseph have been connected? He would not be connected to Joseph Smith, Sr. Joseph Smith, Sr. if he's going to be connected in, would be connected in as a son of Joseph. That connection was not something that having been established was even appreciated during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Still isn't appreciated. There is so much more to the restoration that still has to be put on the ground that the restoration has hardly begun. Joseph laid the ground work and in order to take the very next step you have to return to the point of the beginning at which it ended. You have to gather back together

everything that happened before, in order to be able take the next step in that line. It does not matter if you're over there if the destiny is up there. Develop all you want out there, but you're never going to find yourself back into that final gathering at Adam-ondi-Ahman in which Adam will be present, and Adam will be present in the presence of Ahman, or Son Ahman, and a meeting will take place.

But there's a lot left to be done. We tend to think as soon as we've got something that that means we've got everything. And when we've got something, what we've got is something. But everything is a lot further down the road with a lot more diligence, heed, effort and study. I'm constantly amazed at our arrogance. I said it, and I don't think it's in the book but it's on the recording, I said there's absolutely nothing special about us - yet! And the fact is that there can be. There can be, if we are diligent.

All of that came out of the discussion that was going on up there. Someone said, ah, people are feeling left out, but all of that was provoked by some questions and stuff. Are there any questions that someone's wanted to ask?

Question — Comment on how disjointed or "octopoid," that is having eight separate folks vying for primacy, how disjointed the fellowships can be.

Answer – Disjointed and ill organized. The fact of the matter is that the freedom... That is not a bad thing. That is a normal thing. Try to envision yourselves as a temporary family. A temporary gathering together of members of a family. If you don't have some wonky aunts and some curious uncles, in fact maybe an uncle or two that you want to keep the kids away from. Every family has some strange folks in it. Consider the fellowships nothing more than an extension of that and try and love one another. The fact is that there are going to be those who through their behavior in fellowships are going to disqualify themselves from being able to be gathered because they are just not the kind of people that can live in peace one with another. That also is a good thing. Then there are others who come to the fellowships and their primary interest is in what they can take and what they can get. There are others who come with the only idea in their heart being what can I give, how can I serve. And even through they may not be able to give or serve much that's what's in their heart. And you all recognize that, you can all see that in people. Those are the kinds of people from which the Lord is going to gather and build Zion.

No one in Zion is going to be a threat to someone else. It can't be. It defeats the purpose of it all. To be able to live in peace with one another means that you literally are harmless to one another. The diversity in which you find yourselves and the ability to bump the corners off one another in fellowships, those are healthy, good, normal things. Hopefully they run their course and eventually result in people becoming smoother and becoming easier with one another. There are some people I admire immensely and they're tough personalities and they are difficult to deal with. And there are other people who are hard to deal with because they are too easy going and they really need to speak up more. They have more to add but they won't do it until you coax it patiently out of them. If you don't figure out that you have to coax it patiently out of them, you're

missing the treasure that this person represents. In your fellowships think of one another as members of a family and then work out your issues, because that is how you grow into being a community. You may really prize the more difficult members if you take that approach.

Question –...I know everything is orchestrated in the hand of God...This lack of family. What I'm leading to is, it's frustrating to me, but it's all meant to be, I guess. It seems to be difficult out there to find... On the front of Tim Malone's page he has... I get deluged and I'm sure he does, about ...how to meet. He gives you a link to a site. You go to it, and yes, it's got the one... Our's isn't on it. There does not seem to be a way ...to find a group.

Answer – They are working on that right now. There is work on several things. There will be a site... in which anyone worldwide who wants to be baptized can submit a request and anyone who has the ability to perform the baptism can check worldwide and if they are able to perform it they can connect up. That site will become live. It has security features built in to it, it has anonymity built into it, it has confidentiality built in to it. That's going to come live within the next two weeks.

There will be another site that is in the preliminary development stages in which you can click on a map anywhere in the world and find out if there is a fellowship anywhere in there. My suspicion is that there may be, for example, in Indiana and Ohio, people who may not live close enough to fellowship with one another face to face, but people who can get together in a conference from time to time. Eventually the numbers will grow.

There is another phase of the work that is going to launch in the next year that has nothing to do with the Mormon corridor and has everything to do with going out to try and find other people who may be interested in the Doctrine of Christ, the Restoration, and in learning about more than their typical Christian view of Joseph Smith and the Restoration and Mormonism.

Joseph Smith has been maligned by the church that claims itself to have been established by him. If you take Joseph Smith's words, if you take Joseph Smith's sermons and conversations and you stand them on one side, and then you take the [LDS] essays, they [the LDS Church] sold *Rough Stone Rolling* in Desert Book. You take the typical history that is told by the Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith was required to undergo a metamorphosis in order to make what Brigham Young claimed to have any defensible position to it. Joseph had to change. In the preface to the book that just came out [*Preserving the Restoration*] I quote from one of the fellows that worked in the Church historian's office, watching them alter the history that the Church was maintaining precisely to accommodate the claims that the Church was making. So although the *Joseph Smith Papers* have proven to be extremely useful, they are useful because the Church doesn't know what to edit out. They don't know what to change. So in their ignorance they have published things that I have extensively footnoted that demonstrate exactly what Joseph was and was working on. The restoration was not complete. The manner in which it was taken over and it was managed thereafter has

altered the view and has altered the trajectory. It has substantially altered the view that you would take of Joseph Smith and that's a project I'm taking on. We will be going out into the Christian world and doing a great deal more there to try and reintroduce Joseph Smith to the evangelicals, even the Catholics.

The Catholics have had people in their history that stood exactly in the same position as Joseph did in introducing a new religious insight. You take St. Francis and the struggles that St. Francis had. You take Martin Luther, and although Catholics hated him at the time they respect him now. You take John Wesley. You take religious reformers throughout history and Joseph Smith stacks up favorably in a comparison with any one of them. He said and he did magnificent things in the struggle to perpetuate faith. The most remarkable thing about Joseph is that he never doubted and it didn't matter how big a mess the people made of it.

Two things about Joseph that I'm hoping will become clear, (and I'm working on it): The first is, Joseph Smith never doubted, never turned back, never relented, never said, "is what I'm doing really what God wants done?" That was never the question. The doubts he had were about his ability to get others to recognize it, his ability to preach it, his ability to teach it, and his ability to get others to practice it. That was what he doubted. That is the first point.

The second point is: From the beginning, after his childhood ended, Joseph Smith's biggest enemies, his biggest opposition and his greatest detractors were those who were one-time members of the Church. Members of the Church were the ones who drove him out of Kirtland. Members of the Church were the ones who betrayed in Missouri and wound up getting them driven out of Jackson County. Members of the Church were responsible, in the Salt Sermon and in the wake of the Salt Sermon, in stirring up literally... The extermination order issued by Governor Lilburn Boggs, is a concept drawn from Sidney Rigdon's 4th of July Salt Sermon. "A war of extermination..." Sidney Rigdon preached it first. Lilburn Boggs took the Mormons at their word. In Nauvoo, if it were not for Mormons betraying Joseph Smith he would never have been martyred. A mob may have killed him, but he was surrendered to the mob by members of his own church.

Sixty days before his death he got up and he said, "You don't know me, you never knew my heart..." talking to the people that were subsequently entrusted to preserve and teach the legacy of Joseph Smith and who he was. So we have borrowed a history that has been relayed to us from people that Joseph said never knew him. One of the things about getting back to the starting point necessarily therefore is we've got to do a better job of carving our way through the fog and getting back to a point of departure, so that the work can resume.

So far as I can tell Joseph Smith greatly respected women, in what he said, and what he taught, and how he taught it. I know all the arguments. I've read all the histories. I've read what the people say. I've read what the accusations are. The fact of the matter is that they are not accurate. The histories that they are based upon and much of the

information was ginned up in consequence of litigation, in which Joseph F. Smith went around gathering affidavits in the two affidavit books from which we draw most of the information to redefine what Joseph Smith was doing in Nauvoo and earlier with plural marriage.

Plural marriage was denounced by him as an abomination. He got up and said before a crowd, "I hear all the time that I have wives, I've got seven wives. I'm looking out in the audience and can only see one." (Meaning Emma.) If you read the letters that Joseph sent to Emma and you read the letters that Emma sent back to Joseph, and they are preserved in the correspondence and the documents of the Joseph Smith History, you realize that those two, whatever else was going on around them, those two were in love with one another. Joseph relied on her, respected her, and she loved him. They had a fabulous relationship between the two of them. I don't care what *In Sacred Loneliness* wants to portray otherwise. A fair reading of Joseph's life was that he was a man who was faithful to his wife.

I'm off on a tangent now. Was there something else we ought to talk about?

Question - I've been hearing of some other groups and even some of the people in the group I meet with. They talk about receiving revelations that it's time to flee Babylon and prepare a place of refuge. So people are actually leaving their jobs, selling their homes, buying up remote properties, and deciding to live together and live the law of consecration. As I've prayed and fasted about this I've felt concerned about that, I don't know we're anywhere near that. So the question is: Does the Lord actually want us to do physically something to prepare or is it all spiritual preparation at this point? Are we anywhere near the law of consecration?

Answer - I don't think it is useful for people to argue over the revelations that they have received in contrast to the revelations someone else has received. I think that we should give allowances for the possibility that someone has received for themselves some communication that for themselves they ought to act on. Therefore, I don't want to be dismissive of someone's revelation that says they ought to be doing something. But, I was reading out loud to my wife's amusement, a letter written in 1841 by Wilford Woodruff in England in which he was writing back back to the saints in Nauvoo about how obvious it was that we are right now at the end of all time. The poverty in England that he was seeing, and the abuse of people, the great pollutions that were on the land, and all of the signs, the cholera that was going on in India, the earthquakes that they read about from South America; it's really clear that we are now at the culmination of the final distress, and that God is coming soon. The plagues have been opened, the angels have been released, and the end is upon us. That was, I think it was in the March edition of the *Times and Seasons* for 1841.

The apostle Paul writes about the times of distress are upon us. Everyone in every generation sees that.

Here's the reality: In order for the entire earth not to be smitten and utterly wasted at the Lord's return it will be necessary for there to be a Zion. In fact, it's almost a cause and

effect. You have to have the reestablishment of what was in the beginning of the world in the end of the world also. That was a prophecy of Adam. He made it in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Enoch was the one that preserves it, so it appears in the Enoch portion of the Book of Moses, where Enoch preserves Adam's prophecy that that same priesthood which was in the beginning of the world shall at the end of the world be also. I have to tell you, that's not your senior chief apostolic high and holy pontificate of the ninth order, it's not that at all. It is reestablishing something about which we know very, very little and that has to occur only within an environment that has been insulated from the world and accepted by God. It has to be physically accepted by the Lord. That edifice has to be located in the place that is approved by the Lord. We don't know the place, we haven't built the edifice, we don't have the right to proceed, but all of this must occur before the invitation is extended. Because God is not going to come to a planet that He utterly wastes at His coming. An invitation has to precede the return of our Lord, and that invitation needs to be done in His way, at a place of His choosing, in a manner that He ordains, that occurs according to His will; established as a consequence of Him returning what was once here back to the earth again.

People are wildly enthusiastic about a lot of things and I don't deny the possibility that their enthusiasm can be based upon something that is authentic, God talking to them. But as for wrapping up of the creation and the culmination of the ages, God's direct involvement in that and the impressive nature of how that will roll forward, will not be some people deciding to flee and go farm somewhere. It's going to be a little bit different kind of enterprise, culminating in a city of righteousness and a people of righteousness, and in that sense, righteousness includes a great deal of knowledge. The glory of God is intelligence or in other words light and truth. Knowledge and redemption, all of that go together.

I don't talk about any of the revelations or visitations I've received except to say they have happened. I will tell you, they have happened. The Lord in His wisdom... I did a little post on Nephi and constraining him, and how smart I thought that was in the long run. The Lord in His wisdom has asked that I talk using the scriptures and the things put on the ground by Joseph Smith and not anything else. I think that's an important thing to do.

Until we have first remembered and straightened out what it was that came to us through Joseph, we have no business going out and starting another experimentation. I've used this analogy and some of you have heard it and I apologize to those that have heard it, but I'm going to use it again. Edison tried iron, he tried copper, he tried aluminum. He tried a number of elements, all of which failed, until he finally used carbon as the filament and then he got light.

Joseph Smith proceeded with the restoration as a come-as-you-are party. He believed that with the right kind of preaching you could take any people, convert them and turn them into Zion. There's some reason to suspect that's a possibility, because of what we learn about Melchizedek in the book of Mosiah, in which [Melchizedek's] preaching resulted in people repenting from their wickedness and becoming righteous. So it's not

an irrational thought, it's not an non-scriptural thought, because Joseph had translated the book of Mosiah and would be familiar with that. My conclusion however is that there's no reason to try iron if Edison tried it and it didn't work and there's no reason to try copper if Edison tried it and it didn't work. There is no reason to expect that you can take people and gather them and then try to produce Zion. It makes a whole lot more sense, as the scriptures seem to indicate, that first people are taught repentance and then some few repent. Then they are gathered, one of city, two of a family. Then they are gathered, and they are gathered by those who are the angels to whom the keys are entrusted to do that gathering. Then you put them together.

We know what Joseph tried to do, failed. He did not produce Zion. Brigham Young doubled down on the model that he assumed Joseph was putting on the ground, and in doubling down on that model he didn't produce Zion. We didn't get it in Kirtland, we didn't get it in Missouri, we didn't get it in Nauvoo and we sure as hell don't have it in Salt Lake City. Therefore, there is no reason for us to try and repeat exactly the same thing. It's time to try something new, something other, something different.

I'm getting the signal from the one running the show it's time to wrap this up. I wish I could have been with you here, it would have been more fun than some of the things I was doing. I'm pleased to see everyone who is here and to renew acquaintances with a number of you folks, some of whom I know came some distance in order to be here. God bless you all. God's hand is moving again. This is going somewhere. It will eventually culminate in the fulfillment of the prophecies. The trouble is whether we do it or whether it is left for another generation depends on what we do. I don't think religious enthusiasm or religious fanaticism produces it. It's kindness to one another. It's taking seriously the things that God asked us to do and then in a meaningful way being self sacrificing and trying to help and lift other people. Because at the end of the day, Christ summarized all the law and all the prophets in loving God and loving your fellow man, which goes back to the question that Lewis asked about all you quirky people liking one another. Well, that's the challenge. If you want to see Zion get a little closer, then love one another.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2015.11.22 Mormon History

Fireside Talk
November 22, 2015
Bountiful, Utah

I want to thank Tony [Gilbert] for the opportunity to get together and do this. Tony and I were talking and I said there's something I want to talk about and he suggested this, and I was glad to respond. I wish all Mormons (Latter-day Saints and otherwise), I wish all Mormons were Tony. He is a man of convictions, but a man with a broad mind. He's reflective, he's contemplative and he's tolerant. If all men were like Tony Gilbert, we would have a lot fewer problems between all of ourselves. It's just the right kind of attitude that I see in him continuously.

I want to talk about Mormon History. I want to redefine some terms in order to get the problem of Mormon history into a position that you can understand some concepts. I'm going to use terms but I'm going to define the terms so you understand how I'm using them.

I'm not talking about any anti-Mormons. All of the stuff that the anti-Mormons have written is in a different category. If you go back to the very beginning and the first anti-Mormon stuff, Philastus Hurlbut was gathering a bunch of affidavits together to try and discredit Joseph Smith. His [Hurlbut's] works and his affidavits got gathered together by E.D. Howe and published in an early anti-Mormon book, first one *Mormonism Unveiled*. Ezra Booth wrote a series of nine letters. He was actually a member of the Church. He was one of those who in June of 1831 was among the first 23 who got ordained to the high priesthood in Kirtland. And then he turned on Joseph and he wrote a series of nine letters that were blasting him. It does not appear that what Ezra Booth did in his letters was intended to lie. He thought the truth as he understood it, he thought the truth was bad enough that if you just said what he saw, what he heard, and what he thought that that would be enough to undermine confidence in Joseph Smith. The problem is that his attitude was viral.

If you are trying to evaluate what Joseph Smith was saying and doing, you have to say, what was Joseph Smith meaning? For the interpretation of what Joseph Smith was meaning you don't get to stand back at arm's length and say, "I impute this." "I take what you're doing to mean this..." "I want to color what you have to say by this." You have to say, "None of my attitude or my disposition matters one iota. Joseph, tell us what you mean. Joseph, explain yourself. Joseph, account for your sayings. Joseph, what do you mean by that?"

You can't stand back and say, "Joseph, you said **this** here, and you said **that** there, and those two are irreconcilable. Therefore, Joseph, you are a liar!" You have to say, "Joseph, you said this here, and you said this there. What do you mean by that?" And let him explain it. Because if all you're going to do is to throw rocks you can say, "On Tuesday you said the sun was shining! And on Wednesday you said it was raining. It

can't be both sunshine and rain! You're a liar." That's the problem with a great deal of the anti-Mormon stuff. If you're going to look at the anti-Mormon source material what you have to do is to say, I'm going to take their coloring. I'm going to take their bias, and I'm going to try and wade through that to find out what was really going on in the process.

But I'm not going to talk about those people today. I want to talk about people who believe. People whose religion is Mormonism. People who, despite radically different viewpoints view their religion as the religion of Mormonism, who accept the Book of Mormon as true, who believe that Joseph Smith was, in fact, a prophet. Because if you say, only look at those people you still have enormous conflict and enormous disagreement. I want to account for that. I want to try and get my hands around that so that maybe we can all take one step back from Mormon history and say, okay, now I get why we have such a tumult of opinion and strife and contentions among ourselves.

I want to define the term "apologists" as those people who have written the story that we all have accepted as the orthodox story that gave rise to and accounts for the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That includes, most notably, B.H. Roberts. B.H. Roberts was involved in the gathering of the *Documentary History of the Church*. He is the one who wrote the serialized *Comprehensive History of the Church*. He wrote the *Comprehensive History of the Church* as a series of magazine articles that got published in the East. Then they got gathered together and published in the seven volumes of the *Comprehensive History*. He's one of the folks that is primarily responsible for the apologetic history.

When I was baptized into the LDS Church I was handed a book that was written by William Berrett. I don't know how many of you remember William Berrett, but he wrote a book in one volume called *The Restored Church*. It was one of those glossy paged things with color photos in it. I read it cover to cover as the first introduction. It was used in the Seminary and Institute programs. I checked; you can still find it on Amazon if you're looking for one. After reading Berrett's *Restored Church* I bought and I read B.H. Robert's *Comprehensive History*. I bought and I read *The Documentary History of the Church*. I did that in the first year.

Joseph Fielding Smith wrote a book called, *Essentials in Church History*. George Q. Cannon wrote, *The Life of Joseph Smith*. There are a series of others who are part of what I'm going to define as the apologists, including John A. Widtsoe, Glen Leonard, Thomas Alexander. Organizations sprung up to try and support the apologetic view of the Church and that includes FARMS and it now includes FAIR. As part of FAIR it includes the *Mormon Interpreter*. If you want to know what I'm defining as "apologists", it's that group of people and the narrative and the story that they want to tell.

I'm going to define another term. These are people that I'm calling the "anti-apologists". This includes people that are very friendly and very widely accepted, like Richard Bushman. It would include D. Michael Quinn. It would include Juanita Brooks, Gregory Prince, Mark Staker, and Terryl Givens. What I'm referring to as anti-apologists are

people who are accepting of the history of Mormonism but who are saying that the apologists are not complete. They're not trying to pick a fight with or undermine the Church. What they're trying to do is to say that the story that has been told by these people are not complete enough so that we want to tell a different – and we believe more complete – story.

These people do have motives. For example, Richard Bushman. He was the Columbia University History Chair. His intellectual ability to defend Mormonism to other historical critics provoked him into saying, "We can do a better job and we can be more fair." What he was trying to do was give full disclosure.

In the case of D. Michael Quinn, he still defines himself as a Mormon. He's no longer a member of the Church but if you ask him what his religion is, it's Mormonism. In some cases I believe that Michael Quinn's motivation was he was hurting. He learned things. He felt bad about what he learned. He felt cheated or robbed, and he was lashing out to try and say, "Yes, but..." He was venting on the Church. You have to realize that after D. Michael Quinn's work was done there isn't a single historical writer of Mormonism, Rex Bushman or the late apologists that I've mentioned, that don't go to Michael Quinn and the source material that Michael Quinn uncovered, because he worked in the LDS Church History Library. He had access to diaries and journals. He made copies of original source material that would not otherwise be available for anyone to see. When he finished with some of the work that he was doing he donated that material to Yale University Library so that it wouldn't be lost. Someone went back to Yale University Library and took copies of the material that was back there, typeset it, and rolled out some limited edition books that made available, for the very first time, a bunch of diaries that Michael Quinn had read, and a bunch of journals and a bunch of other source material that had not been previously available.

At the same time that these people are doing their work, there were sources for Church history, Mormon history, that were not previously available, such as *The Joseph Smith Papers* that have been coming out recently. Probably every one of you here own, if not all of them, some of them. A work was done to go back and to find all of the discourses that were ever given by Brigham Young. You can take the *Discourses of Brigham Young* that were drawn out of the *Journal of Discourses* and you can hold it in one book. It is standard book size. It has large print. That's the complete discourses of Brigham Young, until Richard Van Wagoner went out and searched for and found source material. In fairness there were some shorthand transcriptions of Brigham Young's talks that had never been translated from shorthand into English that took a big project to get that done. The *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* is now a five volume set. They are very large volumes. They are oversize books. They are small print. They are double column. There are 3,260 pages of small print. Someone had gone to the trouble of trying to find all of what Brigham Young had said. They had searched for and they got into one set, 1,100 entries of Brigham Young addresses. This five volume set that became available in 1999 has 4,400 entries, many of which have not been seen previously. If you're trying to understand who Brigham Young was, and you've read

anything that was written before 1999, you're only looking at a tiny fraction of what is now available to understand or see what Brigham Young was all about.

This was a set of books that no one thought would be commercial. Only 350 copies of it were ever made. It was intended that libraries buy them – Yale University, Brigham Young University, University of Chicago, California – big libraries, people that were interested in theology or history. I bought a set when it first came out. They're still around but they're really quite expensive if you're going to find one now.

There was an effort made to gather together and put into typeset the Wilford Woodruff journals. That is a ten volume set, and that ten volume set has been out of print for over 25 years, but they're still out there. They were put into print and you can find them still if you're willing to be patient and you're willing to spend enough money to get a copy. The Wilford Woodruff journal is one of the primary sources from which all of the historians drew and reached the conclusions that they reached.

The *Times and Seasons* were put into print. They are a seven volume set. All of the newspapers throughout the entire period of the publication, from 1840 to 1847, are in the *Times and Seasons* print edition.

I approached Mormon History like it mattered. I thought that what the religion was based upon at its final analysis, was a revelation by Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith, and that Joseph Smith, called as he was by God to do a work – and I still believe this – had some very important things to contribute. As I went through all of the works of the apologists and I ran out of anything they had to say, and then I looked at the work of the anti-apologists, one of the things that occurred to me as I read the anti-apologists was that they not only succeeded in persuading me that what the apologists had done was incomplete and in some instances unfair, but they aroused in me the suspicion that these guys were probably incomplete equally and unfair perhaps more so, because some of them were smarting from the sting of having realized that stories that had been told and retold were really nothing more than fiction. If the religion matters then the truth of the religion matters all the more. After getting through all of those what occurred to me was it's really necessary to go back and look at the original material and to look at what the sources are. I don't expect people to do this and I don't expect people who don't have an interest in it to ever take the trouble of even finding these things. But I care about it and I'm interested in it, and I wanted to try to get to the bottom of it.

One of the fascinating things about the history is that all of these people tell the history like there's a plot line. There's a story to what's going on. They tell the story like: I'm leaving this house and I'm headed triumphantly out to the Interstate. With angels accompanying me I will go down south on Interstate 15 and, inspired by God, I will turn at 106th and I will head eastward towards the rising sun, towards Jerusalem, yea in the direction the Lord Himself shall one day return, until I arrive safely and happily at my destination. And they tell that story and we have a lot of confidence in that story. But when you read the journals of the people who lived the history what you realize is that when they left here they were headed to Brigham City, and they ran into a bunch of

orange barrels. Swearing impatiently they took a southern route because they never imagined that they were going to have to head to the south. Then, through a series of happenstances and collisions and car trouble and flat tires and a search on your iPhone that locates the nearest place that will tow you to replace your flat tire, you exit at 106th. Then, through a series of pathetic acts of charity, someone houses me on the east side of Sandy, bruised and beaten, exhausted, and with my car in the shop. And that's a very different story. When you read the journals what you realize is that these people's understanding of what was going to happen and what was underway is just like that. They don't have a clue. They lived their life like you live your life. You have your hopes, you have your desires, you have your fears, you have your uncertainties. Sometime you tailor your hopes to reflect the sad realities of what's going on, and then you adjust, and you adjust, and you adjust.

I got to the point where I'm reading all of the contemporaneous events. I got to the point I was reading the diaries and the journals. Because I have read all of what the apologists have to say, and all of the anti-apologists reply an expansion on that, I can read the diaries and the journals and fit them into a story that is already out there.

When I read the secretary to the First Presidency's minutes about the meetings where they're struggling over trying to get statehood and they're grappling with the opposition that they're getting in Congress and the federal court system over the practice of plural marriage, I already know what the story is going to turn out like. What's new and interesting and vibrant is how they're reacting as these events are underway, and what their intentions are. How they hoped it would turn out otherwise. What they planned and schemed and agreed and conspired to lie about in order to try and trick the government into allowing us to become a state so that on the other side of statehood, knowing that family law is a state law issue and not a federal law issue (boy, did that change recently), they would be able to do whatever they wanted to do in the structure of family life and there's not a thing that the federal government could do about it. But the federal government perceived that they were lying about it, and so they made adjustments in the constitution for the state of Utah, and so everything folds out the way that it folds out.

Given the fact that everyone whose writing has an agenda, the question that occurred to me is, if I'm going to try and understand history of the restoration and God's involvement in us, how do you find the framework from which to reconstruct what God did? Not what men wanted or men hoped for. Not what men were thinking at the time. Not what men took advantage of because of opportunities that presented themselves. The question is, in my way of thinking, what was God up to? Did God have a plan and if so, where might that plan be found?

As it turns out, not only is the Book of Mormon filled with commentary about what was going to happen at the time the Book of Mormon rolled forth but the prophecies of Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants likewise contain an entire library of material saying, this is what God says he would do if, but then, if not, this is what God

would do. And so, no matter how much I may have wished for it to turn out otherwise, no matter how much I may be rooting for a different story, the question that I posed to myself was: If these prophecies mean what they say, what then does the Mormon history look like? Because it's going to have a whole lot more faith than what the anti-apologists give to it, but it's not going to be as pleasant, as flattering, or as self confident as what the apologists are going to say it looks like. In an effort to try and put it together in a way that made sense and harmonized – not with what men wanted or hoped or what they wanted to kick around but what the prophecies say would be happening in the last days, including what Christ himself said to the Nephites in the 16th chapter of Third Nephi. It turns out you can write a new history of what has happened with the restoration in Mormon history and you can reach conclusions that will fly in the face of what the apologists and the anti-apologists say. It is, in my view, just as faith promoting, just as glorious, just as triumphant, as the greatest story spun by the apologists, but it has a completely different look and feel.

If you're going to jump into Mormon history one of the things that frustrates me to no end are the many people who claim to be faithful believing Latter-day Saints, who accept Joseph Smith as the prophet of the restoration, but believe that Joseph Smith is a liar, who believe that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who believe that Joseph Smith said one thing in public and another thing in private, and believe that a prophet of god can do that and can get away with that.

In April of 1838, the high council at Far West held a trial in which Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated. Nine charges were brought against him, seven of them were sustained. One of the charges brought against Oliver Cowdery was that he was defaming the prophet Joseph Smith by accusing him of committing adultery. Joseph Smith testified in court. He was examined on the issue. Oliver Cowdery was questioned by Joseph Smith in the Church court and Oliver Cowdery backed off of those charges during the trial. One of the reasons why Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the Church was because it was found that he lied about the prophet Joseph Smith. This is in April.

A series of crises were underway and a lot of the Church leaders were losing their fidelity to Joseph and their willingness to participate in the Church. A series of excommunications took place including the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Church historian. The Church historian was John Whitmer, brother of David Whitmer, who himself was one of the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, his brother one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He had been given the commission to write the history of the Church and he had been writing it since 1831, but he left after he was excommunicated and he took the history with him. When he took the history with him, Joseph Smith began the process of rebuilding the history of the Church.

The history of the Church written in 1838 was written by Joseph in an attempt to make up for what had been stolen from the Church by its historian, John Whitmer.

I want you to listen to these words in the context of 1838 and what had been going on, including the trial and excommunication of Oliver Cowdery.

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history.

Joseph isn't writing a response to what went on when he was a child in 1820, having the First Vision and the persecution that occurred then. He's rewriting the history to defend the Church in 1838 against members of the Church's own leadership ranks that left the Church and would subsequently testify the next year against him in legal proceedings that were conducted in Richmond, Missouri, in which he was under trial for his life.

Remember that Oliver Cowdery had been on trial for his membership because he had, among other things, attributed to Joseph immorality. Keep that in mind when you read Joseph's words in his history written a few months later, that in making a confession of his own sins: ..."No one need suppose [him] guilty of any great or malignant sins. [For] a disposition to commit such was never in my [character]." (JS-H 1:28.) Joseph Smith, after the accusation that he is an adulterer, says: "I never had the disposition to commit great or malignant sins. That was never in my heart."

What was it that Oliver was talking about? Oliver characterized it as "a dirty, filthy affair." We hear the word "affair" and today we put that into a certain context meaning immorality, gross immorality. He was talking about the relationship between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger. Fanny Alger is someone that if you haven't encountered you will encounter. All you have to do is go online and look for Joseph Smith being blasted for his gross immorality and the first woman with whom Joseph Smith purportedly had "immoral relations" was Fanny Alger. When you study all the history and you look at all the source material, here is the material that you will find that deals with Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger: William McLellen, a former apostle, excommunicated from the Church in the 1880s, wrote a letter to Joseph Smith III, son of Emma Smith, in which William McLellen said that he spoke with Emma Smith. Emma Smith told him, William McLellen, that she witnessed the whole TRANSACTION (all in capital letters) in the barn!!! in his letter to Joseph Smith III.

Okay, that sounds salacious. It really reads – those exclamation points probably mean something, and "transaction", is that a code word for something immoral and unseemly, and you're trying to convey that but you're using the word "transaction"? What do you mean by that? William McLellen, repeating what he says Emma told him before her death, written three decades after the discussion, put into a letter written to Joseph Smith III. That's one source. The second source is Mosiah Hancock, the son of Levi Hancock, wrote (I think this account was written after 1900). Mosiah Hancock wrote that his father, Levi Hancock, told him, Mosiah Hancock, that he, Levi Hancock, had

performed a wedding ceremony in the barn in which Joseph was sealed to Fanny Alger, Joseph telling Levi the words to use and Levi repeating the words, which would be "the transaction" (with three exclamation points) that Emma witnessed through the door of the barn.

Fanny Alger would subsequently marry a man and would bear nine children. Between Joseph and Emma they had eight children. Between Joseph and Fanny Alger there were no offspring produced. Joseph Smith claimed to have been a virtuous man after the allegations in 1838 involving Fanny Alger, saying that he had never committed any grave or malignant sins. The problem I have with the anti-apologists, and I now have with the apologists, because the apologists have to include the institution of the Church itself, is that they are saying that Joseph Smith was someone other than who I believe Joseph Smith was.

While he was confined in the Liberty Jail, the Lord said to Joseph, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage after thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings (constantly) from under thy hand. And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors."

This presents another level of uncertainty about Mormon history because wise and noble people are going to look to Joseph as a source of blessings, not to Joseph as someone to excuse and cover over my own sins. Joseph Smith stood up in Nauvoo about sixty days before his death and said to the people that would inherit all of his legacy, and who would own the history, and who would manage the restoration following him, Joseph Smith said to them on that day: "You don't know me. You never knew me. No man knows my history. If I had not lived it I wouldn't have believed it myself."

The people who don't believe in Joseph's virtue inherited the restoration that came through him. Now in reconstructing the history they're doing things with it that I would suggest you go back all the way to the source material if you're really interested. I include in the anti-apologists Brian Hales, because Brian Hales has the view that the Church has never done an adequate enough job of reconstructing Joseph Smith's polygamy and, sure enough, the three volume set that he has written is called, *Joseph Smith's History*. If you ignore the editorial conclusions and you look at the source material that he's gathered; one of the sources that he looks to to try and prove that Joseph Smith had marital relations, that is sex, with other women, is a quote from Eliza Snow in which she doesn't answer the question. Eliza Snow says, "If you have to ask the question then you don't know Joseph very well." If I think that Joseph Smith is an adulterer and I hear her say, "Well, if you have to ask the question, then you didn't know Joseph very well," and I reach one conclusion. But if I think Joseph was a virtuous man and I see Eliza Snow saying, "If you have to ask the question, you didn't know Joseph at all," I reach a different conclusion. She did not answer yes or no. She left you to put whatever is in your heart onto the table of the restoration.

The fact of the matter is that you could go into issue after issue. You can go into question after question. If you go back and you read the material and you say, okay, let's take everything that has been written about Mormon history and let's erase all of it in terms of interpretation, and let's go back to the First Vision and the visitation by the angel Moroni. Let's say, if God had a work for Joseph Smith to do then let's try and figure out exactly what the work was that God entrusted to Joseph to accomplish. I don't care what happened after he handed it off. I don't care what happened after he died. I don't care what happened with really well intentioned people. The question is: what was the work that God had Joseph do? And if you confine it to that and you draw a line at that point and you say, everything that happens thereafter cannot help me in interpreting what went on. When the picture that emerges of Joseph Smith takes a very different look and feel than the picture that emerges of Joseph Smith when you start gathering affidavits in order to win a lawsuit over property in the 1860s. A very different picture than the image of Joseph Smith that emerges when the Mormon reformation gets underway.

A very different picture emerges than the one that comes out after 1852 when what will become D&C Section 132 is first made public. Actually, it's the teaching. The revelation itself wasn't made public for another decade or so after that. When the actual document does get made public that is now Section 132 it isn't in Joseph's handwriting. It wasn't in Joseph's scribe's handwriting. It's in the handwriting of a fellow, Joseph Kingston, that wasn't one of Joseph's clerks at the time.

Mormonism is true but it is possible for people to believe in Mormonism and have a whole bundle of ideas in their head that I don't share with them. The difference between the views that I have of Mormonism and the views that that person has of Mormonism can largely be accounted for based upon how much study, effort, review, thoughtfulness, has gone into where they are and where I am. The effort to uncover the story of the restoration is still left undone, it's still incomplete. I have been working as diligently as I can in every spare minute that I have, and I have to tell you, there's still a monumental pile of material yet to be reviewed before I get to the end of what's out there. I work full time for a living. I don't have the luxury of doing this as a profession; I do it as a hobby. These things are expensive to acquire and require months to review and get through and find. But let me tell you, the search is worth it.

No matter how shallow the pool is that you've drunk out of in trying to figure out what the history of Mormonism is, let me assure you that if you uncover a question there is an answer to your question. There is something out there that will give you the truth of the matter. I get so tired of reading these silly, inane anti-Mormon rants like that Grant Palmer book: *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* is silly. It's trite. That letter to the CES thing that has caused a crisis? I read it and I laugh out loud at how superficially silly it is. In my view there is a great work left to be done, and I have to stay focused on some things that are important, some things that still never got completed in Joseph's day that got promised would be completed at some point. We may yet see the restoration take on a power and a glory that it hardly attained to at the beginning. The easiest way to hijack that is to spend all of your time dealing with refuting arguments

about our history. I have given up any ambition of either refuting critics or refuting my own critics. The only thing I'm interested in doing is trying to at last state truthfully, based upon the work that God had Joseph do, what it was that God accomplished through him. Historians can go back and take everything I've written and they can fill in all the gaps, and they can defend everything I've written. I'm going to keep pressing on and I'm going to keep plowing new ground in order to try and construct what it was the restoration was intended to accomplish.

I would encourage every one of you to take seriously the restoration of the gospel. I would encourage every one of you to realize that Joseph Smith was exactly what he said he was and probably a whole lot more than he was ever willing to disclose.

When the endowment was rolling out in the red brick store Joseph Smith didn't have three angels named Peter, James, and John, he had two angels, and he didn't put a name to those two angels. But he had two because there's two witnesses required. Changing it to three and identifying them as Peter, James, and John was an innovation of Brigham Young, adopted to the temple ceremonies in order to reinforce the primacy of the Quorum of the Twelve as the leadership of the Church but it wasn't there to begin with.

In the endowment, the temple ceremonies, Joseph Smith constructed in a ceremony in a ritual form the idea of beginning a walk back in which you encountered sentinels along the way and you demonstrated by the life you had lived that you were in possession of certain standards of conduct so that eventually you could arrive at the point where you were able to converse with the Lord through the veil. And then, having proven yourself true and faithful in all things, you were permitted to enter into the presence of the Lord.

That ceremony has been tinkered with. There's been a lot that happened during Brigham Young's time. There's been a lot that happened since it got written down in 1876. The first revisions got done during the Smoot hearings in Washington, DC in order to conform the ceremony to the testimony that was given by the Church president at the time, and the first changes are in the handwriting of Joseph F. Smith. I'll leave it there. The ceremony has been altered but the theme of the ceremony has remained the same. What Joseph Smith did was he lived that journey. He accomplished that walk. He made that pathway back to conversing with the Lord through the veil and then entering into the Lord's presence. He encountered those that were opposed to the walk. He encountered those that were encouraging of the walk. If you want to know where the idea for the temple ceremony in the form that Joseph established it came from, all you have to do is read his letter when he was in exile:

And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony,

Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county... And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places... And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:19-21.)

That was what Joseph Smith lived. That was what he described the restoration as having included. That was what he attempted to turn into a ritual to be housed in the temple so that everyone in the ceremony could experience the same kind of angelic ministration coming and talking to you and giving to you the obligation to live a higher life and then a higher life still, and then yet another higher standard of conduct, until at last you're purified sufficiently to come and embrace the Lord through the veil, and upon embracing Him through the veil receive from Him, not a name but a seven-fold blessing that stretches from time into eternity.

Any of you who have been through the temple will realize that what goes on there is something that is very other-worldly, very foreign, very strange, very unusual. We don't typically see that level of ritual in the Mormon religion that's really relatively informal. But in the temple it gets quite formal. It's because that was the process by which Joseph Smith learned about what went on throughout history.

Do you really believe that God would trust into the hands of a wicked man, a liar, and a deceiver, the restoration of the gospel for the salvation of every one that would live in the world thereafter? I feel like it's silly that you have to defend the character of Joseph Smith to Mormons. But given the latest essays that have been published by the most successful Church that claims him as their founder, I find that the ridiculous is necessary.

Joseph Smith was a good man. Joseph Smith was a far better man than most of you think he was. Joseph Smith was true and faithful to everything that had been entrusted to his care. His greatest mistakes were trusting other people that deceived him, that lied to him, that misled him, that engaged in misconduct behind his back. Time and time again the people who betrayed Joseph, as soon as they were found out, blamed Joseph for what they were doing. Time and time again, the testimony of Samson Averd in the court in Richmond, Missouri, when he testified against Joseph, he was the one that went out and lead the mobs. He was the one that destroyed the property that belonged to the Missourians. He was the one who engaged in darkness and assault and murder with his band called the Danites. But when he testified in Richmond he said "Joseph did it, Joseph lead this. Joseph conspired to do this."

When John Bennett was caught committing adultery, practicing a system that involved adulterous relationships with other married women and he was caught and discredited,

he immediately published a book saying that all of that he learned from Joseph. Joseph did it. But if you go to the talks of Joseph Smith consistently he denounced that kind of conduct. When you go to the words of Joseph Smith and you look at what happened in Missouri, consistently he sued for peace. When you go to the public talks and you go to the high council minutes of the Church courts that were held in Nauvoo, to find out and to deal with inappropriate misconduct by church members including adulterous relationships, Joseph Smith was the one who was the accuser. Joseph Smith was the one who brought them to the court. Joseph Smith was the one looking to find it, denouncing it, and standing against it. And yet, after he dies, Joseph Smith then becomes responsible for the practice of plural marriage in a way that he denounced while he was living.

Brigham Young got a testimony of plural wives while he was a missionary in England. Wilford Woodruff got a testimony of plural wives while he was in England. Snow got a testimony that it was true, and if Joseph's dead and you get to run the Church and you already know something is true and you're not quite sure whether anyone will accept an innovation from you, but you know that they honor the dead martyr, well, don't trust historians. Trust the people that lived it. Trust the scriptures. The best entries are the entries that were made on the day that the talk was given, the conversation was held, or the thing was witnessed. Unfortunately one of those people who was in an ideal position to contribute a lot, William Clayton, had a double set of books and we don't know which set was right and which set was altered, and how reliable he was. So when you're reading William Clayton's journals you've got to take into account the fact that Joseph was dead a lot longer than he was alive when William Clayton was working for the hierarchy, and he fell in line with Brigham Young and those that inherited the Church after the death of Joseph.

I haven't said for many years that the Church is true but I have said, and I say again, the Gospel is true, the restoration is true, Joseph was what he claimed to be and probably a lot more. And, if you stumble into questions in LDS Church history that raise some doubts in your mind about the restoration itself, trust me. If you'll just study the matter out and take the time to look into it, you're going to find an answer. Very often those answers are quite glorious, glorious beyond anything that you could imagine. If anything, Joseph Smith understated what he did. That list I read you, which is found in D&C Section 128, doesn't tell you what "divers angels from Adam or Michael down to the present," who claim and declared the keys, the rights, the honors, doesn't tell you what was involved there. Joseph Smith left out more than he put on the table.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that Joseph had a work to do and he did it. It was the introduction for something far more glorious that God is still going to do. It will include the establishment of Zion. It's going to happen. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2016.04.10 Zion Will Come

Regional Conference Talk

10 April, 2016

Rockland (Near Moab), Utah

I want to thank those that organized this for the invitation to come. I want to thank the landowners for allowing this to take place on their property, and I want to thank you participants for coming down and spending the time here to be present. I also want to thank Brian [Bowler] for imposing on me and requesting that I come and speak. Let me see if I can do something to add to what has and is going on.

The Savior is extraordinarily positive, and when He speaks negatively it's at those moments that I want to pay particular attention and give some careful consideration.

One of spots in which, in 3rd Nephi, in His visit with the Nephites at Bountiful, He spoke quite negatively, He attributed the content of His pessimistic prophecy to the Father, and noted that the reason why He was stating it was because the Father had told Him to. This is in 3 Nephi chapter 16, verse 10:

"And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you:" is how He prefaces His direful assessment of the latter-day gentiles. *"At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts."* Then He goes on from there: *" . [A]nd shall reject... Behold, saith the Father,"* this is Christ attributing what the Father has told Him as the source for His message, *"I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them."*

In that list we all can make a self-assessment about a variety of things but the fact that He included within the list of the defects of the last day gentiles, the word "priestcrafts" ought to alarm every one of us. "Priestcraft", when it gets defined in the Book of Mormon, is something that I think all are tempted to engage in. Peter was equally concerned and in his First Epistle, chapter 5, verses 2 and 3 he wrote:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over the Lord's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

It is not appropriate that someone should collect money from the flock nor "lord it over the flock." Priestcraft is one of those toxic failures of the last day gentiles that we have to guard against it appearing among us as well.

Nephi wrote: *"For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who*

belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet." (1 Nephi 22:23)

Nephi supplies us with a definition of priestcraft:

"He commandeth that there shall be no priestcraft, for behold priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world that they may get gain and praise of the world, but they seek not the welfare of Zion."

There is something so toxic about the practice of priestcraft that I want to flip the normal approach to this topic and not focus upon how we see it being practiced by others, but to use it rather as a check on what we do and how we approach the gospel of Christ. It is so toxic that if you engage in the practice of priestcraft, of setting yourself up to be the light, seeking yourself to become popular, seeking yourself to get gain and praise, that it interferes fundamentally with your ability to even be of service to the Lord.

Tithes ought not be used to support a man. Tithes ought be used to help the poor and the weak and the infirm. There is "enough and to spare" according to the revelation given to Joseph Smith but only if the purpose for which the tithes are paid are satisfied first; not to enrich men. I would dare not participate in a ministry in which service and sacrifice wasn't compelled, I wouldn't dare do that. There's a hardness that is associated with taking pay for what you do. There is an arrogance that sets you above the flock. It is better to pay than to receive tithes and offerings. It is better to give than to take.

We got an extensive warning. Moroni, reflecting upon what the predicament of the gentiles would be in the last days, in Mormon chapter 8 – and this is Moroni who is talking – beginning at verse 32:

"Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins. O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled. Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted."

He makes no exception for some latter-day church. He makes no exception for some latter-day organization. There may be those who are the humble followers of Christ that are mentioned with some frequency in the Book Mormon but they are never mentioned in a congregational setting. They are never mentioned in an institutional setting. Nor is the gathering that is to take place in the last days ever an institutional gathering. Christ Himself said it would be "one of a city, and two of a family" He did not say, one of an institution. There is no such thing, and the Book of Mormon preaches against it. We are just as vulnerable to that misapprehension as are any other group of people.

It is our relationship to and our connection with God that matters. And you form that, not through me or through some other man, and not through the groups to which you belong. The groups to which you belong are a place to render service. They are a place where you can sacrifice to help others. I don't care if that group is Methodist, Presbyterian, Latter-day Saint, or one of the fellowships that have been organized. That is of little consequence. You can be a Christian soul wherever you are, serving whoever you happen to be in contact with.

I'm going to talk about Zion, and Zion is going to be gathered. But the gathering of that group will not necessarily come exclusively from any party, group, denomination or lineage. Priestcraft damages the practitioner, I think more so than those on whom he practices. I don't see how you can destroy equality, and injure and grieve the Spirit by holding yourself up as a light and interfering with the work of the Lord in bringing about Zion, and not suffer the greater loss.

Now I have heard countless expressions of hope for the Second Coming to be upon us soon. I hope to clarify the challenge that's faced in having Zion established. I know of eight (and I haven't gone out of my way to look.) These are eight who have imposed themselves upon my awareness. I know of eight; there are probably many more individuals who claim that they are going to establish Zion. They think God called them. They are tired of waiting. And they know what needs to be done from their study. So they're going to launch out on the project. I have to tell you, Zion is not going to be a human achievement. I hope to make the daunting nature of what it will include a little more clear today.

I know of three who claim, presently, that they are Messiahs. It's an odd thing, really, all three to make the same claim.

Zion will be God's work, and in the end it will be His and His alone. He will own it; He will bring it; He will be the author of it, and He is the one who says that He will take credit for it. When it happens, however, it will conform to a pattern.

This is a verse that gets attributed to Enoch, who is in turn quoting a prophecy that was given by Adam. This is the original prophecy given at the beginning of the world through father Adam, who established in the beginning the covenant that God Himself intends to vindicate.

"Now this same priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also." (Moses 6:7.)

That authority gets explained a little more fully when Abraham sought for the blessing that began in the beginning. He describes what it was that he wanted:

"I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me." (Abr. 1:2-3.)

There are some very bright, well studied, Latter-day Saints who think they know what the gospel and priesthood of Abraham was.

I'm here today to declare to you the truth, whether you accept it or not, whether you understand it or not, whether you think you can parse the scriptures otherwise or not. I'm telling you what the truth is today. Abraham sought for the right that came down through the fathers, from Adam, which was the right of the firstborn, which is that priesthood that must be restored in order to bring about the purposes of God in the last days. Abraham chapter 2 verse 11, the Lord says that through him:

"...I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel."

Abraham's fatherhood reckons from priesthood. Although the right will continue through the literal seed, it reckons through priesthood. He sought for the right to be one of the fathers.

We're talking about a time in the last days, prophesied, and repeated by Jacob as his testimony in the Book of Mormon, when the natural fruit is going to reappear upon the earth. Natural fruit is always genealogical; it is always familial.

There is going to come a time in the last days when the Family of God will return again to the earth. "That same priesthood" includes a function that is not well understood. Abraham knew what this was when he said he desired to be a "father of many nations."

He was identifying one of the attributes and one of the roles that necessarily must return.

If you go to Moses chapter 5 there is an incident that takes place in which Mother Eve celebrated because, after the apostasy of son after son, she rejoiced because – well, I'll read it to you. This is Moses 5:16:

"And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: [now this is her, she conceived, she bare Cain, and she said concerning this son] I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?"

That is to say, Mother Eve looked at Cain in contrast to those that had rejected the gospel message that had been born by her previously. And Cain, apparently an answer to her supplication to the Lord, came as what she anticipated would be the son upon whom the birthright would be conferred. The one through whom the lineage would continue; the one through whom the government of God would continue upon the earth. The replacement for Adam.

But Cain when he arrived at the age of accountability and beyond, "hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?"

"And she again conceived and bare his brother Abel. And Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." (Moses 5:17.)

Now mind you, there is no attempt to set out the chronology here other than by milestones. But Cain had determined to reject the Lord and not hearken to Him by the time the replacement, Abel, was born. And when Cain, who thought it his birthright, found that he could be displaced by his younger brother, as an act of overthrowing the government of God, Cain slew Abel in order to prevent the birthright, in order to prevent the promised Messiah, in order to prevent the work of God progressing through any lineage other than his own. This was an act of treason. This was an act of overthrowing the government of God. This was an attempt to force God to place the Messiah, that should redeem all mankind, into a position inferior to Cain, his father.

But God replace the slain Abel with Seth. And Seth who was the one through whom then the promise would be realized.

As you go through the account in Moses chapter 6, at [verse] 10 and 11:

"...Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth."

So in "his own likeness after his own image" when Adam was created in God's own likeness after God's own image makes Seth, like Adam, a godly man.

"And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years, and he (that is [Adam]) begat many sons and daughters."

There is no indication that any of them were as rebellious as were the descendents of Cain. He begat many sons and daughters. And yet, in the next verses there is only one son who is identified.

"Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos, and prophesied in all his days, and taught his son Enos in the ways of God; wherefore Enos prophesied also." (Moses 6:13.)

So although there are many sons and many daughters, there is only one name. And you can follow it through. Seth, "many sons," all of whom are unnamed other than one — and that one that is named is Enos.

Enos had "many sons," all of whom are also unnamed other than one: Cainan. And Cainan has "many sons," all of whom are unnamed other than one; the one that is named is Mahalaleel. And although all of his predecessors had "many sons," Mahalaleel had "sons." So the fertility rate is collapsing as we got closer to the Flood. There is only one named son of Mahalaleel and that is Jared. There is only one named son out of all the sons of Jared, and that is Enoch. And there is only one named son out of all of the sons of Enoch, and that is Methuselah.

This is not a genealogy. This is a description of the government of God as it descended down through each generation. So that upon the death of one you then knew who stood next in line in order to be "the father of all, the father of many nations;" the role that is occupied by the head of the human family. It is a priesthood line, in which only one in each generation stands at the head as the father.

This one stands as "the father of all," and hence Abraham's desire to become "a father of many nations," because if he stepped into the line, he necessarily stepped into the role of providing the government of God. Christ is the one to whom all generations belong. He is the Redeemer of all mankind, and as the Savior of mankind He becomes the Father of all.

In Isaiah chapter 9 there is a verse that is dealing squarely with this issue. This is chapter 9 verse 6 of Isaiah:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."

This is a prophecy about Christ coming to restore, in the meridian of time, the government of God in which He, Christ, represented the "Father" of all, as the Redeemer of all, as the bringer again of the holy covenant.

He is prophesied to return with the description provided in the Book of Revelation, chapter 19 verse 16, as "the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords."

In D&C section 76 He explains what His intention is with respect to mankind. He intends to make men:

"[T]hey are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fullness and glory, and are priests of the Most High after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son." (D&C 76:56.)

That's the intention that He has for all men; that men should become like Him: "kings and priests."

Zion is a mortal responsibility. Men must cooperate with God for God to be able to bring it. It is not something that heaven is going to provide for us.

When Enoch and his city were established, it was not until after it was established and people had gathered together that the Lord came and dwelt with them. They prepared the place, they extended the invitation, and the Lord came.

Likewise, in the city that was established by Melchizedek, it wasn't the angels who built his city. He preached repentance; men repented, and as a consequence of having repented Zion was taken up into heaven. Enoch's Zion fled. Melchizedek's Zion fled.

The last days Zion will be built not to flee. It will be built as an established beachhead to which the Powers of Heaven will return in order for He whose right it is to govern the earth can assume the responsibility of governing the earth. He intends to overthrowing every other government there is and to establish as the King and as the Prince of Peace, and as the Father of Righteousness, His rule and His reign over the earth once again at His coming.

Joseph Smith described the priesthood that will function in Zion preliminary to the Lord's return. This is a quote from one of his teachings: "That priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy and stands as God to give laws to the people." (That's from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 322.) In that same talk there is a better elaboration made [by] one of the note-takers. You can find this in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, page 246. Joseph said: *"It is understood by many by reading this chapter [referring to Hebrews chapter 7] that Melchizedek was a king of some country or nation on earth. But it was not so. In the original it reads 'king of shalom,' which signifies 'king of peace or righteousness' and not of any country or nation."*

What Melchizedek established was a community of peace, and as the one who preached the peace to which the people came he was acknowledged as the prince of peace or the King of righteousness.

At the beginning of the restoration, while Joseph was still alive, there was an abortive attempt to get founded what would necessarily need to be reestablished in order for there to be Zion. In a sermon that he delivered in August of 1843, he said that the fullness did not exist in the church; if it did he wasn't aware of it, because the fullness required a man to become a king and a priest. Joseph Smith was made a king by anointing the following month on September 28 of 1843. The month before his anointing he explained, "no one in the Church held the fullness of the priesthood; for any person to have the fullness of that priesthood must be a king and a priest. A person may be anointed a king and priest before they can receive their kingdom." (Wilford Woodruff recorded that in his journal on August 6, 1843.) The following month then, 28th of September 1843, Joseph was anointed a king and a priest, and the month after that, on October [28], 1843, Hyrum Smith was likewise ordained to be a king unto God.

Hold that thought for a moment while we turn to 2 Nephi chapter 10 beginning at verse 11:

"And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words."

So now we have a paradox. There must be a return of the "same priesthood that was in the beginning," in which there is a theocratic father or king, but God commands there shall not be one, and if you raise one up then God will destroy him.

In solving the paradox I would suggest we go to the Book of Mormon first, in order to find out exactly how was it that at the time of the Nephites we had successful kings. One of whom is most notable is King Benjamin. We don't even call him "Benjamin," we call him "King Benjamin," because his identity with his role is so linked together that we can't talk about the man without talking about his status. This is King Benjamin in Mosiah chapter 2 explaining himself and explaining the greatness of the kingship which he held.

*"But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people; and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, **to serve you** with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me. I say unto you that as I have been suffered to **spend my days in your service**, even up to this time, **and have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you**; Neither have I suffered that*

*ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves one of another, nor that ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and **have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you**— And even **I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you**, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne—and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses this day. Yet, my brethren, **I have not done these things that I might boast**, neither do I tell these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things that ye may know that **I can answer a clear conscience before God** this day. Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent **my days in your service**, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God. And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that **when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.**"*

This is King Benjamin explaining kingship; one that God recognized and ratified; one that was approved by Him; one that brought about peace in his day.

Christ was born a King. In fact, wise men from the East came inquiring saying: "Where is he that was born King of the Jews?" Because that was His status, that was what the prophecies said of Him. That was the role He occupied. And the person they approached to find out where they might identify the newborn king was the king of the land who knew nothing about the matter, and had to go to the scribes to ask them, who after some fumbling came up with "Bethlehem." Bethlehem of Judea, thou art not the least.

Christ was born as a King, but He explained how He discharged His Kingship. In John chapter 18 beginning at verse 36, Jesus answered. This is when he was on trial for His life:

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

That's the King. He suffered Himself to be surrendered into the hands of wicked men who spitefully used, abused, beat, and humiliated Him and then killed Him publicly on a thoroughfare where the notoriety of His death would be on public display. No one entering or leaving on that day, the city of Jerusalem, could do so without noticing the humiliation of our Lord. That's our King.

He explained Himself further in contrasting who He, the King, the Almighty Father, the Wonderful, Counselor, of the end of His government there shall not be a failure of

increase, He explained Himself and how He rules to his disciples. This is in Luke chapter 22 beginning at verse 25:

"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doeth service."

The great King came, above all else, to serve. Zion will come. It will come, not because of the worthiness of any of us, it will come because of the repentance of us, and the worthiness of those with whom God covenanted to bring it to pass, including Adam and Enoch and Abraham and Melchizedek. It will come as a consequence of the righteousness of those who went before and with whom God, who cannot lie in a covenant, made a covenant to cause it to happen in the last days. It will surely come.

Mormon wrote his book and had us in mind as his audience. After Mormon finished his book there was one reader, and that was his son Moroni, who buried it. Everything Mormon did he did for this audience today, the last days, the gentiles. As he is finishing up his record – this is in Mormon 8:31 – he talks about us and says:

"There shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity."

There is a right way, and it will be done according to the Lord's will. And the Lord is actively working to bring that about right now in our day. The potential for Zion and the covenants being fulfilled in our day is as great as it has been in any generation from the days of Adam until now. And yet in all those generations there have only been two successes that the scriptures have captured.

Well, the original priesthood and the original pattern will have to return in order for the last days Zion to exist. The first Zion, in Moses chapter 7 verse 13:

"And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, ...so great was the power of the language which God had given him."

When the government of God is upon the earth in the form of Zion, as it was established by Enoch in his day, then God protects and defends it. God will be the force with which the nations of the earth must contend if they intend to do harm to Zion. Because it is His government, it is His handiwork, and it is an affront to Him to challenge His authority in attacking Zion, hence Enoch's ability to speak the word of God and to have those that would bring harm upon Zion vanquished.

Hence, further, the reason why, before the Flood, it was necessary to remove Zion, because God cannot destroy the [righteous]. The wicked can destroy the wicked, and the wicked can destroy the righteous. But when Zion is here, the wicked cannot destroy Zion because God is asserting His government. And because the wicked cannot destroy Zion, and God will not do so, Zion necessarily was taken up into heaven. The same thing happened with Melchizedek's city.

The Lord lamented: "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and ye would not!" There have been occasions on which it would have been possible to have established Zion, but men would not. When that happens, and men will not, the same rules apply as applied at the beginning. Hence the necessity for removing Moses out of the midst of Israel because through Moses we could have had Zion, but the children of Israel were not interested. Hence the reason why Elijah was taken up into heaven, because Elijah was an opportunity in which it would have been possible for Zion to have been established.

Well, that same priesthood which was in the beginning that allowed [Melchizedek] to establish the city of peace, the city of righteousness, the city that God Himself would defend, necessarily must return. If you look at D&C Section 133 beginning at verse 26:

"And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows."

Heaven will protect the last day's Zion. It will belong to Him, and therefore God will not allow it to be overtaken or overcome. D&C Section 45 has another prophecy about the last day's Zion. Beginning at verse 66:

"And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the

wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand."

When they came to arrest the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane after His suffering, even though He intended to submit Himself, and to be abused and ultimately killed. When they entered the Apostle John records that Christ, despite the ordeal he had just concluded, stood up, confronted them in their arms and said: "Whom seek ye?" And they said: "Jesus of Nazareth." And He said: "I am he." And they stumbled backwards, tripped over one another's feet, and they fell down.

An armed group bearing swords and weapons were intimidated by the Lord identifying Himself. He made no attempt to defend Himself, but had He elected to do so, they could not have taken Him. He went as a lamb to the slaughter because he intended, though the Lion of Judah, to become the sacrificial lamb.

Heaven protected Zion in its first iteration and heaven is going to protect the last day's Zion. As a consequence of that, the time is going to come when it will not be the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt that people cite as evidence of the power of God. You see, Egypt had to be subdued. Moses was sent to subdue them because Egypt was, at the time, the greatest kingdom, the greatest nation on the earth. Moses was sent to them to establish the government of God. When you confront the government of God against the most powerful nation on the earth, it's the most powerful nation that must yield the field, and not the Lord.

In the last days Jeremiah prophesied that the time is going to come when the talk about the power of God is no longer making reference to what the Lord did anciently with Egypt. It's going to be what the Lord intends to do with the last days Zion. This is Jeremiah chapter 16 beginning in verse 14:

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

That will be the reference point to which people will point as evidence of God's intention to establish His rule, His reign upon the earth, His authority over the nations of the earth.

It is going to come to pass. In your enthusiasm, it would be better to demonstrate the virtue of patience as the Lord brings His work about, than to exhibit the character flaw of impatience and enthusiasm in trying to bring about what the Lord intends Himself to cause to happen because you cannot give birth prematurely to a living Zion, or it will choke and it will die because it is unable to be viable outside of the hands of the Lord. We have to wait on Him.

Just a few random concluding thoughts:

One bit of advice: If you're going to have a school of the prophets, you are going to need a prophet.

God's ways are higher than man's ways. He said this to Isaiah: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Jacob, a prophet who stood at the presence of God, expounded on the meaning of God's mysteries to an audience that include now us. This is in Jacob chapter 4 verse 8:

"Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God."

In other words, I don't care if you have a PhD in theological studies, and you are the most adept scriptionist of our age; the meaning belongs to God, it does not belong to me, it does not belong to you. It is not found out by our clever or witty parsing of what it is. In large measure the prophecies have as their purpose to hide from men what God intends to do until God has done it. And then having accomplished what He intended to do, the scriptures confirm that He knew the end from the beginning. But if you could know the end from the beginning you could interfere with the plan of God by going where the prophecies say, when the prophecies say, and interfering with the hand of God in fulfilling it. Even worse still, if your inclination were to priestcraft, if you knew what the prophecies meant beforehand, you could profit from them. The things of heaven were never intended to be given into the hands of men so that they might profit from them.

We are expected to sacrifice for God. A religion that does not require sacrifice is a religion that will not produce faith. If there is one thing that is going to be necessary for the establishment of Zion, it is going to necessarily be faith. You obtain it through sacrifice. You do not obtain it through adoration, you do not obtain it through the praise of men, you do not obtain it by sitting in chief seats, you don't obtain it by faring sumptuously and administering the wealth that is surrendered to you as if you were God. It belongs to God. It is His. You should go get a job to support yourself if you're going to administer the tithes and leave the tithes alone.

I know there are verses that suggest that the laborer is worthy of his hire, I know that. I'm telling you it's toxic. I'm telling you that there are, in the history of mankind, I can think of maybe five men who have lived that would be worthy and beyond corruption in occupying that role. And one of those five was the Lord Himself. Don't look upon a passing verse as a basis upon which to revoke and to cast aside all of the other many verses, and warnings, and cautions, and prophecies about the abuse of the last days gentiles which largely emanate from the corruption of our religion because of priestcraft.

Priestcraft is toxic, not just to the listeners, but to the practitioners. If what you are saying, if what you are preaching is greeted with wild enthusiasm and it doesn't get you shunned, then you are probably not saying anything that God would agree with.

God's purpose is to bring us to repentance. The Lord is exceptionally positive, but He is positive in stating affirmatively the standard that is acceptable to Him. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake." He expected us to be misunderstood, misapprehended, assessed very narrowly just as He was, cast out, not to be handed money and to be given a chief seat, to be adored, and to be respected.

Our challenge among ourselves, however diminutive we may seem to be; priestcraft can invade our little fellowships every bit as much as it can invade multi-billion-dollar institutions. There's no limit on where you can run amiss.

Rest assured that God intends to establish in the last days a Zion in which we will see the return of exactly what was here at the beginning. There will be a return. The reason why they are coming to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is because there will be a new Jerusalem. They will bring rich treasures when they come because they have records that they themselves are going to need to have translated. They are going to be crowned because the Family of God consists of people who are, in fact, kings and priests. All of that infrastructure has to be put in place by the Lord before His return. Therefore He intends to accomplish this work. When He accomplishes this work, you are not going to find at the top of it a king like the gentiles expect. You're going to find something or someone or some group who are meek and lowly, who are rather more like our Savior than the kings who ruled during our Savior's day. You won't find a Caesar and you won't find a local potentate; you will find a servant.

There is a parable. It's just one verse. It's a very short parable. It moves along, but it's a response that Christ gave to the question that was put to Him by his disciples asking Him: Tell us what the signs of your return is going to be. He goes through a list of things but he ends with a little parable at the end. Our translation makes it seem kind of morbid so I'm going to substitute "body" for "carcass" because it sounds like what you're dealing with in the current King James version is morbid, not a living body. He says one of the signs that are going to be of His return is: "Where the body is, that's where the eagles will gather." The "body" is the New Jerusalem. The "eagles" are going to be angelic ministrants who are going to come.

There has to be an opening that occurs in order to prepare the way. The opening at this end is going to be handled by someone who has remained behind, and the opening at the far end is going to be the one to whom the assignment was given to open the way for His return; Elijah, the one who was promised.

Now, I want to be really clear. I don't expect either of those individuals to have any public ministry again. They have a role in Zion, and those who dwell in Zion are going to have some contact with them. The three Nephites are a great example. They, like John,

were given a similar ministry to remain around and to administer until the end of the earth. And they did minister. Two of the people to whom they ministered were Mormon and Moroni. They, like ministering angels, ministered to Mormon who in turn ministered to the public. They ministered to Moroni and kept his hope up in the waning days of that dispensation. But they did not minister publicly. John will have a role, but the work of Zion is the work of flesh and blood.

Men have to extend the invitation for God to return so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

Now the good news is that Zion will be preserved. And the even better news is that all of those good people of the earth who live in ignorance but who would've accepted the truth if it were brought to them, they will be preserved also. There will be a mission field into the millennium.

But the really bad news is in the laundry list of those whom the Lord intends to destroy at His coming – that is the description of those who are Telestial and therefore cannot endure His presence when He shall come – all of the liars, all of whoremongers, all of the people who have taken our Lord's name in vain having not authority, all of those who have preached for hire and practiced priestcraft. One of the reasons it needs to be eradicated before you get to Zion is so you're not ignited like a torch head to the amusement of everyone else that is in Zion. There has to be an end of all that nonsense.

Our Lord was and is meek. When He said: "I am more intelligent than them all," when He said: I am "the greatest of all"; there wasn't one whit of arrogance in His announcement of that. What He was saying is: "Please have confidence in me. Please trust what I say to be true. Please recognize I've paid a price in order to be able to minister."

You needn't respect the messenger, but you must respect the message because salvation is limited in every generation to those who are authorized to preach repentance and to baptize, and if they're not authorized then it is powerlessness. However good it may make you feel, it is powerlessness.

Well, I've covered the things that I was needing to cover. Let me end by saying that I don't talk a great deal about any of the experiences, visitations, revelations. I don't talk a great deal about any of that because the concern I always have is, that in the days of Joseph we made some foolishly laughable mistakes. Because when we had a man like Joseph walking among us, it was so easy to take our eyes off of the Lord and put them upon the man. That when Joseph got up to talk to the Relief Society in 1842 he said, "Your minds are darkened because you are neglecting the duty that's devolving upon

yourselves. You are depending too much upon the prophet." If we don't learn anything from that past example in failure, then we can expect the exact same outcome. We may get Kirtland, we may get Nauvoo, we may get Salt Lake City, but we will not get the New Jerusalem. We have to learn from the past errors. We have to determine not to repeat at least those. We may make new and inventive mistakes of our own, but at least they will belong to us and not be caused by our arrogance and stupidity in simply repeating what we have seen gone on before.

I don't care how cleverly you parse the scriptures, God and God alone is responsible for causing them to be written in the first place, and He has a meaning in mind behind them. He has a work that He intends to do that they will vindicate when the work is done.

If you think that you can outthink the Lord, and you can arrive at the right place at the right time, then go ahead and buy some farmland in or around Independence, Missouri, and wait for the burning, because you're not going to be at the right place. If Independence, Missouri was where the Lord intended Zion to be, He wouldn't have told them in January of 1841 that He was going to make Nauvoo "the corner of Zion." It is portable until it is fixed by Him.

Adam-ondi-Ahman is not simply a location that you can find on a map in Missouri. It is the description of an event. The event is Adam in the presence of Son Ahman, Christ. Wherever that happens, that is and will be Adam-ondi-Ahman. So buy all the land you want, build all the bleachers you expect to build. The fact of the matter is that when Adam, the Ancient of Days, returns, there is going to be an orderly process in which a king, a mortal king – it necessarily begins there – surrenders the jurisdiction of the earth back to those who once presided over it, in turn, ultimately back to the Ancient of Days. That's why he is going to be here. He in turn will surrender it to the Father, the Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father; of the end of whose government, or the increase of whose government there shall be no end.

Christ, when He returns, will have the lawful, the legal right, to possess this earth, to rule it and to govern it. And He will come to govern it. But before that day, groundwork has to be laid. There is a process.

Now, this may seem a little presumptuous and a little full of myself but I'm telling you it's the case. If you go back to the very first book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*, and you read everything I've written from there until now (and today's talk, which we'll get a transcript of up on my website) what you will find out is that I've only been giving one talk. Admittedly it's long, admittedly it fills millions of words in English, but it's one talk. I've been addressing one subject from the beginning until now; it is all one great whole. I've talked a little about, and pushed a little further back, understanding about some things related to Zion today. I'm telling you that the scriptures are full of hundreds and hundreds of additional verses describing exactly what I've been talking about today. They are all one. They are all covering one great theme. No one can lay it all out but I've been giving one long presentation, one long talk, one long

dissertation, all of it leading up to this talk and hopefully I'll be able to talk a little more about where things are going at some point in the future because it's impossible and even forbidden for me to cover everything at this point. I remain absolutely optimistic in the goodness and the desires of the hearts of you people, and of others, who really do believe in and want the Lord to return again. I commend you for that. He may have put a burden on me, but it's not for my benefit. I don't worry about myself. I worry a great deal about mankind, including all of us who are here today and others who are not.

Christ lives! He is the One who redeemed all of us. He has a rightful claim as the Father of us all. In the resurrection we come forth out of the grave as His children, because He purchased with His blood our continued life. We symbolize that when we are baptized by going under the water and coming up again to be born again a new creature in Christ, as a preliminary ceremonial necessary sign that we accept Him. He is real. I bear witness of Him. I have stood in His presence. I have spoken with Him. He speaks in plain humility. He has a very poor student in me, and I don't say that to be humble, I say that to be truthful. I wish I were better, but in His infinite wisdom He chooses what He chooses, He does it as He chooses, He does it how He wants. I am stuck in the position that I find myself, and you are stuck with me.

Worthy is the Lamb. He came deliberately to offer Himself up as a lamb without blemish. He had the right **not** to die, and therefore, He had the right to take His life up again, and it's through that medium that we in turn obtain the right to live again. I bear testimony. I bear witness of Him, and I want to express my gratitude to Him for all that He has and is doing, and for the patience that He has shown with all of us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2016.07.02 Assembly on Missionary Work

July 2, 2016

Eden, Utah

Denver: I think everyone was making perfectly valid, true and wonderful points, and it may seem like there are contradictions but the souls of men are so differently situated that they have to be met wherever they are, in whatever circumstances you find them in, with regard to their unique view of the world.

What happened in the early church when the missionaries went out and aggressively pursued, and argued, and debated, and won over people who were persuaded by the power of the argument that brought them forth?

Comment: You've got the Campbellites.

Denver: Yes. The book that is coming out next explains how... The book is based upon three monumental failures in the life of Joseph Smith. In each one of the failures Joseph responded, not by despairing or by throwing up his hands, he went to work on what he thought would fix the problem.

From the time that John the Baptist promised that there would be some higher priesthood conferred upon them in May of 1829, until after the Church was organized and they were holding a conference in June of 1831, Joseph Smith was looking forward to getting this higher priesthood conferred upon him. He finally got the commandment by the voice of God just as the inspired version of Genesis 14 says: that this priesthood is conferred upon men by the voice of God. The voice of God came to Joseph in the conference, and he was told to ordain people to this higher priesthood. He ordained six – and the one of those six that he ordained _____ **(02:58)** the rest of the people. 23 total people were ordained to that high order of priesthood. The book documents what happened to every one of them. It was not simply a failure, it was a catastrophic failure.

One of those who was ordained, Ezra Booth, went out and published a series of nine letters explaining what a fraud Joseph was. He had received by the voice of God the ordination to the higher priesthood in June. By October the Ohio newspaper was printing the scandalous retelling of Joseph's hopeless failure that occurred in the ordinations in June. In the same month that the Ohio newspaper was printing it, they hold another conference and Joseph ordains people again – while you're reading in the newspaper about what an abject failure this was. This was in October of 1831.

Joseph Smith did not accept the failure. He set about trying to conclude how it would be possible for people to get 'power in the priesthood, upon them and their posterity, through all generations of time and into eternity,' a phrase that shows up again at the end of his ministry, which utterly fails. What was the solution to the problem? It was *Lectures on Faith*. The *Lectures on Faith* addressed the crisis of the failure of the faith of the people. Joseph's response was to say, "Okay, that didn't work." It's not a defect in those people, it's a defect in the ministry of Joseph. He simply assumed the responsibility

and set about trying to fix the problem. That's exactly the sort of response you would expect from someone who knows that they are about God's work and they are not just freelancing.

The book tells the story, and invariably it doesn't matter which crisis you look at, and the product that Joseph creates in response to the crisis. The villains are Latter-day Saints. Ultimately the villains that would be responsible for the murder of Joseph Smith would be Latter-day Saints. If it had not been for those who managed to get themselves into a position of trust and confidence, what happened in Illinois that resulted in the death of Joseph could not have occurred.

Joseph believed that you could take anyone and convert them, save their soul, and march forward to Zion. Time and time again it did not matter how bitter the betrayal was, time and time again he simply said, "Okay, that is a failure on my part, I can fix them by what I teach, therefore I need to be better, I need to explain more, I need to teach more."

Juxtapose that with Abinadi, who comes he and delivers a message. He says, "This is the way it is. This is where the large burley animal is going to defecate in the woods, and that's the way it is," –and he leaves. He shuts down and he's gone. He comes back two years later and he says, "Time's up, it didn't work. Now, your life now is going to be valued like a garment in a hot fire." They kill him. He makes one convert. The one convert of Abinadi is the hinge point of the entire *Book of Mormon*. Everything that happens before and everything that happens thereafter goes through Abinadi. Abinadi and his one convert, they become custodians of the record. It is that convert's posterity that goes all the way to Mormon and Moroni. He is the hinge-point of the story. *One convert*. And quite frankly, the priests of Noah, they didn't get much of a sermon. He vindicated how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that cry peace – in his own person, despite the fact that he was pronouncing judgements and wo upon them, which seems like an odd contradiction – by pointing them to the Ten Commandments and saying, "You don't believe them, you don't do them, you are not converted to them." He didn't get into anything other than an explanation of the prophecy of Isaiah in the context of the Ten Commandments, fairly rudimentary stuff.

He persuades one guy. And that one guy goes out to be re-baptized. Before he re-baptizes, apparently himself, he asked for authority from heaven to do that and the baptism takes place. And from there to the end of the *Book of Mormon*, that is the focus and the story line, that's it.

If you are going to measure quantity, and you look to Joseph Smith, who had probably 30,000 in. Joseph probably had 100,000 people baptized while he was still alive but there were 30,000 that still held on. About 18,000-19,000 were in Nauvoo, others were in faithful congregations around England, New England and other places. But Abinadi had one.

Both of them gave their lives up. If you take one step back from that and you say, whose ministry was more successful? The prophet of the restoration, whose own followers were responsible for the conspiracy to have him murdered, who created an absolutely completely vertically integrated structure that could be compromised by simply taking over the top seat. Or Abinadi, who preached the message of repentance and organized nothing.

There are a lot dynamics that go into the success of the gospel; one of which is, if Joseph were here today and had in front of him the history of what occurred when he was here before, would he do the same thing again? It would be insane. It would be madness. You have a formula for failure; therefore you don't invoke the formula for failure in order to achieve success. If you're going to succeed, you must find the pattern other than the pattern which brought about the excommunication of people that believe in the *Book of Mormon* and choose follow Christ. You have to have something other than that.

The *Book of Mormon's* religious structure – I'm not talking about the era of the judges, where there were governmental and church functions that were going on and you really don't have a distinct separation of the two adequate in the records. What you have – the best description is the one that is given in Alma about how they functioned. The priests came and would teach them on Sunday. Everyone would drop what they were doing, they come, they would be taught, and then when they were done with their Sabbath observances, everyone would go back and they would work and they would labor. There was no professional clergy, there was no hierarchy. They had a high priest who was apparently an itinerant that traveled around.

The more you consolidate power and authority into an office, the more you tempt the adversary to gain control of the office. Because the one thing about salvation is, it is entirely other worldly. If you can get gain in saving the souls of men you will be unable to save the souls of men, because faith, and the first principle of faith, is obedience to God and sacrifice of everything. Without the willingness to sacrifice everything, it is impossible to gain the faith that will save your soul.

So what happens when you trade sacrifice for power? What happens when you trade it for wealth? What happens when you trade it for the ability to control the souls of men?

Joseph Smith sitting in Liberty Jail was not concerned about the governmental abuse that had confined him into a filthy dungeon. I cannot imagine the reek in the dungeon basement of Liberty Jail. Quite frankly the display and the "Temple Prison" does not communicate to you the wretchedness of the conditions in which they found themselves. There were two windows on either end of the building that had an opening less than a foot wide with one bar going through the middle of it, and there was no glass. So in winter when the wind blew there was no way to stay warm. If you lit a fire in the basement the jailers would make you put it out, but if they didn't, they sat upstairs and laughed. By the time the straw generated heat, you were choking.

In those direful circumstances what Joseph is concerned about is the power of the priesthood and the abuse of priestly authority. *"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood but by persuasion."* Where does that come from in those circumstances? [It comes from] God. Because Joseph's concern was not about, and his faith was not based upon, the salvation of his own soul. The salvation of others; his response to every crisis he went through was exactly the same.

So what can we learn about the value of numerosity by juxtaposing the tens of thousands that came aboard, many of whom were responsible for the death of Joseph Smith, and a structure that ultimately wound up utterly compromised on the one hand, and the ministry of Abinadi with the one convert on the other?

If we manage to bring someone aboard by persuasion and out-arguing them and beating them in a scripture bash, how long do they remain aboard when someone else with a better argument comes along to persuade them contrary-wise? If you make a convert because they felt the presence of God with them, you can beat them with a crowbar and they're not going to give that up.

Taking the message of the restoration to people and being rejected by 900,000 readers, and having one person show up, is a perfect model. If you had 30,000 people show up and you baptized them, my guess is that in short order the abuses and the mess you would have on your hands would be shameful. It's the quality of the conversion process, and it's the presence of the Spirit.

Even in the caution that we were getting in Section 88, if you look at verse 72, the Lord says, "Behold and lo, I will take care of your flock and will raise up elders and send them unto them." Well, how is that we gain jurisdiction over someone by bringing them aboard when the Lord said He's going to be the one that takes care of them? I agree we need to nurture, we need to dung, we need to water. But ultimately, all we can really do is facilitate the Lord nurturing, and facilitate the Lord dunging, and facilitate the Lord ultimately giving the increase.

I was a newly baptized LDS zealot. I had more baptisms than the full-time missionaries. I was a baptizing machine. A couple of them went on to serve missions before leaving the Church. As I counted the track record of the numerous baptisms that I've made, with time I think there are two still left and I am not one of them. There are two of them that are still paying the Church, because what I did to get them converted was so in your face.

I attended the local Jewish temple lectures on Judaism to mine Jews and I got some of them aboard. Jews don't last long in Mormonism. I think that we have to be sensitive to a whole host of things. One of them is, when the conversion takes place, it can't be us.

I talked during those ten talks, and then I worked on the book and tried to be as quiet as I could be. I tried to be as nondescript as I could be, because what I don't want... Every one of you that has talked about your conversion experience, it may have been

facilitated by something I wrote, but she's right, it doesn't have anything to do with me. We can facilitate but it has to be between them and the Lord.

I'll tell you, someone who's heart is inclined to the Lord and who has accepted Him is not going to turn around and conspire to murder Joseph Smith. They aren't going to do that. They will not find it in their heart.

I want to point out, that as Christ leads them to "this is my doctrine," go back to verse 29 of 3rd Nephi 11 and it says, "*Verily, verily I say unto you, he that has the spirit of contention is not of me.*" Paul says "contend earnestly for the faith," and I did that and I brought a bunch of people aboard the LDS Church by contending. But Christ is saying "contention is not of Him" and yet that was one of the primary conversion tools that I employed.

The difference between persuasion and contention: Persuasion largely does not happen because you overcome the resistance with argument and contention. Persuasion comes by opening up an idea and letting it enter into the heart of the man or the woman, and then letting God take over and get the growth inside them. "*Contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, who stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.*"(3 Nephi 11:29-30) He is saying, don't contend, don't make people mad, don't confront them, take a step back from that and I'll tell you what my doctrine is. And then, "*this is my doctrine, ...I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me.*" (3 Nephi 11:32) Every bit of that is internal to the proselyte, every bit of that.

Preach, teach, exhort, expound, contend, bitch them into conversion; you've ignored what His doctrine is. It's internal to them. It goes on with Him and them. We facilitate but He is the one who ultimately becomes the object of their worship, the object of their adoration. It's like God lights a candle inside of you. You can hold the candle up and you can give people light but if they don't get their own candle, get their own flame, they're still dead. They aren't alive.

There's this description that's given in 1st Nephi chapter 14 verse 12:

"And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw."

We're not going to get 15 million people, but it's not necessary that we get 15 million people. It's only necessary that the invitation be extended. If the invitation is extended and if the hearts of people respond, there is a resilience, there is a power, there is

something inside of them that cannot be broken. We are not looking for anything other than the few.

If you go back to... I want to remind you, D&C Section 88 was given in December of 1832. Three months earlier, in September of 1832, the Church was under condemnation. When the revelation was given to Hyrum Smith telling him, hold your peace, wait, you're not ready to go out yet, that was given before the *Book of Mormon* had come into print. Without the *Book of Mormon* yet in print, without the formal Church organization, in 1829 – David Whitmer would write about it his address to all the leaders. They were baptizing people. In 1829, the Lord, by revelation, over and over said to people, if you have a desire to participate, "you are called to the work." Everyone that wanted to was told "*the field is white already to harvest.*" (D&C 33:3). One of the interesting things about the harvest is the only sickle that you can throw in or thrust in in order to make the harvest actually work, is one that invites the grain to be harvested. If you are out there with a power mower and you're just bringing them in by the dozens, that may not have that kind of satisfactory results we would like to have.

We do have the *Book of Mormon*. We do have the record of the fallen people who went before us, times two.

I have become less and less curious over time about the future because every time I'm inquiring about that I wind up with more work to do. It got to the point that I said the only thing that I want to know about is the next step. I don't want to hear about anything past that, because I didn't like what I saw when I reached out a little ways into the future. I don't want to go there and I don't want to be there.

The book that just got completed and will be out shortly, is written with the objective of having something that can be handed to a believing Christian to introduce Joseph Smith as a significant Christian figure, and nothing else. It goes no further than that one step. The content of that book is a brilliant little layout and simple story. I can take no credit for it because everything about it was from above. But it is a brilliant little book. If a Christian reads that book, they may be ready for something more and they may be willing to talk to those who might be able to answer their questions.

My wife and I were talking this last week how happy I was that I finished that, and so far as I knew there was nothing else coming, and wouldn't it be great to take some time off. She left me alone and I spent some time praying, and now there's another project and I don't like where it is headed. I had already started on another project and I hadn't even gotten printer's proof in the mail yet from the last one. But the next one will include within it, in the book, the websites where they can request baptism and where they can learn more.

The genius of the Lord in what happened with the restoration and then what He started over with again, is that literally anywhere in the world where there is a single soul who was one time baptized and one time ordained – it doesn't matter if they are sitting in Japan and they're inactive, it doesn't matter if they're in Slovakia and they haven't had

anything to do with Mormons – if they heard the message. If one time long ago they were baptized and one time long ago they were ordained, wherever they are in the world they can repent, they can call upon God and they can ask for God to give them authority to baptize again. They are immediately empowered to baptize within their own family. As soon as you have enough to call a conference and you are sustained by seven women, you have the ability right then to begin to baptize outside of your family anywhere in the world.

Isaiah prophesied that in the last days *"it would break forth on the right and it would break forth on the left."* (Isaiah 54:3). Well, how does it break forth, because no one is in control of running out there and saying, "You! You! You need to get busy!" It is them that is responding to God and God breaking it forth everywhere in the world.

The website allows people to contact, wherever they are in the world, and someone nearby can then volunteer or someone will travel. Everything that is happening is happening in an order organized by someone other than man. And I know what the next step is after this step that's rolling out at this moment. All of it is designed to appeal outside of Mormonism, to bring people aboard from anywhere, in any religious tradition, primarily the Christian tradition, to convince them that they need to look into this.

I was remarking to Alan that I'm now going to manage to make enemies in the Christian world along with making enemies with the Mormon world, because this stuff will not be happy for ministers, because priestcraft is priestcraft, whether the practice is inside or outside the LDS Church. LDS priestcraft may make the typical priest look like a piker and a poverty-ridden amateur. I don't know of many groups of ministers that can embark upon a trillion dollar cost of the development as Mormon leadership can, but priestcraft is wrong wherever you find it.

In the verses that we looked at in [D&C] 88, which is after the church has been brought into condemnation:

"Tarry ye, tarry ye in this place, and call a solemn assembly, even of those who are the first laborers in this last kingdom." (D&C 88:70)

They did call solemn assemblies and Joseph would write from Liberty Jail how poor, how meek, how mean the conferences of the church had been. Too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the characters of those who are called by God. So even though they are calling solemn assemblies there's something more to the solemnities of God than merely getting together with long faces and pondering over scripture. There's something about accepting the influence of the Spirit and proceeding, when if you have the desire, you're called to the work.

"And let those whom they have warned in their traveling call on the Lord, and ponder the warning in their hearts which they have received, for a little season." (D&C 88:71)

See, the purpose to warn against the harvest and to harvest the wheat is so that they are gathered in to a place where they are protected against what is coming, because ultimately the field is going to be burned. The only thing that's going to be gathered in are the wheat that is harvested. The way to harvest is to warn, and the way to warn is not with a lot of words but with the sincerity of your heart, persuading people to open themselves up and to receive a message from God.

There was comment about the misapprehension that some people entertain about Jesus, but they came in the sincerity of their hearts to accept Him. I would suggest that when you talk to the typical Christian about Jesus, the Christian who is going to listen is going to you is going to have in his mind or her mind exactly the figure that Joseph Smith saw in the First Vision and not a triune, cosmic, incomprehensible cosmic muffin, "whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, who sits on the top of a topless throne surrounded by a myriad of beings who are saved, not through any acts of theirs but by His good pleasure." I'm quoting the old endowment. If you went through before the minister's role, it was removed.

So when you go and you preach Jesus to them, they are not thinking what the theologians are thinking, they are thinking what you are thinking, they are thinking what Joseph was thinking. They are thinking about a man who came into the upper room and said, *"handle me and see, for Spirit hath not flesh and bone as ye see me have,"* they are thinking of that guy. They are not thinking of the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. And yet there are not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible. That is one of the things that Jesus denounced when He said the creeds are an abomination.

"...I will take care of your flocks." (D&C 88:72)

"I will raise up Elders." The Melchizedek priesthood, the higher order, wasn't restored until 1831. In 1829 Joseph and Oliver were called the First Elders of the church. In the beginning, the title "Elder" – this is the problem with all of our filters and all of our vocabulary – in the beginning an elder simply referred to someone who knew more, someone who was wiser. "Respect your elders." What if the oldest and wisest in the village is a woman, who was here the last time we went through this. She is the elder. Because what you are looking for is someone that is in possession of information that may help you. Does that mean that she is ordained to the priesthood and all the nonsense the "ordain women" are clamoring for? (Which by the way, ordain them all you want, it is not going to amount to a hill of beans.) Elders that the Lord intends to raise up are people whose wisdom and counsel will bring people closer to the Lord, whether that elder is Eliza Snow, Sister Martineau, Sister May. In the Proverbs there is a statement about if you hold your tongue, everyone will account you for being wise. Jan takes it all in. My guess is if you could ever get advice from her you would find an elder, indeed.

"And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize

yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me." (D&C 88:74)

What is the purpose of cleansing the hands? So that you do not handle anything that is unclean. How do you handle anything that is unclean? You go out and you meddle in stuff that isn't your prerogative to do, all of the unclean things in this world, all of the stuff that bogs you down. How do you get contamination primarily into the body? Your hands lead you: on a keyboard, they lead you when you're paid. There are manifestations of the cares that you have. [Do] you want clean hands? Change the things about which you care.

When we had animal sacrifice, particularly when we had industrial animal sacrifice in the courtyard of the temple of Solomon, and the second temple, and then temple there, you could not go into the courtyard where the animals were being sacrificed, even if you were only going to sacrifice a turtle dove. You could not go in there – and turtle doves they just wrung the neck and they say it's a relatively blood-free thing – you couldn't go in there and not get blood on your feet, because the sacrifices that were going on were just dumping blood. They collected it in bowls and they sprinkled it on the altar. But you sever the carotid artery in any animal and you've got spray, and the courtyard is a mess. If you walk out into the courtyard, even for a modest sacrifice and you walk back, you have blood on your feet.

What is the blood representing? The sins of this world. How do you cleanse your feet? If you want your hands clean and you want your feet clean then walk in the paths of righteousness. *"He leadeth me beside the still waters."* (Psalm 23:2). Your feet are walking where there's peace, where they are going to stay clean. And if need be, you can take a step or two into the still waters to make sure that the feet are clean. But you can go sacrifice goats and lambs and anything you want to sacrifice all day long and be no cleaner from the sins of this world for that act. Just like you can have the Savior kneel and wash your feet and receive no benefit if you're Judas (although I think he had left the room by that time.)

When it's talking about this, they would invoke a ceremony inside the Kirtland temple to actually wash feet, but it's a symbol of the cleansing and the abandonment of sin. Do you want to have clean feet? We can wash all of your feet, but it's not going to take any greater effect upon you than what you already received in the LDS temple. If you want your feet clean, walk in the paths of righteousness and stay in there, "that I may make you clean." That is the cleanliness that we seek for.

*That I may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfil this promise, this great and last promise, which I have made unto you, when I will.
Also, I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth. (D&C 88:75)*

"Let your food be prepared with singleness of heart that your fasting may be..." (D&C 59:13). You can fast more effectively by shutting off the things of this world and tuning in the things of God than you can by simply by going hungry. Some people go hungry and they get grouchy. They don't closer to the Lord, they get more irritating to their neighbor.

Comment: It's called 'hangry'.

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom." (D&C 88:77)

Every one of you that have spoken up today, every one of you has been doing this, teaching one another the doctrine of the kingdom. That's what we are supposed to do.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand." (D&C 88:78)

We're going to have an opportunity for that up in Boise and I'm hoping that those that are going to be talking are spending time on teaching one another this stuff. I would hope that it would be useful and edifying and in conformity with what we're directed to do.

"Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth." (D&C 88:79)

This is a huge aside, but the things that are "under the earth" aren't dirt and caves. It is the movement of the stars as they rise and fall on the horizon. [Adrian] has written a little about that. But the things under the earth,

"...[T]hings which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass;" (D&C 88:79)

That's the definition of truth. Truth is the knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.

"Things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land;" (D&C 88:79)

One of the biggest judgements that are upon this land, is that this land belongs to and is going to be preserved for those who worship the god of this land. And when they reject the god of this land they get swept away, when they've fulfilled the measure that is required for that.

"...[A]nd a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms." That means more than just France and Italy. Countries are places that are lands of inheritance that have been

given by God. No one owns a country that hasn't been given to them by covenant from God. "And of kingdoms," that's not the monarchs of Europe or the Middle East, that's God's. Because what difference does it make to us who the king of Saudi Arabia is?

"That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you." (D&C 88:80)

Look, the commission has been given.

"I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor." (D&C 88:81)

You guys have been warned. The content of what has been given, and understand all of those ten talks and *Preserving the Restoration* is entirely based upon expounding the scriptures. You can take the message of everything in that book, bypass the book, go to the scriptures, teach, preach, exhort and expound using only the source material, and they don't have to listen to an apostate. My name doesn't have to come up. I've noticed it's been leaking into General Conference a little bit.

"Therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads." (D&C 88:82)

I've gotten the signal I need to shut up and sit down so I'm going to shut up and sit down. But I do think that everything that everyone has said is part of dealing with it. And once we have brought someone aboard, if their heart is right – I'm not going get around to pointing them to websites and inviting baptism in what I'm writing until the book after the book that is now coming out but that will be addressed to the Christian world. Very methodical. The pace is somewhat slow but I can tell you we're better off bringing the right people aboard, as Abinadi did, than harvesting huge numbers and winding up with an absolute mess on our hands. But if they come aboard, then they come aboard as the Lord's. The Lord is going to watch over them and the Lord is going to care for them in a way that exceeds our capacity to do so.

Amen.

Question: Can you mention anything about what you received on the April 14th that you mentioned on your blog?

Denver: I'm sorry, I laugh at myself. I'm not a very good student. I am embarrassingly oblivious to the obvious. I could tell you stories about that but you would wonder at the Lord's patience.

I wanted to know about Joseph and the restoration and details about what went on in Nauvoo and what has been going since Nauvoo, and where and what and who, and I

couldn't get enough questions out on the table. I was obnoxious, obnoxiously inquisitive, nothing about the future. I wanted to know about the past up until now.

I saw what we were doing and how apparently important that was, and how the Lord is watching over this.

And then the view expanded and, God is working with people that we won't encounter for some time still, to get them ready for what's coming. And He's surprisingly just as involved in caring for them as He is in attending to us.

Then the view increased another order of magnitude and I could see every people everywhere, and it doesn't matter who they are, where they are, what their culture is; it doesn't matter where they are in this world. He is working to bring about ultimately their salvation as well.

And then it got ridiculous, because He has concerns about creations that are without number. In trying to put it into words, this is the analogy that I've come up with:

Let's liken Zion to a bus station. Someone needs to build the bus station, and that might be us. If we build a bus station and we have the place that can receive people and that is a place of safety where they can pass through. When we finish with that, the bus station won't amount to much if someone doesn't build a bus, and we're not building that bus. The buses that get built are not going anywhere if they don't have fuel, and someone has got to do that. That is going to involve miners and explorers and manufacturers and refiners and transport people and delivery mechanisms that God is working with. And when they finally fill the buses, that will be someone over whom God is responsible.

When they finally get to our bus station we're not going to be the ones that stand there and say, "Yeah, we built the bus station. We rock!" Zion is an absolutely critical component in the last day's plan of God and indispensable in the salvation of the souls of men, living and dead. But it is just a bus station. And through it will pass concourses of people with whom we've had very little responsibility.

When He says that there is going to come a time "when the prophets are going to awaken and will no longer stay themselves, and they are going to come from the lands of the north, and they are going to come to the bus station to receive something at the hands of His servants, Ephraim, in the boundaries of the everlasting hills," He is working on that. And He is working with people on that.

We need to be about what He has asked us to do. And it is important. It's indispensable. But it is absolutely no more indispensable than what He is doing among people in Asia and Europe and Africa, and everywhere else in the world. He promises you to lead on with the scriptures, and He tells you after the voice of warning – then He is going to preach a sermon – and His sermon is going to shake and cause fear. It's not because

He is an angry God, it is because He is a loving God who knows what it takes to stir people up, to get attention, to consider the things of eternity.

But that's essentially... It's hard to put into words.

Comment: Heard and saw much.

Denver: Yes. That's the analogy and I think that it conveys the meaning. He is the God of the whole world and every soul is precious to Him. Christ's atonement was intended to yield the absolute greatest benefit that can be obtained through the suffering of the Lord. For some people, their reluctance is no deterrent to the Lord's desire to save them anyway. I think Zion needs to be people that receive the word with gladness and not people we contend with to bring the glory. I am really interested to see what will happen up in Boise. I think that is going to be an interesting moment.

[Group discussion follows]

2016.07.29 Was There An Original?

Sunstone Symposium Presentation

July 29, 2016

Salt Lake City, Utah

Facilitator: Many of you are familiar with Denver Snuffer, his contributions and his work in recent years. He is a graduate of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University, a practicing attorney for 36 years, father of nine children, and a faithful Latter-day Saint until his recent excommunication for apostasy in 2013 for writing a volume on LDS history. Denver, we'll go ahead and turn the time over to you now and listen to what you have to share.

Denver Snuffer: This talk is an abridgement of a paper by the same title. The paper is 55 pages and it has 213 footnotes. It's going to be released on my website this evening. I mention that so that you understand that this talk is just an abridgement of that. If you have any issue with the content, the sources that I rely upon of historical, scriptural, and doctrinal material are available in the paper and you can look at that to determine the source I rely upon.

Mormonism is compelling. It's a very big religion, at least when it began. Since its beginning it has diminished considerably. Joseph Smith asserted:

The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another, when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds...

Everything that's true, lovely or of good report was intended to be part of original Mormonism.

Joseph's original Mormonism was inclusive, not exclusive. All truth belonged to Mormonism but it never pretended to have it all. Mormonism was the search for truth. It was originally the search to discover "truth" without fear of finding something new.

To Joseph, Mormonism did not possess all truth. His religion was not based on conceit, but on humility—the willingness to continue to search, pray, study and hope for newly revealed additions. It was understood there was a great deal more yet to be discovered. The claim that Mormonism was the "only true and living church" presumed the willingness to hear God's voice and receive new truth; it was not because it already had all truth. It was "living" during Joseph's life because it continued to grow and expand. Living organisms grow, dead ones decay.

Boyd K. Packer may have had a point in asserting, "Some things that are true are not very useful." Packer did not clarify to what end truth needed to be "useful," because the original end of Mormonism was not about institutional loyalty but it was to teach

mankind to converse with the Lord through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence; then to enter into His presence, and thereby be redeemed from the fall. We must all concede that Packer is quite right that truth which destroys idolatry is never "useful" to the idol.

The present fracturing of Mormonism is because it lost sight of the original inclusiveness. The opposite of the Packer standard is the one suggested by J. Reuben Clark, "If we have the truth, it cannot be harmed by investigation. If we have not the truth, it ought to be harmed." Between J. Reuben Clark and Boyd K. Packer, the LDS version of Mormonism departed from an inclusive truth to an exclusive truth, becoming in the process, intolerant, arrogant, and consequently much smaller. That intolerance makes the claim to have all truth all the more amusing to anyone who compares the vacuous content of correlated Mormonism to the interesting liveliness of the original.

Mormonism revived the original relevance of religion because mankind wants big picture answers from the God who created us. Because all of us hope to hear answers from God, we remain interested still today. No matter how much our predecessors have tampered with and discarded from the original, the power of the ideals of that original still haunt all who have been exposed to it.

Even if the present-day interest for some is thought to be a postmortem of a stillborn cult, critics must acknowledge the power of the original ideas of Joseph Smith. Critics continue to complain because they remain interested, even if disaffected. They linger over the corpse as if they fear another resurrection.

Critics are justified to fear a Mormon revival. If God really did talk to Joseph, Mormonism may again assume the role of God's soapbox to address mankind. If all truth belongs to Mormonism, everyone looking for truth will want to take part.

At one time Mormonism claimed the true and only God of heaven, who sent His Son Jesus Christ to save mankind, still cared enough to talk to us. By participating WE can become as important as the people who produced the Bible. The rest of Judaism and Christianity may have dead prophets and a silent God, but in Mormonism, God's voice originally spoke anew.

The presence of God's active voice is the foundation of original Mormonism. If Mormons can hear God's voice, it renders all other religions inferior. By implication, it also renders every other Judeo-Christian religion "an abomination" because it's obviously wrong to reject the voice of God calling you to come unto Him by becoming a Mormon.

Because God spoke, everything changed continually. It was an expanding changeling, never taking a final form.

David Whitmer was dissatisfied because everything continually changed. His *Address to All Believers in Christ* started with the issue of Mormonism-in-motion:

They have departed in a great measure from the faith of the Church of Christ as it was first established, by heeding revelations given through Joseph Smith, who, after being called of God to translate his sacred word -- the Book of Mormon -- drifted into many errors and gave many revelations to introduce doctrines, ordinances and offices in the church, which are in conflict with Christ's teachings.

They also changed the name of the church.

He thought the Bible and Book of Mormon were the only faithful canon, and all else was vanity and foolishness.

I am only going to refer to a handful of examples to illustrate the shifting contours of Mormonism during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Many others could be added.

Mormonism forces us to confront the choice: Mormonism, or the false Judeo-Christian religions that are "other than Mormonism." We have a choice between only two churches. The Book of Mormon explains, "Behold, there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil." This claim alone made original Mormonism relevant.

If "there are save two churches only," and only one is the church of the Lamb of God, splintered Mormonism cannot be the "one true church." It is now anything but monolithic. Which version is "true" (because it is impossible for squabbling and disagreeing versions to all be the "only true church") particularly when the various factions have gone to the trouble of excommunicating one another.

Mormonism has or does include over 84 sects. It's an interesting list of names. If there is only one true Mormon church it ought to be "true and living" and "righteous" and "united"—so those words in the names of some of these congregations of the various splinters are both apt and attention-getting.

Mormonism rose only briefly above the religious squabbling of its time. Following Joseph's and Hyrum's murders, Mormonism has subsequently degenerated and splintered. It now can be described in the same terms Joseph Smith used to explain the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians of 1820:

The whole of Mormonism is affected by an unusual excitement, and multitudes unite themselves to the different Mormon parties, which creates no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo, here!" and some, "Lo, there!" Some are contending for the LDS faith, some for the RLDS, and some for the FLDS. But, notwithstanding the great love the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifest by the respective advocates, who are active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they are pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the

converts begin to file off, some to one party and some to another, it is seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts are more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensues—prophets, seers and revelators contending against presidents, prophets, kings and revelators, and pseudo-saint against pseudo-saint; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, are entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.

This Sunstone conference is the result of the divisions now found in Mormonism. The conference topic is: "Many Mormonisms and the Mormon Movement." The divergences all reckon from a common starting point, and it is that point of beginning that I hope to address. I am concerned with whether there was an original Mormonism. To accept "Many Mormonisms" as a welcome outcome is contrary to the first premise of "one true church," all others being the devil's whores. If Mormonism has any eternal value it will be found by identifying the original—the one God called "true and living" and was the "only one with which [He was] well pleased." What was that?

If there is any hope of successfully separating the many Mormonisms into more or less like what began with Joseph Smith, we have to answer the question: how do we define the original? And that is not a simple task.

Today's Mormonism is separated from the martyrdom by 172 years. It's a landscape filled with proprietary Mormon orthodoxies attempting to stifle the spontaneous and unruly springs of revelation, inspiration, and 'conversing with the Lord through the veil.' Every splinter has an hierarchy whose right alone it is to hear and announce God's voice. If any should come from outside the hierarchies claiming revelation, dutiful followers believe they should test them, by asking that they cut off an arm or some other member of the body, and then restore it again, so that we can know they come with power. (You needed to go through the temple before 1990.) It does not matter the institutions fail to provide such miraculous signs. If the sheep donate enough, the power of constructing monuments with brick and mortar using the widow's mite is enough of a sign to show God approves the leadership. After all, if they build a great temple (or a tower to heaven), isn't that sign enough?

So what was original Mormonism? How would you describe it with certitude? During Joseph Smith's lifetime, Mormonism had the ill-defined visage of a kaleidoscope. As soon as one indispensable characteristic is identified for the original, we find discontinuity. The voice that Joseph heard never stopped tampering, adjusting, modifying, adding and improving—unless of course you didn't like what he did. And if you disliked it, he fell from grace, did not improve but damaged the original before he died, leaving something others would need to reorganize and reclaim.

While Joseph was alive, there was no approved creed or necessary body of beliefs. Joseph was opposed to constricting the beliefs of saints. On April 8, 1843, while preaching, he referred to an audience member, Pelatiah Brown, who had been

summoned before the High Council for preaching false doctrine. Joseph explained his views:

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter Day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.

Joseph Smith's tolerant broadmindedness does not mean his silence about ideas circulating among the Mormons was an endorsement. Mormons at the time were all first generation converts. They brought with them many ideas from their prior religious traditions. Joseph made little attempt to compel uniformity, choosing instead to "preach, teach, expound, and exhort" a developing religion with increasingly nuanced broad features.

David Whitmer believed Rigdon exerted a powerfully negative influence on Joseph. In David Whitmer's retrospective *Address to All Believers in Christ*, Chapter 4, he explained, "Sydney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church. I believe Rigdon to have been the instigator of the secret organization known as the 'Danites' which was formed in Far West Missouri in June, 1838. In Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831, Rigdon would expound the Old Testament scriptures of the Bible and Book of Mormon (in his way) to Joseph, concerning the priesthood, high priests, etc., and would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it. Rigdon finally persuaded Brother Joseph to believe that the high priests which had such great power in ancient times, should be in the Church of Christ to-day. He had Brother Joseph inquire of the Lord about it, and they received an answer according to their erring desires."

While Whitmer's retrospective account was written decades after the events, he was directly involved and his recollection is worth considering, because Joseph believed Mormons should be free to believe anything they wanted, unconstrained by creed, the contours of Mormonism during Joseph's life were left poorly defined. The contributions from Pratt, Rigdon and others complicate, rather than contribute, to clarifying the original.

Mormonism's mercurial form during Joseph's lifetime can be seen by considering the most stable practice: baptism.

Baptism began before 1830. While the mode of baptism (by immersion) remained constant, both the language and the purposes changed. The original baptismal prayer set out in the Church Articles and Covenants used the identical prayer found in the Book of Mormon. The words of the prayer, after calling the initiate by name, included "having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you" and so on. Those words were changed in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants to "having been commissioned of Jesus

Christ, I baptize you," and so on. Once altered, the words were never changed back. The Book of Mormon commends one baptismal prayer (given by Jesus Christ), and the Doctrine and Covenants commends a different prayer.

Proxy baptism of the living for the dead was added in 1840. Originally proxies of either sex could be baptized for both men and women. That later changed, and vicarious proxy work could be done on behalf of the same sex only, which would not prove a harbinger of later same-sex approval.

The purpose of baptism grew from remitting sins and joining the church, to include rebaptism as a means for rededication and purification, and rebaptism for the healing of the sick.

Emma Smith was rebaptized in October 1842 for her health. In April 1842, another additional clarification limited baptism and rebaptism for rededication for the living, to be performed in living waters like a lake, stream or river. Baptism for the dead or for the healing of the sick, were only to be performed in a temple font. So we see the practice of baptism expanded while Joseph was alive, even though it was perhaps the most stable feature of the original.

There is no single organized entity founded in 1830 that has remained intact. Every one of the organized corporate forms of Mormonism has morphed, been superseded, or rolled into new legal entity, and changed from whatever existed in New York on April 6, 1830.

There was never a single corporate form for an original. In January 1841, an Illinois corporation was formed and Joseph Smith elected the Trustee in Trust for that entity. This was likely the first legal organization of the church, as no formal corporate documentation from New York has ever been discovered. But Illinois law limited the corporation to owning no more than 5 acres. Upon Joseph's death, the church Trustee was lost and disputes over property followed. Property held in Joseph's name may have belonged to the church—or not, if you were Emma Smith. Hopefully no one believed that salvation was tied in any way to which corporate entity owned what property upon the death of Joseph Smith.

Each one of the proprietary, corporate forms of Mormonism are very pushy about insisting that they are "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth." But even if there were such a thing as continuity of a corporate entity from Joseph Smith until today, would that really be the original without doing, teaching, conducting and delivering what originally was done, taught, conducted and delivered? Can institutional identity decide religious authority apart from conduct? The LDS version of scriptures rejects that idea.

There was never a single name used to identify an original Mormon church. Originally, the "Church of Christ" had changed names several times from the 1830s to 1841. In addition to different names, a series of entities, many of which were not legally separate

from the individuals involved, were formed to hold property belonging to the "Church of Christ." The first name didn't last and was occasionally replaced by the "Church of Jesus Christ." The third iteration was the "Church of the Latter Day Saints," and still later the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." On April 26, 1838, a revelation settled the question of name as "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," but the revealed name was not used until years later.

Today, the Doctrine and Covenants has changed the original revealed name, substituting a different name. There is no entity that uses the original name.

"Original" Mormonism must reckon from some form of continuity, but continuity of exactly what? Practices changed markedly during Joseph's life and never acquired a settled form. It took six years from founding of the church before washings and anointings were introduced. Once introduced, they were changed. Originally they were done with whisky scented with cinnamon, followed by perfumed olive oil. Feet and face washing were added after the Kirtland Temple dedication on March 27, 1836. The rites were revised in Nauvoo and tubs were added as a practical accommodation in the Nauvoo Temple. Joseph died before the completion of the Nauvoo Temple and therefore neither a building design for the upper floors, nor a ceremony for the endowment, were completed by Joseph Smith before his death. Brigham Young completed the unfinished ceremony and claimed Joseph Smith told him to.

According to L. John Nuttall's diary, Brigham Young stated he received the endowment from Joseph before the temple was available and "after we got through Bro Joseph turned to me and said Bro Brigham this is not arranged right but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed..." How confident are you that they were completed in the way Heaven wanted?

The remark giving Brigham permission to complete the temple rites were made in private. In public, Joseph declared, "Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles." The first question this raises is whether Joseph contradicted himself by changing things. The only way to reconcile the many changes he instituted is to take note that he made only additive expansions, finishing and recovering the ordinances instituted in the heavens. He was transmitting what came from above to believers, and it came incrementally. Joseph's changes never took away from the ordinances, but frequently expanded on what was here before.

Joseph never did anything with "the ordinances instituted in the heavens" like the LDS Church has done. The elimination of the Christian minister from the endowment in 1990, along with the abandonment of the penalties from the ceremony at the same time, were purely deductive. Joseph never did anything like that. Likewise, LDS washings and anointings were changed in 2011 to eliminate actual washing and actual anointing, replacing them with "simply symbolic" references. That was yet another deductive deviation from "the ordinances instituted in the heavens." It violated Joseph's principal that they "are not to be altered or changed." The original Mormonism may have added,

but it respected what was previously revealed. All later forms of corporate Mormonism have been deductive.

The RLDS Church made even greater deductions. They abandoned baptisms for the dead, washings, anointings, eternal marriage, and the temple rites altogether. Subtraction from the ordinances is one clear way to confirm the original form of Mormonism no longer exists. If there is to be an original, it will require adding back what has been lost.

The First Vision is a clear illustration of Joseph's practice of adding to the religion. Originally, the event was not part of the Mormon narrative at all. Once it was added, it changed over multiple retellings. The 1832 account focused on Joseph's personal salvation. The 1835 account is the first to mention a struggle with the devil. The account evolved in the 1838 retelling to have cosmic implications for the salvation of all mankind. Both the Father and the Son appeared, and the purpose was not to forgive Joseph's sins, but to confirm the entire Christian world "were all corrupt" and taught "the commandments of men" "having a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof." It is the 1838 version that is canonized in the Pearl of Great Price. Like everything else for so long as Joseph Smith was involved, the First Vision expanded, both in details and meaning, until it was no longer about Joseph the individual, but the salvation of all mankind.

The description of the Godhead, which was settled during Joseph's lifetime, became unsettled after his death. When *Lectures on Faith* was adopted as scripture by a conference in 1835, the Godhead consisted of two personages: the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost was not a person but "the mind" of the Father and Son. It is described similarly in Moses 6:61, as a "record" or the "truth of all things" and not an individually embodied spirit being.

A different definition gradually crept into LDS scripture, assuming final form in 1921. The 'Holy Ghost creep' stemmed from a talk Joseph delivered on April 2, 1843. The note-takers who were present during that talk bequeathed an altered definition of the Holy Ghost. Their notes reflected what they believed they heard from Joseph. However, Brigham Young and Jedediah Grant approved a change from the notes in 1854, which then underwent a round of punctuation changes in 1858. A final version of the embodied Holy Ghost doctrine was approved by Heber J. Grant and a committee of six members of the twelve in 1921 (the same time they deleted the *Lectures on Faith* from scripture). The addition of the embodied Holy Ghost to LDS scripture created a doctrinal conflict with *Lecture Fifth*, and something had to give. So the *Lectures* were deleted. Whatever else this process illustrates, it confirms there was confusion stemming from Joseph's comments in April 1843, and therefore Mormon beliefs remained unstable while Joseph was alive.

Mormonism's canon of scripture was still unsettled when Joseph died in 1844. Different Mormon sects rely on different canons as their sacred texts. Joseph retranslated the Bible, which is commonly referred to as the Joseph Smith Translation. He called this

endeavor "the fullness of the scriptures" and it was only the Joseph Smith Translation that was used throughout *Lectures on Faith*. Joseph prophesied that the church would fail if the fullness of the scriptures was not completed. Though finished, Joseph never published the text. Upon his death, it became the property of Emma Smith. She bequeathed it to the RLDS Church, and they subsequently published it. Excerpts are now in the LDS Bible in footnotes and an appendix but not the entirety of the fullness that Joseph said was critical.

This canonical disparity between Mormonisms is only possible because a completed authoritative canon was still expanding during Joseph's life. Ironically, the canonical exposition Joseph personally edited and vouched for, *Lectures on Faith*, has been discarded by every Mormon sect.

Originally, like the Book of Mormon, the church had elders, priests and teachers. The term "apostle" began to be used. But the term "apostle" did not mean the same thing then that it does today. A quorum of twelve apostles did not exist in Mormonism until February 1835. Prior to that, many individuals were identified as "apostles." The term meant someone sent with a message from God. The term was originally used to identify all the missionaries sent to preach the Book of Mormon. The revelations given through Joseph Smith specifically identified the following men as "apostles" in the following dates:

-Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer in June 1829

-Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in April 1830

-Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt and Leman Copley in March 1831 — in fact, if you go to the D&C and check the heading date of everything that refers to an "apostle" if it comes before February 1835 then it has no relevance to or limitation of the term "apostle" to a quorum of twelve. It simply meant, "those sent with a message."

A series of revelations referred to "apostles" and included admonitions, instructions, and commandments to different audiences composed of "apostles" before the organization of a quorum of twelve in 1835. Even after that the Seventy were regarded as "apostles." It was not until 1835 that the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, were asked by Joseph Smith to choose the first twelve members of the newly announced quorum of the twelve. The Three Witnesses made their choices at a meeting on February 14, 1835. And while they didn't preserve the order in which they were ordained, assuming that they were ordained in the same order as the Three Witnesses are listed, it was Martin Harris who would have ordained Brigham Young.

Joseph Smith took an inconsistent path identifying the center of power and influence in Mormonism. On the day the church was organized, a revelation identified Joseph as the church's "prophet, seer and revelator." Five months later in September 1830, another revelation limited all revelations and commandments for the church to those coming through Joseph Smith. David Whitmer thought Joseph Smith was led into error by pride when he assumed the role of "prophet, seer and revelator."

Despite the revelations making Joseph the primary revelator of commandments for the church, he never presumed to be the exclusive revelator. To the contrary, others were expected to receive them, and he was pleased when others received visions, he believed them to be authentic, and he recorded them. The year after a revelation conferred status on Joseph as the primary revelator, another revelation empowered everyone holding priesthood with the authority to reveal the mind of God: "they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost & whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be Scripture shall be the will of the Lord shall be the mind of the Lord shall be the voice of the Lord & shall be the power of God unto Salvation[.]"

From October, 1838 to April, 1839, Joseph spent 173 days jailed in Missouri. Just prior to his release he penned a letter to the saints. The most remarkable part of the letter addresses abuse of the priesthood. It is noteworthy; this occupied his thoughts while in prison, instead of state and political abuse. He wrote:

...Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson--that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handed only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood, or the authority of that man. Behold! ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks; to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God.

We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

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

Early in the restoration, power and influence had been consolidated into Joseph's hands alone. He began to erode that power by the following year. But in the meditative confines of Liberty Jail, Joseph saw the wisdom of destroying all power and influence by virtue of the priesthood alone.

Two months following Joseph's release from the Liberty Jail, Joseph condemned the highest levels of church leadership, warning them against self-sufficiency, self righteousness and self-importance. He was alarmed by the idea leaders would think themselves better than church members, and would rise up in judgment, calling themselves more righteous than those they led. His warning to leaders included the following. This is an audience composed of the Twelve and the Seventy, not of any common members:

I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy, and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as god lives.

This caution has been turned on its head by the many Mormonisms of today. Hierarchies uniformly regard themselves as "righteous" even claiming that they cannot lead their churches astray. They presume to condemn and find fault with the church's members, saying the members are out of the way while the leaders are righteous. In short, the fears that began to arise in Joseph's heart in the mid-1830s crystallized in the Liberty Jail, and in the July 1839 sermon he denounced the very conditions that have now come to pass.

In 1842 he lamented the Saints were depending too much on the prophet, darkened in their minds and neglecting the duties devolving on themselves.

Whatever authority may have been claimed early on, by the end, Mormonism's priestly domination was diminished, if not altogether gone. It is impossible to reconcile the most virulent form of priestly power found in correlated LDS Mormonism with the Liberty Jail edict that "no power or influence can, or ought, to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood." Joseph Smith's meditations on learning from sad experience that men abused even "supposed" power has been forgotten in modern Mormonisms. Fortunately, anyone can be a servant, kneeling to wash others' feet as the Master showed in His example, whether they are ordained or not. So too can anyone persuade using gentleness and pure knowledge, women and men, young and old, black and white, rich or poor.

In 1836, sacred rites were introduced in the Kirtland Temple. In 1843 different rites were contemplated, even partially celebrated. The new and improved temple rites were to be completed and housed in a new temple then under construction. A partial "endowment" was added to the already existing washings and anointings. The expanded rites also contemplated sealing marriages and adoption, or man-to-man sealings, all of which remained ill defined at the time of Joseph's death.

Joseph's original instruction about sealing dealt with connecting the living faithful to the "fathers" in heaven, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The connection was to be accomplished through adoption sealings, not genealogy. Joseph was connected to the

"fathers" through his priesthood. He and his brother Hyrum were to become 'fathers' of all who would live after them. Just read Abraham chapter 1 verse 2. Families were originally organized under Joseph as the father of the righteous in this dispensation. Accordingly, men were sealed to Joseph Smith as their father, and they as his sons. This was referred to as 'adoption' because the family organization was not biological, but priestly, according to the law of God. As soon as Joseph died, the doctrine began to erode, ultimately replaced by the substitute practice of sealing genealogical lines together. In between the original adoptive sealing to Joseph and the current practice of tracking genealogical or biological lines, there was an intermediate step when families were tracked back as far as research permitted, then the line was sealed to Joseph Smith. That practice is now forgotten, and is certainly no longer practiced by any denomination within Mormonism.

When Joseph died, any understanding of the practice of "adoption" was quickly lost. Confusion over this subject once again confirms both the ever-changing nature of Mormonism and its failure to become complete during Joseph Smith's lifetime.

In developing man's role in the cosmos, things began rather Protestant-like. Joseph eventually taught plainly that men could become gods. Further, he asserted that God was once a man that had progressed to godhood. LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley commenting on this topic said, "I don't know that we teach it. I don't know that we emphasize it. I haven't heard it discussed for a long time in public discourses. I don't know. I don't know all the circumstances under which that statement was made. I understand the philosophical background behind it. But I don't know a lot about it and I don't know that others know a lot about it." President Hinckley was right, of course. The idea crept into Mormonism late in Joseph's life, and never had an opportunity to be fully developed. So Mormons do not know a lot about it.

Joseph Smith's 'Magnum Opus,' the King Follett Discourse, seems more like an introduction to something new than an established, fully developed theology, though the idea that man could progress to be like God had been disclosed earlier. The idea that God was once a man and also learned His salvation was clearly something new, that was first revealed in this talk. Joseph's April 1844 sermon finally closed an idea opened nine years earlier in the 1835 *Lectures on Faith*.

We ask then where is the prototype, or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question, ... that it is Christ: all will agree in this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation; or, in other words, that he is a saved being.

He goes on to explain that any saved being must be precisely what Christ is or else not be saved.

The 1835 *Lectures* was just a prelude, left un-clarified and unexplained. The implications of this teaching escaped believers. Mormons were surprised to learn Christ did what His Father did when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Like God the

Father, Christ "laid down His life and took it up again" or, in other words, attained to the resurrection of the dead. These ideas were consistent with earlier revelations, translations and writings, but King Follett signaled a whole new level of harmonizing ideas and adding upon the restoration.

Because Joseph was killed less than three months later, the talk was left as the introduction of something much grander to follow. But like the Nauvoo Temple and the temple rites, this fresh teaching was left undeveloped; a reminder of how great a loss one encounters when God takes an authentic prophet out of the community.

Mormonism failed to reach a finish line while Joseph was alive. God seems quite willing to give people what they want, even if it displeases Him. The first missionaries were sent among the Lamanites but never arrived. Along the path westward they stopped in Kirtland, Ohio and converted over 200 Campbellites, including Sidney Rigdon. The early eager Campbellite converts steered Joseph's inquiries, and over the following decade the restoration focused on organizing a restored, New Testament, Primitive Christian church with all the original offices, teachings and practices. In the background of this preoccupation with New Testament Christianity, however, God pointed Joseph, and in turn us, toward something more ancient. God was attempting to return to the earth the original faith taught to Adam in the beginning.

The religion of Adam was the objective of Mormonism. Joseph Smith was unable to fully restore that first religion of man. Joseph predicted the religion would include a future gathering in the "everlasting hills," (in all probability the Rocky Mountains) where returning tribes would be "crowned" with glory in a New Jerusalem to be God's last [days] Zion. The returning tribes did not gather in Kirtland, Jackson County, Far West, or Nauvoo, and Joseph was dead before the trip westward to Salt Lake. Even the most ardent defender of the LDS version of Mormonism must concede that things expected, even promised and prophesied to happen, that were left unrealized when Joseph died.

The LDS and RLDS organizations disagree on many subjects, but four in particular separate them: Polygamy, succession in the presidency, plurality of Gods, and secret temple rites including baptism for the dead. Depending on which part of the history was considered most important the outcome favors one over the other. One writer explained the disagreements this way, "I realized that as long as the focus was on Kirtland, the prairie Mormons [RLDS] held the advantage, but whenever the debate turned to Nauvoo, the mountain Mormons [LDS] would win." The morphing faith under Joseph Smith was responsible for allowing this outcome. Anywhere along the timeline of his life as church leader, if there was a line drawn, what followed was different from before. Nothing was abandoned, but expansions sometimes so transformed the earlier ideas, rites or practices that the new developments seemed to revolutionize the religion.

Because of the instability of Mormonism during Joseph's life, it is reasonable to conclude if there was an original, it cannot be defined by searching the teachings, practices, features, rites, or organization of the period from 1820 to 1844. One must look elsewhere to define an "original." Perhaps the best and only, way to identify an

"original" Mormonism is to look at the aspirations for a religion that embraces all truth. If the goal of the original is considered, one can get much closer to defining it than by reassembling bits from its beginning. It is Mormonism's destiny that best tells us what Mormonism was, is, and is to come. Anything else fails to meet the scriptural definition of truth.

If the original Mormonism needed to recover the fullness that was lost, then to revive an original, it will require a recovery of what was lost, and more. If recovered, believers will be able to receive a holy spot, accepted and defended by God. In that place the religion of Adam will be taught. The promised original religion includes the revelation of everything, "nothing shall be withheld." Today's Mormonism has a great deal withheld, but the religion of Abraham (and therefore the religion of Adam) included "a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers." The original Mormonism must grow in ancient knowledge and understanding until their understanding reaches into heaven. Not just spiritual understanding, but also physical understanding of the layout of the universe. The placement of the lights in the firmament was for "signs" to man, and therefore were deliberately placed and contain information originally understood by Adam.

Because of prophecies made to the patriarchal fathers, the right to found this future city of peace descends from a specific ancient line. There will be an heir descended from both Jesse and Joseph who will accomplish it. Occupants of the community will likewise have lineal qualification. The last-day's Zion is an accomplishment promised earlier to the patriarchal fathers and it is through their descendants God intends to vindicate the promises. The result of this alignment will be a priestly city of Zion that will "return to that power which she had lost."

The original iteration of Mormonism was apocalyptic. But it was oddly practical about the apocalypse, assuming there were things that could be done to prepare. Not in haste, which was condemned, but it was a physical and spiritual enterprise to be accomplished by the hard effort of those interested in welcoming the Lord's return.

(Okay, read the paper. I find that topic relentlessly boring. My guess is that a male in puberty could keep his attention focused on that topic for a decade. Just read the paper.)

Joseph was the only one who could appoint a successor. He first designated David Whitmer. In 1835 Joseph organized the complementary presidency in Zion. The president was David Whitmer, with counselors W.W. Phelps and John Whitmer. This made David Whitmer the backup church president if Joseph died. Four days after organizing the Missouri Zion presidency, Joseph explained, "if he should now be taken away that he had accomplished the great work which the Lord had laid before him[.]"

He wrote in his journal the following year, 1835, that the church's permanent foundation was assured because of the Missouri president, who would take over if he, Joseph, were taken. Unfortunately, in 1838 Whitmer resigned as president in Zion, joined the

dissenters and contributed to the agitation that resulted in the Mormon War. Whitmer later organized his own competing church. Presumably an active dissenter who refused to participate in the church for six years was disqualified as Joseph's successor when Joseph was killed.

A second successor was appointed in 1841. Hyrum Smith was given the same status as Joseph by revelation. Although Hyrum was faithful, he died moments before Joseph and that left the "successor" unidentified. This was all the more unfortunate because Joseph alone had the power to appoint a successor.

If there was an original Mormonism it had an inclusiveness to it that welcomed all truth. Diverse, even opposing views held in good faith, were welcomed and expected. The original would have welcomed Paul Toscano and Boyd Packer (and it is doubtful Packer would have had authority to forcibly exclude Toscano). The original would have welcomed the insights of both Kate Kelly and Dallin Oaks, and allowed their opposing views to be resolved only by persuasion and long suffering. The original would have allowed D. Michael Quinn to have continued access to the Historical Department archives to mine and publish the sins and excesses of the past. Confessing sins is good for the individual, but it is even better for an institution. An original would not have leaders seeking to hide their sins or gratify their pride, or whose vain ambitions attempt through control, dominion and compulsion to reign with intimidation over a flock that is only kept from the truth because they are not allowed to find it.

The general conferences of an original would look a lot more like a Sunstone Symposium than the uniform and predictable April and October meetings. (While in law school we dubbed the droning cadence of General Conference "General Authoritic Pentameter." It's produced by using a screened read without any sonorous meter. [Any cadence] would qualify as long as it kept attention away from the jarring and discordant words that separate us now from what Joseph was doing.)

We have lost the original. But we do not need to abandon it forever. After all, repentance means to turn to face God again. He is quite willing to speak still.

If James 1:5 were true for Joseph Smith, it should be true for us. We can ask God with real intent, and obtain a like measure of wisdom from on high. Mormonism may have been a briefly lit candle whose flame expired on June 27, 1844. But it left behind a smoldering spark that only needs another generation to breathe enough of the breath of life to reignite the flame. The breath of the spirit gave life to man originally. It can still restore life, even to a religion that has somehow departed its way.

Mormonism is (or ought to be) a very big religion. Such a faith as that always attracts adherents. We won't get there unless our attitude returns to something like Joseph's in the original Mormonism. Here is what he wrote in a letter from Liberty Jail about how broadly tolerant we ought to be in our religious views:

[W]e ought always to be aware of those prejudices which sometimes so strangely present themselves, and are so congenial to human nature, against our friends, neighbors, and brethren of the world, who choose to differ from us in opinion and in matters of faith. Our religion is between us and our God. Their religion is between them and their God.

Joseph died with a clear conscience. Few Mormons since him have done likewise. Somehow Mormonism has tolerated marital misconduct, adultery, concealing criminal misconduct by "lying for the Lord" to evade Federal investigations, aggregating wealth while neglecting the poor, exercising control to abrogate follower's consciences under the claim it is the right of church leaders to do so. It has abandoned adoptions, denounced eternal progression, de-canonized *Lectures on Faith* (without a vote of its members), and concealed church finances. It recently has stretched LDS "sustaining" into an oath-like obligation binding on us. LDS Mormonism has determined that truth can be sometimes "unhelpful" to it. These deviations have happened as modern Mormonism yet claims Joseph as its founder. Modern Mormonism isn't. It is something far deviant from the original, and as this Sunstone Conference shows, its deviations are metastasizing.

Joseph dreamt while in Carthage Jail, the night before his murder, the following:

I was back in Kirtland, Ohio, and thought I would take a walk out by myself, and view my old farm, which I found grown up with weeds and brambles, and altogether bearing evidence of neglect and want of culture. I went into the barn, which I found without floor or doors, with the weather-boarding off, and was altogether in keeping with the farm.

While I viewed the desolation around me, and was contemplating how it might be recovered from the curse upon it, there came rushing into the barn a company of furious men, who commenced to pick a quarrel with me.

The leader of the party ordered me to leave the barn and farm, stating it was none of mine, and that I must give up all hope of ever possessing it.

I told him the farm was given me, and although I had not had any use of it for some time back, still I had not sold it, and according to the righteous principles it belonged to me.

He then grew furious and began to rail upon me, and threaten me, and said it never did belong to me.

I then told him that I did not think it worth contending about, that I had no desire to live upon it in its present state, and if thought he had a better right I would not quarrel with him about it but leave; but my assurance that I would not trouble him at present did not seem to satisfy him, and he seemed determined to quarrel with me, and threatened me with the destruction of my body.

While he was thus engaged, pouring out his bitter words upon me, a rabble rushed in and nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel among themselves for the premises, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud.

While I was a little distance from the barn, I heard them screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as it appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the vision ended.

Of course we now can see the fulfillment of Joseph's vision about his "farm." The original is lost and can only be recovered in the same way it began: By God's direct involvement. If an "original" returns, it will add elements that recover, finish, fulfill—not just add upon, but greatly expand, and yet remain entirely consistent with, the original.

In the current environment of "Many Mormonisms," an original will likely be unnoticed, or dismissed as merely another schismatic breakaway from the party of angry men now occupying "Joseph's farm." But if the original Mormonism was founded on God's voice, then God's voice is abundant enough to recreate what is yet to be fully created. That is, of course, assuming there will ever again someone foolish enough to hear and heed His voice.

The paper upon which this talk was based is available as a PDF on my website but I printed about thirty copies of it and I'm going to leave them up front and at least thirty of you can pick up a copy there. I intentionally reserved enough time for questions and wondered if anyone had a question that they wanted to come up to the mike and voice.

Facilitator: Come on up here to the mike if you would, in the center aisle up front.

Question 1A: I'm formulating this question as I'm standing here talking already. My opinion is that the church under Joseph Smith never would have survived as long as it did doing what he did, unless he were a charismatic and he were open-minded enough to accept all walks of life into the church. If you were much more hard line till like Brigham Young was, let's say, more of a business man, I don't think the church would have had its metamorphosis that we see...

Denver Snuffer: But remember, Brigham Young had the advantage of isolation in the wilderness where it was difficult to flee.

Question 1B: Very important. That's what happens when you cultivate a desert wasteland. My point would be, from a skeptical perspective, it seems like almost the wrong question to say, "Was there an original church," because it was constantly morphing and changing. Trying to nail down a point, you can say April 6, 1830 but that was divorced from what he and Oliver Cowdery were doing in 1829 together. My question would be, would it be better to ask, what can be gleaned when we compare what we see as maybe an original, to today's? Would it be better to examine the

differences and say, what can we understand about it as a whole, instead of saying, we should try and follow whatever the original was?

Denver Snuffer: I guess the way that you approach it: was Mormonism originally something, and if something, what was that thing? The closer you look at the issue of what it was the less it appears to be an organization, an institution, a body, and the more it appears to be a window into heaven in which individuals encounter it and are transformed by it. As the ordinance development went along, one of the things that distracted people – it's the perniciousness of the vocabulary that substitutes one for the other. It's when you introduce the idea of being sealed up and you introduce the idea of an ordinance in which something cosmic occurs, that people become distracted from the fact that Mormonism was trying to get you... At the end of this long ceremonial thing, you come and you encounter at the veil a symbolic presence of the Lord with whom you communicate through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence, at which point you render an accounting. It's a mechanical process of keys, signs, and tokens. People think, "oh well if I got them then I can give all the passwords and I can get by the angels that stand as sentry, because that's the way that Brigham described the endowment. If that's the case then let's all go to Gerald and Sandra Tanner's website, let's get those keys, signs, and tokens and go get drunk and have a frickin' orgy and enjoy ourselves cuz we can get past the sentinels. We got em!" Unless of course they are purely symbolic, intending to communicate to the heart and mind the idea that you must represent by the life, the tangible life you lived, you must represent a life that has been devoted to obedience and sacrifice.

The Lord will come into contact with you to confirm that your life has been so, because He is the keeper of the gate and He employeth no servant there. He can tell at a glance if you have lived your life in accordance with the gospel, consecration, fidelity. He can tell that, and then allow you to enter into His presence and thereby be redeemed from the fall. All of that mystical journey was a process of substituting symbols for truth. The testimony to the truth being...

I do think that when Joseph Smith had the First Vision he pretty well describes the initial reaction that he had to it. He went home, he leans against the fireplace and he tells Mother Smith, "I've learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." That's about as far as it went. But as the religion began to roll out it assumed a cosmic significance precisely because it began to dawn on Joseph that the religion was intended for all men, all mankind to be redeemed from the fall. At the end of the whole thing, when you get all the way to the end, you can take Mormonism and go all the way back to James 1:5 and say, all Joseph is doing is saying that James 1:5 is true and it works. Therefore, you ought to attempt it. Take all the ordinances, take all of the promises, take everything that has been delivered and realize that all of that is simply God cheerleading you to reconnect with Him, and have an authentic experience. When that happens then the religion is alive. Then it matters. But it's living in you, it's not living in some chapel, it's not living in some temple, it's living in you. That's the objective of the original.

Question 2A: *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was a primary catalyst to my own paradigm shift and faith transition a few years ago, so thank you for that journey.

Denver Snuffer: Don't thank me.

Question 2B: So much of what you have written since then has really resonated with me but something that I come up against, that is a stumbling block for me – and I'm not a 12-year-old boy and I will read the paper – is the insistence that Joseph Smith did not practice polygamy despite all of the even contemporaneous evidence to the contrary. How would it harm your argument to say that he did? Why couldn't he have been the prophet of the restoration and have made this huge mistake with polygamy?

Denver Snuffer: That's a fair question and it's a great question, actually. I understand why people of good faith believe all of the propaganda that began upon Joseph's death and are confident that there is truth there. In fact, in D&C 132 we know something got read to the Nauvoo High Council and that something that got read dealt with the topic that the current iteration of D&C 132 contains. I'm not denying any of that.

Here's the problem: If you start with the beginning, and I take the position that whatever was revealed was first revealed in 1829. I think that it came during the translation of Jacob chapter 2. Just like reading about baptism in the Book of Mormon, they pray about baptism and John the Baptist appeared. I believe it was Jacob chapter 2 and not the Old Testament translation. In fact, there's plenty of reason to suspect that. Start with 1829 and look at everything that exists up until June 27, 1844 and end your inquiry there. Just stop it at that moment and ask yourself, is there any proof that Joseph was involved in the way that people characterize his involvement?

If you have an ordinance identified, and D&C 132 identifies an ordinance. It's only one. It's the old cliché, to a man with a hammer the whole world looks like a nail. If the only ordinance you have is marriage, and that's the mechanism by which you are going to preserve families into eternity, and you want to preserve another family into eternity, how are you going to accomplish that? The only way in which it is possible to do so is through marriage.

Some time – and understand, it was so late, we're talking a period of a few months, it's some time very late in the process – Joseph Smith began to do adoptions. We don't even have language for what it was that Joseph was doing. Brigham Young attempted to mimic that. In fact, that section that Brigham Young wrote in the D&C about captains of tens and captains of fifties, substitute the word "father" because he organized the companies according to adoption principles.

When Brigham Young got through in the valley and he was migrating back, and he was going to Winter Quarters and he encountered John Taylor and Parley Pratt and their company, the reason he blew a gasket, the reason why he went back and he wanted to become the president, was because he had organized that company according to the priesthood. He went back and was ranting and raving. When you read that it makes no

sense at all unless you substitute in their the fact that he had organized them in an adopted family, and he viewed what Parley Pratt and John Taylor had done as an offence against the priesthood itself, and that's why he wanted to be elected president. He got himself elected president, and one of the first things he said was, he can hardly wait to get back to the Salt Lake Valley and have Parley Pratt and John Taylor confess that they aren't Brigham Young, because he's the big dog now, and no one can seal anyone to anything without him and his word alone because he substituted.

Joseph was up to something. But as soon as you get to 1852 the well of history is poisoned and everyone who advocates the continuity of polygamy dating back to Brigham Young, every one of them necessarily argues that fraud, deceit, lying, false testifying is an integral part of the religion in order to conceal the "sacred principle" of what they were up to.

You look at Joseph Smith. The way that they have parsed the language to try and make it appear that Joseph was dishonest, is to distinguish between celestial marriage or the principle, and polygamy or plural wives or whatever else language got used. I see no such fine tuning in the talks that Joseph gave, in the conduct that he manifest. Your choice is that Joseph Smith was a calculated two-faced deceiver, or he said what he meant, he meant what he said, and that the subsequent amalgamation of historical proofs are insufficient.

I dealt with that Fanny Alger thing, and the incident in the barn. We have two sources. We have only two sources for that, and they are decades after the fact. And when you put them both together the incident in the barn was Levi Hancock reciting the ceremony that Joseph gave to him in order to perform it, and that's what Emma saw through the barn. There was even a conference in Provo. I think FAIR sponsored the conference. It was a woman that gave the talk. She got up and said the reason that Emma Smith was upset about Fanny Alger, [it] didn't have anything to do with leaving sexual conduct with her husband, it was because she regarded the sealing as being more important than Fanny Alger did, and Emma actually believed in the eternity of the covenant.

Look, there is too much post 1852 retrospective accounts to ever say it is impossible for the story to be cleaned up. There's too much that is contrary. The way in which I have tried to get a handle on it is to stop the inquiry on June 27, 1844 and look at what happened before.

Unfortunately, in the Joseph Smith Papers there are letters that are exchanged between Joseph and Emma, and the way I read the relationship is very different from the way in which others read it. She was the stronger personality. Her personality was stronger than Joseph and he needed her, he depended on her, and he had enormous respect for her, and he loved her and she loved him. Their relationship was not some... They did some practical planning in light of what was going on, in light of what happened. I think Joseph Smith's reliance upon, affection for, and respect, for Emma Smith as his wife was far greater than most people have fathomed. Read their letters to one another. If they were unequally yoked, Emma had the advantage. She was better educated than

him and he valued her opinion. This idea that he was some... Well, it's like *Rough Stone Rolling* pointed out, if he was a lothario, where the crap are the children? There aren't any. In fact, Joseph Smith's statements, teachings, letters, communications with women seem very respectful. I would suggest that he was more of a shy nerd as to women than he was some predatory guy in a smoking jacket with a gold chain on his chest.

Question 3: Could you please tell us, are you or are you not the reincarnation of B.H. Roberts? If you would like to table that, I could also ask if you give much credence to the theory that Brigham Young and his cousin, Willard Richards, orchestrated the death of both Hyrum, Joseph, and then their younger brother, Samuel Smith, shortly after Carthage?

Denver Snuffer: The records don't let us rule it in and something that dramatic probably ought not be ruled in without proof. It's like, on some matters the burden of proof ought to be high enough that we have to reach a conclusion. When the historical record is a jumble... Brigham Young and Willard Richards were definitely propagandists willing to change the historical record in order to accomplish something. Brigham Young's ambition to run Mormonism knew no bounds. He had an agenda, and his agenda could not be served by cooperating with others. He needed to have control. He saw Joseph had it and he wanted it. Aspiring men have always been a problem in Mormonism and they continue to be a problem today.

Question 4: If you compare the first few years of Mormonism to the first few years of Moses it seems that Moses received more. It was as if God wanted this to happen more because of snakes and fire from heaven, getting rid of competition, the evil people. Why do you think that didn't happen in Mormonism? It seemed that whether it was the Kirtland Safety Society or the Mormon War, or John C. Bennett, or William Law, whoever it was, prevented it. It was as if God didn't want Mormonism to reach Zion in the 1840s but that he wanted it to be pushed out into the wilderness and receive what we have today.

Denver Snuffer: It's an interesting thought and I would agree with the idea that Mormonism was never intended to reach the finish line while Joseph was here, but I don't know that that was a line drawn by God because He refused to permit it. I would think it would rather be a line drawn by that generation because they were unprepared to permit it. I also think that if it had not been for the establishment of what was done in Joseph's lifetime, you can't make it to the finish line in any generation. It had to be done in stages. It had to be done incrementally. The first increment or the first installment necessarily involved preparing the ground, much like Martin Luther prepared ground that ultimately lead to religious refugees coming to this country and founding a nation that has religious freedom.

Martin Luther was a necessary prerequisite to Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. Joseph Smith was a necessary prerequisite. All of the shortcomings and ills that you see in Kirtland, and in Independence and in Far West and Nauvoo and Salt Lake, all of them should inform us. That would make us better adept. We ought to be able to make

our own new and different mistakes rather than repeating the same old ones. If you are going to do the same thing that was done before you should expect the outcome to eventually be the same thing: the aggregation of a lot of political and economic and social capital in the hands of a hierarchy who will abuse you and abuse the privileges. The best way is to have someone that believes the religion, strip themselves of power exactly as Christ, the prototype of the saved man did.

Question 5: The inclusiveness you were talking about, when you were talking about revelation, that revelation from God can come from any source, and I guess our responsibility would be to be able to identify that. Which would make us have to think a lot more and ponder, I guess. How would you, any keys you would give, not to bring up that, keys have a loaded... Any suggestions? That inclusiveness is quite broad because wherever we look we would have to be able to consider whoever we're talking to, could have something from God for us, right?

Denver Snuffer: That's true. Some people who absolutely despise me say some very intelligent things that make me think. Some of what they have to say is true and ought to be respected and help make you a better person.

The way to recognize the truth is to live your life consistent with whatever truth it is that you have. If you're faithful to what you know to be the truth, none of us will have all of the truth initially but it will grow brighter and brighter as you show respect to the truth. In fact, the more consistently you show respect to the truth you already have, the more your life becomes in conflict with everything that there is down here that pulls in an opposite direction. Hence, the saying that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things cannot produce the faith necessary for salvation, which means that if you're remaining loyal to the truth and an entire church stands up to condemn you.

I don't think it was easy for Martin Luther. I don't think it was easy for Joseph Smith. The adversaries that Joseph Smith confronted initially were ministers of other faiths but later were ministers of Mormonism.

Imagine – the gal that asked the question, I guess it's now politically correct from a Democrat – the girl that asked the question about polygamy. Imagine if you will that Joseph Smith didn't practice it and was opposed to it, and put him back in his historical setting with that problem, with that attitude, and he's opposed to it. There's nothing he could have done other than what he did do in the steps that he took that ultimately lead to arrest, imprisonment, and death. Which is why, given the vagaries of the historical record I am not eager to reach a conclusion. I know that people think that I have ruled it out altogether. All I've done is said, wait a minute, there's a whole lot in the historical record that ought to create doubt in your minds. I'm saying that if there's enough doubt in your mind then stop short of reaching the conclusion that Joseph Smith did and taught and was what the histories say he was. It is possible that he was a man of virtue, a man of innocence, and a man who lived his life consistent with the truth as he understood it. If you do the same the light within you will grow and you'll be able to

distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is error, and what is of God and what is not.

Thank you all very much. We are out of time.

2016.09.11 Doctrine of Christ

General Conference Address

September 11, 2016

Boise, Idaho

The Doctrine of Christ requires that we repent and be baptized. This is the sign He asks to demonstrate faith in Him. Faith requires action or it dwindles and is lost. The importance to the Lord that we act on His Doctrine cannot be overstated.

Repentance and baptism are directly related to salvation and cannot be left undone. Christ declared His Doctrine in Third Nephi 11:32-40. His Doctrine came from His Father and mentions "baptism" four times. Only the first is positive, the three subsequent times it is negative:

The First time: *"...whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God."* (3 Nephi 11:33)

The Second time: *"And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned."* (3 Nephi 11:34)

The Third time: *"And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things."* (3 Nephi 11:37)

And the Fourth time: *"And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God."* (3 Nephi 11:38)

This is a three to one ratio of negative warning to positive promise. I do not believe the Lord or His Father are negative. This approach is more a reflection on us than on Them. God is extraordinarily positive. But we need the clarity of being told the downside, and to be warned, because, unfortunately, a positive promise does not adequately motivate us.

Immediately following His Doctrine, Christ warns against rejecting, changing, adding to, or altering His Doctrine:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them." (3 Nephi 11:40)

His Doctrine also includes this commandment:

"Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth." (3 Nephi 11:41)

This is what He commanded to be declared unto the ends of the earth **before** the Sermon that we got at Bountiful that mirrored the Sermon on the Mount.

If you believe this Doctrine of Christ, you are required to be baptized and then declare Christ's Doctrine to others.

The first time I was visited by the Lord, He showed me just how significant baptism is to abide the day of His return. He showed me baptism is of central importance to preparing for His return.

What He revealed did not seem to involve the baptism offered by the LDS Church. At the time I was a devout Latter-day Saint and did not understand how that could be possible. He revealed future events, and therefore for me to understand, more time needed to pass. The things I saw did not appear to give any greater meaning to baptism offered by the LDS church than baptism by any other denomination.

I have since come to understand that the form of baptism in the LDS church has been changed, and no longer conforms to the Doctrine of Christ. Like all other churches, that institution declares both more and less than Christ's doctrine, and claims to establish it as His.

In the intervening years I have come to see that the baptism offered by you, this people, appears to be the only one offered on earth that meets the requirements of what I was shown by the Lord years ago. For this reason it is important for us to baptize as many as will accept the Doctrine of Christ.

Since we do not ask others to become part of a new institution, nor demand they accept anything other than the Doctrine of Christ, we can and should baptize anyone willing.

I accepted the invitation to speak here, because the time has come to testify of the things shown me by the Lord in His first appearance on the night of February 12-13, 2003. I saw His return in glory, and recorded what He revealed:

I was lying at home in my bed when the Lord spoke to me, calling me by name, when it ended I was commanded to write an account. As I wrote, the words were given to me, and I recorded the following: On the 13th of February 2003 I saw the Lord coming in His glory. At first a sign appeared in the heavens; a light emanating from a single point, and turning first this way and that, All the world saw it. And men debated over its meaning. At length the light turned upon us, and within it was the Lord, showing His glory, with concourses of angels and the hosts of heaven following in His wake.

And when we saw that it was the Lord, we rejoiced and were filled with joy. I turned to my wife and said, "Look, it is Christ!" and she said, "Yes, it is!" And we were filled with joy and peace of mind, for the long awaited day of the Lord had come.

But others were filled with dread. They feared and lamented and wanted the mountains to cover them and hide them from His presence, For He was clothed in red and came in judgment. And Christian ministers knew they had taught falsely and that their faith could not save—and they begged for relief from the Saints.

This caused me to marvel at how this could be. It was given unto me to understand that without the ordinances of salvation through the authorized ministers of the gospel, it was not possible for men to shed their sins. And they could not look upon a just and Holy Being without being racked with torment and guilt for their sins. And they pled with the Saints to minister to them, but we could not, For we were constrained by the Spirit, and were forbidden to do so. For this was the day of judgment which the Lord had in His heart, and He was now come to preach His own sermon, clothed in red, and to deliver those who waited on Him and to convict and condemn those who had not.

I write this with my own hand, and bear solemn testimony that it is true, Amen.

When I had finished recording the foregoing account I replied to the Lord that it was not complete and that I could give a much fuller account. The Lord replied, "When the time comes to bear testimony of this, these are the words you shall use." And many other things were told me that cannot be written.

These are the words I can use to testify of that event. Therefore this is my testimony of that visit in early 2003.

The first appearance of the Lord was in the 50th year of my life—an age considered suitable for more than a thousand years for a man to qualify for service in the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God.

The Lord has visited with and taught me on many occasions since then, but never at my insistence. I have never controlled His appearing. My experience is that He cannot be conjured nor controlled. I can petition, but He comes when He decides. The Lord has never appeared to me in a dream. I have always been awake, fully aware of my surroundings, and with my senses unimpeded. When awakened during the night, sleep has always fled, and following such an encounter I was always unable to return to sleep.

The Lord does everything according to His higher way of teaching. By beginning with a vision of His return, He set out the foundation for understanding His course, which is one eternal round. Since His first appearance He has sent divers angels from Adam or Michael to Hyrum and Joseph Smith, giving line upon line, to confirm my hope in Christ. The most important thing for us is to repent, be baptized, and let virtue and righteousness guide our thoughts, deeds and words. We ought to deal fairly with one

another, and to be kind. You may remember abuses from priesthood "leaders" in your last church. Do not bring that with you. Leave behind all the sins and errors found in other organizations and show Christ-like patience and charity to one another.

We follow Christ to become more like Him. He requires faith, repentance and baptism, and bestows the Holy Ghost to bring all things back to our remembrance.

When we hear Christ's message to repent and be baptized, it is our duty to respond, and then warn others so they can escape the coming judgment. The whole world struggles under a burden of sin that we are powerless to remove without Christ. He suffered and overcame the sins of the world so we can avoid the consequences of sin, on condition of repentance and baptism. As He explained in a revelation in 1829: *"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink [in that context the word shrink means cower- Christ cowered]. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power;" (D&C 19:16-20.)*

When the Lord spoke to Joseph in 1829 about the atonement, He mentioned only suffering in Gethsemane, not His death on the cross, because it was in Gethsemane His greatest work was accomplished. I was shown it, and have given an account in the book *Come, Let Us Adore Him*.

In order for His work to be completed, He had to die. Death allowed Him to attain the resurrection, and break the bonds of death.

As the Lord approached death on the cross, one of the last things He spoke came from a prophetic hymn or psalm. He chose that hymn to testify that His suffering at Golgotha had been foretold in scripture. He sang only the Hymn's first line: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The hymn says much more, as those present would have understood. It continues:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? ... Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. ... They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of

death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. ... All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations. ... A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this (Psalm 22:1, 4-8, 13-19, 27-28, 30-31).

He was the chosen Messiah, and He fulfilled that role exactly as it needed to be done. We should follow Him and do what is asked of us—exactly what is asked: nothing more, and nothing less.

When His life ended, He shouted His triumph: "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). Mark and Luke record that He did this "*with a loud voice*" (Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46).

For His atonement and sacrifice to have the greatest effect, we must preach the Doctrine of Christ.

The scriptures do not foretell any great numbers will repent. Christ said, "*I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion*" (Jer. 3:14).

Too few, perhaps, to impress the world: But the Lord does not view things as do men. The Lord describes those who respond to His invitation as "His elect." He explained, "*mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts* (D&C 29:7).

Nephi foresaw how few believers there would be in the last days; he...

...beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw (1 Ne. 14:12).

The Lord requires us to invite the world to repent, but not to expect large numbers to do so. Numbers matter to man, but the hearts of men matter to the Lord. It is the quality of conversion, not the quantity. He always spoke of having "few" sheep. Of the likely billions living at the time of Enoch, only some few thousand were saved (see Jude 1:14), and only eight by Noah (see 1 Peter 3:20; D&C 138:9). The end times will be like those days (see Matt 24:37; Luke 17:26).

The Lord charges us as He did Ezekiel:

I have made you who have received these tidings to be watchmen unto the scattered house of Israel; therefore you shall hear the words of my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul (Eze. 33:7-9).

The Lord said in 1832, and again now, "*Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor. Therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads*" (D&C 88:81-82).

We are to warn and invite, but not expect many to respond. We have no obligation to dispute, contend and debate with others to overcome their resistance. The Lord warned us about using "contention" to advance the truth about His Gospel:

And according as I have commanded you [and by the way these words were spoken by the Lord immediately preceding the Doctrine of Christ] and according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away (3 Ne. 11:28-30).

We mustn't argue about our faith, but declare it and leave it for the Lord to confirm our testimony.

If by force of argument, or attractive personality, we bring others to accept baptism, it'll do little good. Such people are not converted to the Lord, and remain vulnerable to persuasion by the next argument, or the next attractive personality that, when they encounter, they depart from the faith. It would be better if they were not brought in than for them to accept baptism and then turn from forgiveness to wander off into darkness, rejecting the light. Often it is the failed convert that later becomes an opponent. Only let the words of Christ convert, as they call out to His sheep.

In the tenth talk, given in Phoenix two years ago, you were warned about false spirits, as happened in Kirtland, which you were warned would come among us. That warning has proven true. False spirits have mislead some into foolish errors. I am astonished at vain, foolish and prideful ideas that are anti-Christ, degrading and dark, but have been welcomed by some. Remember Pharaoh's magicians also enchanted their rods to become snakes (see Exo. 7:11-12), and conjured frogs to mimic the sign given by God

through Moses and Aaron (see Exo. 8:7.) Pharaoh's heart was hardened by these imitations. Do not let yours become so likewise.

For two years I have watched, attended some of your meetings, gathered reports, and tried to let you stand and display your strength and understanding. Even God left Adam and Eve in the Garden, and allowed Lucifer the common enemy to tempt and try them, promising to return again to visit them. They transgressed His commandment, and He provided the means to cover their shame, repent and return. He also promised to later send messengers. But God did not "babysit" Adam and Eve, informing them that it was given unto them to choose, even when He forbids something. God is the same now as in the beginning. We are all required to display our understanding, obedience and prove our understanding.

People have come among you preaching falsehoods, and inviting others to follow false spirits: Adulterers and adulteresses who justify sins, and mock the commandment "*thou shalt not commit adultery.*" (Exo. 20:14.) False claimants are pretending to seal others up to eternal life, changing the ordinances and introducing foolish and vain ideas borrowed from pagans and heathen, who do not know Christ nor His righteousness. I do not oppose them directly by debate or counter-argument. I declare the truth and leave it for everyone to decide between clearly opposing teachings. If people cannot discern, then they will need to learn from sad experience to choose between good and evil, perhaps only coming to understand after their destruction in this world.

There are those who use well-reasoned arguments to expound their understanding of scripture who have declared with certainty it is impossible for what I say to be true. These voices come from both the fearful anonymous and proud academics. I do not respond to either.

In a letter on August 24, 1834, Joseph Smith described the only way falsehoods could be avoided. He wrote:

If the Saints are very humble, very watchful and very prayerful, that few will be deceived by those who have not authority to teach, or who have not the Spirit to teach according to the power of the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4, p. 117).

Only the truth is at issue. Individuals other than Christ do not matter. The message I have and do preach is from the Lord. His sheep hear His voice. If they accept it as His, then deceivers, false spirits and men's learning are powerless to destroy faith in Him. He promised He "*will take care of our flocks*" (D&C 88:72) and therefore it will be Him, and not me, who will keep His flock shepherded.

Following Christ's death He was buried and rose on the third day. I know He lives for I have seen Him. He showed me the morning of His resurrection. I testify as a witness that He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, as the Gospels declare. Like

those who wrote the New Testament, I am also a living witness the Lord rose from the dead:

When I saw His resurrection, I was surprised to see it was still dark. I had always thought it occurred at sun up, as the return of daylight symbolized the return of life. But it was dark. The Gospel of John is the only one that mentions the darkness of that morning. Even so, it never registered to me that Christ rose in the darkness of that early morning. ... He did rise from the dead. We rejoice because it is true. As so many others have done before, I can add my own witness that He rose from the dead. I was shown it. It happened. He who died on the cross rose from the dead and He lives still. (Snuffer Jr., Denver C., 2010-12-24. Come, Let Us Adore Him, pp. 249, 257).

All four Gospels give accounts of Christ's resurrection:

- Matthew: tells of two women, both named Mary, who were first to come to the grave, where an angel informed them of the resurrection, and told them to go tell others.
- Mark: states it was also two women, both named Mary, who arrived first to the grave where an angel informed them Christ was resurrected. Other disciples did not believe their testimony.
- Luke: tells of several women who saw the empty grave, were told He had risen by two angels, and then went to testify to the apostles. But the apostles thought the testimony "seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not."
- John: wrote that Mary Magdalene saw, even embraced the risen Lord, and related to the others her testimony of having seen Him returned to life, resurrected from the dead!

[These] accounts differ in the details. [They have] similarities and differences. They are universal in the fact that Christ was seen by the women (or [a] woman) first, and not by His Apostles. [John's account] records that Christ told Mary: 'Touch me not.' In the Joseph Smith Translation the words are changed to read: 'Hold me not.' (JST-John 20: 17.) Joseph's change of the text was warranted. [I tell you that] when Mary realized it was Jesus, she embraced Him joyfully. She did not timidly reach out her hand, but she readily greeted Him with open arms, and He, in turn, embraced her. It is difficult to describe what I saw of the incident, apart from saying [that] the Lord was triumphant, exultant, overjoyed at His return from the grave! She shared His joy. I was shown the scene and do not have words to adequately communicate how complete the feelings of joy and gratitude were which were felt by our Lord that morning. As dark and terrible [as] were the sufferings through which He passed, the magnitude of which is impossible for man to put into words, these feelings of triumph were, on the other hand, of equal magnitude in their joy and gratitude. [He had attained to the resurrection of the

dead! Just as He had seen His Father do, He likewise held the keys of death and hell!] I do not think it possible for a mortal to feel a fullness of either. And, having felt some of what He shares with His witnesses, I know words are inadequate to capture His feelings on the morning of His resurrection. He had the deep satisfaction of having accomplished the most difficult assignment [to be] given by the Father, knowing it was a benefit to all of His Father's children, and it had been done perfectly. Mary and Christ embraced. There was nothing timid about the warm encounter she had with Him. Then He said to her, 'Hold me not' because He had to ascend, return and report to His Father. Joseph Smith was correct when he [changed] this language. I then saw Him ascend to heaven. I saw the golden heavenly light glowing down upon Mary as she watched His ascent. All this happened while it was yet dark on the morning He rose from the dead. He has shown this to me and I can testify to it as a witness. (ibid, pp. 256-7.)

The Lord's public execution was designed to humiliate Him. Onlookers were expected to have contempt for anyone executed that way. He foretold that "*the world shall rejoice*" (John 16:20) at His disciples' sorrow.

In contrast, His triumphant resurrection was private. He appeared only to a few and initially only to women. He endured public shaming, reserving His greatest triumph to quiet privacy between confidants. Our Lord is meek, and although greater (see D&C 19:18) and more intelligent than us all (see Abr. 3:19), yet He condescends to speak with us in plain humility (see Ether 12:39.).

He is the only means for salvation: "*there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.*" (Mosiah 3:17.) Anyone who claims otherwise is deceived or dishonest.

I testify of Him in a day when most people do not believe it possible for my testimony to be true. I ask nothing of you. But I do testify truthfully.

The Lord has taught me a great deal more than I can discuss. This talk can only be given because there are some few here who will believe, and the Lord respects your faith.

If Zion is ever founded, its residents will fulfill the prophecy of Habakuk: "*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" (Hab. 2:14.)

It shall be as Jeremiah prophesied: "*And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.*" (Jer. 31:34.)

But the knowledge in Zion will be of and with Him. Zion will be like Him, without envy, strife, jealousy, ambition, pride and covetousness.

Until that day the Lord will send witnesses to testify of Him. The world is filled with deceit, and some men make claims to have authority from Christ as their basis to ask for obedience, support, trust and property. I ask for none of those things. If you want to donate money to the Lord, then do it as part of a community of believers, and use the donations to relieve the needs of the poor among you. If you have no poor among you, donate to build a temple.

In a letter written August 16, 1834, Joseph Smith expected Zion could be established very soon. He wrote, "we have a great work to do, but little time to do it in and if we don't exert ourselves to the utmost in gathering up the strength of the Lords house ...there remaineth a sco[u]rge" (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4, p. 106.) In the same letter he reminded people in his day that, "so long as unrighteousness acts are suffered in the church it cannot [be] sanctified neither Zion be redeemed." (Id., p. 107.) At the time, he considered the church to be "in a languid cold disconsolate state." (Id.) It was the opposite of the lively, confident and happy state accompanying righteousness, even when worldly circumstances are direful and the wicked seem to triumph. When doing what the Lord asks, we can be lively because He will accompany our efforts and add His strength to our labor. If we have a hope in Christ, we can be confident. If our sins have been forgiven, we have every reason to be happy.

Virtue and patience are required of us every bit as much as it has been required in every age. We cannot wallow in sin, nor be prideful, and expect to do any better than those who have already failed. The best guard against our failure is humility, meekness, longsuffering and patience. We must not charge ahead when the Lord has not prepared the way for us to proceed safely. There's much still to be done. But it must be done when, where and how the Lord directs; and that also not in haste—because haste brings confusion, resulting in pestilence, including violence and jarring contentions (See D&C 63:24).

From emails and phone calls I have received since my talk in Moab, it is clear there are those who want to move now, in haste. There are ambitious men who offer to lead others hastily into new paths, claiming to be so mighty and strong that they can offer great rewards in the afterlife in exchange for following them here. I offer you no such thing. You must look to Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and follow His example of self-sacrifice, patience, obedience and virtue. I can only urge you to patiently allow the True Shepherd to guide us all into His pastures—showing Him the respect due to a Redeemer.

I mentioned the idea of "Kingship" in Moab. Remember the Great King, Christ, came not to be served but to serve. He did not "lord it over" others, but He knelt to elevate them. He came as a meek and lowly servant, and went about doing good. He died to save the lives of others. When He arose from the dead, He went to the Father and advocated forgiveness for those who despised and abused Him.

What kind of "king" would God send? Even if his bowels are a fountain of light and truth, and even if he were to hold the scepter of power in his hand (see D&C 85:7), I doubt a king sent by the Lord would be markedly different than our True King. He would endure the abuse of misunderstanding, criticism and mockery from those who refuse to understand. He would serve patiently, never asserting any claim to greatness. Joseph said in this world "the more a man is exalted, the more humble he will be, if actuated by the Spirit of the Lord." (*JS Papers, Documents, Vol. 4, p. 198.*)

When such a king dies, and returns to God to report, he will have only kindness for those who opposed him as he served God. **WE** should **ALL** be like that. We should all be like our Lord.

Christ's greatest commandments were simple, and given to every one of us: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy [might] mind.*" (Matt. 22:37.) "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" (Matt. 22:39) "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*" (Matt. 7:12.) If we do these things there's no time to proclaim our greatness, to assert the right to be a leader, or to command others. Servants do not strut, but behave meekly. They only take such acts as the True Master commands.

I recently had a vision that began as a dream. In it I was traveling in a small car up a mountain road. The road was steep, but straight, and it grew steeper as it climbed upwards. On the left side of the road there was a railroad track running parallel. As we drove the small car upward, I noticed a sharp bend in the railroad tracks ahead that interrupted the otherwise straight course of the line. I saw a train approaching from uphill in the distance coming downhill rapidly, and it seemed to be going far too fast to safely negotiate the sharp bend in the tracks. The small car we drove was not quite to the bend when the rushing train hit the bend, leapt from the tracks and violently crashed in front of us. Our little car narrowly escaped a collision, as the train's wreckage spread about. As the small car continued upward, the train crash worsened, at first beside the car, and then as we accelerated, closely behind us. The little car got ahead of the continuing wreck of the moving train, and I could see the train was full of passengers who, uphill from the wreckage, were enjoying themselves. They were paying no attention to the disaster already befalling their train. We began to shout out the windows of our car, trying to warn the occupants in the doomed train, but they gave no heed. They laughed and partied aboard the train with no concern for their impending destruction.

I could see the wreckage behind me in the mirror as the violence of the wreck threw shattered railroad cars about, some onto the road behind us, making the road now impassable. We were powerless to save those aboard the train because they would not hear the warnings we shouted to them.

As we reached the top of the mountain, the last of the train went by, and I stopped the little car. We got out and stood in the roadway looking down the mountain and watched as the last of the train was destroyed. While mourning over the many lives that had been lost, I awoke from the dream and sat up on my bed, but the vision continued.

I next saw in the distance, beyond the train wreckage, an overpowering flood, as if it was a great fire, consuming and destroying all the country coming from the east. Although we had survived the train wreck, it appeared certain we would all be killed in the coming flood. I looked about for any sign of hope we might survive, and noticed beside the roadway a great rock with an opening. I led the small party to the rock and discovered the opening was for a cavern that went upward within the shelter of the rock. We entered the cave, and climbed upward. Inside the cavity of the rock, our small group waited as the flood approached, unsure whether we would live or die. The noise of the destruction outside was deafening as the flood approached, and then the opening of the cavern went black and we were left in complete silence and darkness. We waited. In a few moments the light returned but silence remained. After a few more moments our small group emerged from the rock's cavern to see what had transpired with the world.

The scene of destruction was astounding. The entire landscape was transformed. It was destroyed. The wrecked train, the tracks and the road had all been consumed. Everything appeared barren. Then suddenly new life began to spring forth in the widespread desolation. Barren trunks brought out new limbs, blossoms and leaves. Flowers sprang from the earth. As we watched, the earth was quickly transformed, and in a short time the denuded desolation was full of life, beauty and fertility much beyond what had gone on before the flood of fire had destroyed the landscape. At this point the vision ended and I was given the interpretation:

The train is the false religions of the world. The occupants of the small car are those who repent and accept baptism. The protective rock with the cavern is Christ.

We must invite others to join us in baptism. However great or little our success, others must be invited.

You must each decide whether I am sent by Him and acting as a true witness, or whether I am just another of the many deceivers who use God's name in vain, having no authority. I claim to testify to the truth and do not deceive you; and I claim that He has sent me to preach deliverance from sin by obedience to Him. It is His Doctrine that all mankind should repent and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins. If you do so He will be faithful and forgive.

Repentance means to turn from whatever else is **distracting** you and face God. Heed **Him**, follow **Him** and obey **His** will. Repentance substitutes virtue for sin, trades weakness for strength, and remakes us heart, mind and spirit into a new creature—a son or daughter of God.

I know I am no better than any other man. My weaknesses and foolishness have provoked the Lord to sternly rebuke me on several occasions. My many shortcomings cause me to mourn, and wish someone else were responsible for the things entrusted into my hands.

But I will not refuse the Lord. He warned long ago that once we begin, we cannot look back—therefore I dare not depart from the course, no matter how difficult. Like you, I hope to do what the Lord asks, when He asks it, in the way He requires it to be done; and I leave everything else to the Lord.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Now, I was asked by the organizers of this to deal with some questions that people had and that will be what we turn to next:

There was a debate over how best that might be done, and at one point we thought about putting a microphone up and ultimately the decision was made to just solicit questions, get them in, let me look at 'em, organize it and just respond. And last night in going over them, there ..., the way in which I am gonna proceed now is the way that we ultimately came to a conclusion on how to proceed, I'm simply gonna talk to address the topics that were raised, and first of all I wanna be clear that -- questions that had been asked about Elijah and the appearance of Elijah to Joseph, and that stuff -- in the book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, there is a beginning discussion about Elijah and the incident in the Kirtland temple that is in D&C Section 110 that introduces the subject. Then there is an elaboration, because all it does is talk about the historical issues, questions, and dilemma. Then there is a fulsome discussion called *The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered* that is a PDF. You can go to the website, download it, print it out (I think it's 40 pages or so), and it discusses that topic.

And that's an example, if I have already written, talked, spoken, or addressed a question that got raised -- I understand that there are people who haven't had time, they may have been recently aware of this group of people or these issues, and you may have just begun the process of trying to get your hands around topics. But the best use of time is not to go over what is already available in writing and already out there. The best use of time would be to go and to talk about something new or different. And so I wanna encourage you to look at the site and the material that's there, because it's all publically available and intended to address such matters.

I have to say that I have been extremely impressed by the conference, the Boise believers group that has organized this has done a remarkable job, not just with arranging things but with -- I guess the best thing they've done so far is to invite those two women to speak. Annett yesterday and Lisa today. I mean I can see why the Lord first came and visited with the women, it just makes a lot of sense. I thought they were the highlight. And of course the next highlight is that right now I get to stand in the shade and you poor people are out..., I used to be out there; it's hot, but I'm cool.

But the women reminds me of something that I wanna point out. There's all of this competitiveness in the institutional world of Mormonism that has grown out of a profound misapprehension of priesthood, and there's this envy of priesthood. And part of the problem that has been created is because of the correlation process that has sucked all government in the church, all budgets in the church, all right to publish in the church, into the presiding authority through correlation that now runs everything.

The Relief Society used to publish independently their own magazine. The Relief Society used to independently have a budget. They used to collect their own money. They used to administer their own funds. They used to decide for themselves. They had their own graineries. They ran the relief program. The women did -- independent of everyone else. Correlation robbed them of all that, took it all over, raked it in a pile, and said "it's all mine," and now it's under the thumb of one guy who sits at the top of that.

Don't be misled by a false model that you look out and you see somewhere else. Look, we admire a man -- we -- believers and followers of the Lord -- admire **a man** so much so that the priesthood was renamed after him, because he was the last one to really accomplish Zion, that is Melchizedek, priesthood was named after him. You go and you look carefully at why Melchizedek qualified to obtain the priesthood, and it was because he, by faith, quenched the violence of fire, he subdued lions, by faith he achieved all these things -- **not by priesthood; By faith.**

If you wanna know what one can accomplish without faith but with an ordination to the priesthood, there's a whole discussion of that in *A Man without Doubt* about the first attempt to distribute the highest order of priesthood in Joseph's day. There's a description of what an utter failure that was. In fact it was so great a failure that what Joseph did was he backed up, and he started over again with trying to solve the problem. And The problem did not consist of priesthood -- it consisted of the lack of faith. The lectures on Faith are an attempt to create faith that will have power which is separate from Priesthood.

Men, women, and children can have faith. There was a time when the Mary Fielding story had her anointing her oxen and healing them. In the world of the correlated LDS model, she's now calling for the equivalent of Home Teachers to come anoint her oxen. Mary Fielding's faith was what healed the oxen.

Would you rather have priesthood without faith, or faith without priesthood? If you have faith, everything else is possible. Faith is what is lacking. It is the more important. And Not this priesthood envy.

Oh, the trouble I could get into, going too far. Look, at the end of the day, Peter did not hold any greater or different authority when he came back from a mission and said, "we couldn't cast out any devils, we're bringing this person to you, Lord. I mean, whatever it was you gave us, whatever that ordination thing was, it's just not working." And then Christ said, "well this kind come not out except by fasting and prayer." (Matt. 17:16-21.)

Meaning that there is a work to be done to subordinate the body in order to give the strength to your faith necessary to achieve something. .

Peter had absolutely no different ordination than when he entered the temple following the Lord's resurrection and said, "*Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto you. In the name of Jesus Christ, arise, take up your bed and walk*" (See Acts 3:1-7).

What Peter had that was different was faith. His ordination amounted to no power, but his faith in Christ healed the sick. And that is not controlled by Institutions. That is not controlled by ordination. If you want to know how it's controlled, study the Lectures on Faith and then listen to what Lisa had to say this morning, because she was right on the money.

So briefly then, to cover the topics that were raised: A temple is the Lord's House. It's not actually a temple unless He comes to, visits and accepts it. And then it is His house until it has been profaned. Therefore, when it is the Lord's, the timing of when it is to be built, where it is to be built, how it is to be built, and exactly what it is that He wants to be built, are entirely within His control.

We don't have the right to select a spot. I mean If you read carefully the word of the Lord in D&C section 124, he does say to the people in Nauvoo, "*the site that you have chosen for the building of the temple is acceptable*" (D&C 124:43). But remember that the Lord has everything in front of Him, and therefore it's acceptable. In other words, yeah that site will do, just like any other site you wanna choose will do, given where I know you're headed! Given the end result of this massively stupid experiment that you've got under way at present, build the temple there, build it anywhere. It's acceptable to me, go for it.

Now, I want you to know something. The Lord goes on to say, "if you will do it and if you'll follow me, if you do, if you meet the conditions, I will come there and I will not only make it my house, I will protect you. You will not be moved out of your place. I will be the one who establishes you in this spot, and I will protect and defend you, and this will become the corner of Zion" (see D&C 124:44-45).

And He meant it when He made the promise. But again, He knew what was about to happen. He knew the hearts of the people that were involved. It doesn't matter how eager or earnest Joseph or Hyrum were; it doesn't matter. You don't have a temple without a people, and we did not have the required people at the time.

Now, I have been contacted by a group of women. Again, just like the best speakers, I think, have been the women, a group of women are currently organizing a mechanism. Our first obligation in donating and paying tithes is to take care of the poor. But there are fellowships I know that have accumulated money beyond their needs, and there are a group of women that are organizing and making the means available for gathering excess for the construction of the temple. And I assume that eventually the means will

be provided from among ourselves for the accomplishment of that work. I have to say that I do believe that when the command is given, that the command to build the temple is not going to give us decades to respond. I think that when the command is given we're expected to act with some dispatch to accomplish what has been requested of Him. And so, I am personally grateful that there is no command out there at present to do so, 'cause I don't know how we would accomplish it. We're not supposed to do it in haste, but we're supposed to prepare every needful thing. And preparing every needful thing, we might be in a time when it's far more convenient to accomplish it now than it will be later under more pressing circumstances.

I was asked a question about my comments concerning astronomy. We've got..., there's a fellow..., he looks rather vagrant, wandering around here, John Pratt. John....

Oh yeah, there you are. Please stand up. Keep your hat off so they know just how unkempt you really look.

John has an entire website where he has been dealing.... His primary work has been in looking at the calendars and trying to sort through the relationship between events and the Lord's dealing with men and the calendars that have been established. And if you're interested in looking further, John has done some terrific work, and I believe his life has been spared and prolonged, in part, in order for him to have been of some assistance in dealing with some questions that he and I have spent talking about from time to time. And I would refer you there if you're interested.

The answer to a question about "Can I tell everything I know about heavenly mother?" is "no, I can't tell you everything I know about Heavenly Mother." But I can comment about a couple of things. When we get to the creation, the creation says that *"in the image of God created He, him, male and female created He them"* (Gen. 1:27). Meaning that the image of God, I mean, as they look down upon the man Adam after the creation of Adam, in the story that we have in Genesis and in Abraham and in the temple endowment, the conclusion is always the same: When you look at Adam, you're looking at part. Is it good for this? No. This is not good for him to be alone! Are you kidding me? The first thing he's gonna do is to smelt iron, make a pocket knife and carve his initials all over the damn garden! I mean, we have to do something to get this to be good. And how do we get this to be good? Well let's make a companion and a helpmeet for him. Helpmeet..., helpmeet means getting him there. Helpmeet means he's broken and in a disabled condition and she's going to be the solution to the problem.

Yesterday, as we were navigating our way around, my wife said that our worst thing, her and I, our absolutely worst thing is dealing with the navigator, the British voice lady on the..., telling us where to go.

And I said, "What? Is it the blinding rage that you get out of me when I'm trying to follow her?"

And she said, "No, no, that's not it."

"Is it the string of obscenities that come out?"

And she said, "no, that's not it. You're just such an ass when we're trying to get some..."

Well, look, she's my helpmeet, and so she calms me down and puts me back in place.

There is a lady who has, she labors under remarkable handicaps because her only text is really the biblical text, the pseudepigrapha, the available material that's out there. But, she also has a clarity of thought that is remarkable for a Methodist minister. I mean, Joseph was right when he said that he was somewhat inclined to the Methodists. Methodists really are..., John Wesley was a remarkable, remarkable soul. But Margaret Barker, is a Methodist minister and a scholar and she has written about the divine feminine. And while she's not perfect, and she doesn't have everything right, and she is laboring with a limited library from which to draw, if you're interested in those kinds of topics, I would commend to you taking a look at what Margaret Barker has done, including her last book that's now available.

And just so someone has asked a question, I want them to be clear: I have never said that Christ is always appearing in red apparel. Christ doesn't appear in red apparel, He appears in white. But, at the second coming when He comes in judgment, He will come clothed in red, which is a sign of the judgement that He is bringing. So, His red apparel is related to the second coming.

Of course, a false spirit can project love. Of course. False spirits imitate. The great imitator, who is a liar from the beginning, begins by assuming the role that is designed to be a counterfeit. I mean, the only way that a counterfeit works is if it has the look and feel, and sentiment and everything that the real thing has. And if you're gonna imitate, of course love can be one of those things that are imitated. The question if you want to try to dial in yea/nay, good/bad, true/false, is whether or not the love that is being shown to you leads, in turn to pride, to haughtiness, to thinking I'm great, I'm wonderful. If it has as its objective creating pride and haughtiness in the individual, then you have to question the content of the message, not the means by which it gets delivered. Because if the means by which it's delivered is a counterfeit, it's gonna seem like the 'coin of the realm.' Therefore, you have to question if the objective is prideful or if the objective is ultimately destructive.

I was asked about all the destruction associated with the end time and how do I cope with that. Look, I saw a sequence of events that took place. After I was shown that, I went to the Doctrine and Covenants and it was really remarkable because the sequence of events appear, in what I saw, happened in exactly the same order as they are listed in the Doctrine and Covenants. And it struck me well heavens Joseph may have seen exactly the same thing, because it happened in a sequence of events. The destruction may seem random, but from what I saw it was extraordinarily targeted, extraordinarily aimed to accomplish the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous.

When you get to 3rd Nephi and you read the account of the destruction there, it tells you it was the more wicked who were destroyed.

There was a..., June 6th of 1944 there was an invasion that finally got launched on D-Day. Two men who were significantly older than the average G.I. that hit the beach on that day were my father, who landed on Omaha Beach, and Hugh Nibley, that landed on Utah Beach. Utah Beach was a cakewalk compared to what happened at Omaha. My father's job was to, as a combat engineer, blow up the tank traps so that they could clear the beach from the tanks were gonna come in and assist them in over taking the pill boxes. Well, there wasn't a single tank that made it to Omaha Beach that day, because the tide was so..., the weather was so rough that the tanks sank and they didn't make it there. The tank traps were literally the only thing that were blocking the incoming fire. So if you're gonna blow up the tank traps you're gonna blow up a bunch your fellow GI's. I mean, they lost..., they were grateful for the objectives of my father's job being available on Omaha beach, and they hid behind them, and they used instead the Bangalore mines to blow up some obstructions so they could get up the hills, so they could take over what was killing them. My father didn't suffer any injury on Omaha Beach. Everyone in his company was a casualty, but he, on June the seventh of 1844, formed up with a new company and went on - ultimately fought in the Battle of the Bulge as well.

On Utah Beach, Hugh Nibley, who was a well-educated man at the time and was an intelligence officer, didn't have to come in with a gun. He came in riding on a Jeep with a bunch of books. His purpose was to interrogate, and he was as an intelligence officer. And as he came onto the beach in a jeep, a round fell on the beach in front of him, blew a hole, and his Jeep went down and up and bounced through the crater. And he writes Reflecting that the one thing that came through his mind at the time was, "the Book of Mormon is true." In the midst of all this violence, you can see how wars and the way that men treat with one another, really does result.... Later on in the war, he noted that one of the villages he had visited as a missionary, which was very hard-hearted and very unwilling to receive anything, and treated them poorly, was a place where there was a lot of destruction. And he reflected upon how the more wicked element were killed, just like the Book of Mormon talks.

The coming destruction is no different. I mean, you want to be protected? It's in the cavern of the rock, which is Christ. Because Literally, a hand grenade can land in the middle of a crowd, and if the Lord has a righteous man among them, He can save that person. The things that I have seen suggest that it's not destruction that we should fear, it's not violence we should fear, it is our own unworthiness. And that Our greatest fear should be our sins.

What are estates and how many are there? A lot, and there are phases of development. And the talk in Ephraim, which is more supported by material in *Preserving the Restoration* talking about Christ, (it's the seventh chapter, it was the seventh talk): Look at that real carefully with the question of estates in mind and you'll notice there's, the work of the Lord is practically endless.

Now I need to address the subject of "What is appropriate to be explained and what is appropriate not to be explained?" Why does the Book of Mormon draw lines and say, "at this point in the record it's not permitted for me to cover this? I was about to write this but I'm forbidden from doing so." (Ether 13:13.) Or Nephi saying, "I was about to give you the rest of this story, but the Lord said you can't do that." (1 Ne. 14:24-25.) There is a very good reason why information gets withheld. There's actually more than one, but there's one that ought to be front and center: The more information that becomes available that ought to be held in sacred solitude, the more you equip the pretenders and the deceivers to improve their false act, the more equipment you hand to them with which to develop an illusion and a mirage that will deceive and take people from the Lord. But more importantly, when you get to the end of the actual process of what the Lord was teaching to the Nephites, there is power in the government of God that when it got hijacked in the beginning, by the time you get down to the time of Noah, the Earth was so corrupted..., Lucifer or Satan has this great chain on the earth (see Moses 7:26). He has chained the earth and he's looking up at heaven (this is in the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price) he's got the whole earth wrapped in a chain, and he's looking up at Heaven, and he's laughing. How did he manage to get the whole earth bound down into a great chain? He did so by imitating the government of Adam. He did so by binding together, in a false way, things that God would put together in a Godly way.

Right now the struggle -- **the struggle** on this Earth-- is over the agency of man. I don't care if you're looking at economic difficulties, governmental difficulties, business, religion, society, entertainment, it's all about destroying the agency of man. In order to prevent Zion, the adversary knows he has now but a little time. The only way to make sure that it doesn't spill out and accomplish the objective that God wants it to accomplish is by curtailing the ability of people to choose. Take away the right to say, the right to speak, the right to preach. Take away and categorize, or if you can, criminalize, and if you can't do that, then simply murder in order to prevent the agency of man. Because few..., men must, women must, come willingly to the Lord, have to voluntarily accept the invitation from Him. Can't..., compulsory means cannot be used. Everywhere you look right now, the struggle is over the agency of men. And some things are absolutely essential and needful, more than the mysteries of God. Right now what is most important is to preach the Doctrine of Christ and baptize people so that we at least have someone living at the Lord's return.

Why Christians need to hear about Joseph Smith? Because Joseph Smith began the restoration. The Christian world has no clue that there is a restrictive deed on this land. The Christians have no clue that the God of this land must be served or they will be destroyed from, and swept away from, off of this land. They possess it and they think they're free to mock the God who owns this land, and they're not free to do so. And you come to that understanding only through the Book of Mormon. And you come to the Book of Mormon only through Joseph Smith. Joseph taught about Zion in a way that the Christian world does not comprehend.

Oh, heavens....

Let me cover one more matter, and that is this idea of prophecy and interpreting prophecy, 'cause I know that there are elaborate efforts made to parse the scriptures and come up with the meaning, the interpretation, even the timing of certain things that the Lord has now begun, or that He intends to accomplish in short order. In Isaiah chapter 48, the description is given of how prophecy works.

"I've declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass" (Isa. 48:3). "Suddenly" can be rendered surprisingly. Suddenly can be in an unexpected way. Suddenly can be, 'you got caught off guard.' I declared what I was gonna do, I did it, and you got caught off guard:

Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and [that] thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, ... my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and wilt not ye declare it? I have [shown] thee ... things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them (Isa. 48:4-6).

You didn't know them. I declared 'em, I accomplished them, and I told you about them beforehand, and it happened suddenly, and you didn't expect it to happen. Why is that? Because the way in which the Lord intends to accomplish what He's going to accomplish is not going to be in the way that will permit you to say, "I and my idol have been hard at work to accomplish this great thing." No man gets to take credit for that. It's got to be surprising and unexpected in order for the Lord, once it happens, to say "this was what I had in my heart and I have done it." If we knew how the Lord and when the Lord was going to accomplish, how and what He was going to accomplish, we would stand a chance of preventing it. Or, we might make commerce out of it by profiting from it. Therefore, the way in which He will accomplish it will be according to His will, at His timing, for His purposes, without the control of man and with man always saying "that was sudden, that was surprising, that was unanticipated," and so He can send that Galilean-accent-speaking carpenter's son into the world and have the world take no note of Him; or, a farm boy from upstate New York to declare the Lord has opened the heavens; and have everyone react to that in bemused humor or with insults and scorn, ultimately fearing Him enough to kill him and those that would follow him.

Well, I'm out of time, but let me end by thanking again the Boise fellowship for accomplishing this. It's the third anniversary of the weekend in which we began this series of events. And I am absolutely more encouraged, from what I heard here, than I have ever been about where we're at. I mean, people..., I hear all the complaints. I hear all the criticism. I'm just very heartened by the things that I heard here and in particular from the talks of the women.

Thank you all and let me end by saying, may the Lord accompany all of you in the work that you do. Do not feel shy about speaking up. Do not be ashamed of the Lord. And leave it to Him whether someone takes seriously the message that you have. Your obligation is to speak it. If the Lord has a sheep and you speak the warning to them, they'll listen. And it won't do you any good to herd goats. They're still gonna be goats.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2017.03.19 Things to Keep Us Awake at Night

General Conference Address

March 19, 2017

St. George, Utah

Where are the Adolpho's sitting? Mahalo!

We face the same test as all others have ever faced from the days of Adam down to the present. Things never change. From the time of Adam, the roles have been filled by different persons in different ages but the conflict is perpetual and the same battle continues from age to age. You can even lift the arguments that are made from one epoch and put them into the next and they fit. It doesn't change.

Adam taught his posterity the gospel and Satan, imitating an angel of light, declared himself to be a son of God and taught this doctrine, "believe it not." And most of Adam's posterity did not believe.

Enoch received a message from God, and the record that Enoch left behind says, "*and all men were offended because of him.*"

Noah taught the same gospel as was taught "in the beginning" to Adam but his audience claimed "we are the sons of God" and they would not hearken to the message that came through Noah.

Abraham obtained the same rights that were "belonging to the fathers" or to Adam in the beginning, including holding the right of the first born that came down from the first father, Adam. "*And those who claim the gospel of Abraham is less than the gospel given to Adam are a false message bourn by a false messenger. Mark it: If they don't repent for preaching that message in opposition to what the Lord declares both in scripture and by my voice they will regret it.*" Unfortunately, Abraham's own family; that is his fathers, his uncles, utterly refused to hearken to his voice.

Moses saw God face to face and he talked with him. God gave Moses a work to do. Satan tempted Moses to instead worship him, even declaring to Moses, "*I am the only begotten, worship me.*" When Moses rejected this demand, his message from God was opposed by sorcerers and magicians who "did in like manner with their enchantments," duplicating signs shown through Moses over and over again in the record in Exodus. Even after delivering Israel from Egypt, the Israelites wished they had died in Egypt rather than being delivered and freed. And of course, what might have happened – given the qualification of Moses to bring it about – did not happen because the people that he led were unwilling to rise up as they were invited.

Christ was opposed by Satan who demanded that He worship him, and then He was opposed by religious leaders of the people. The people He went to save conspired to kill Him and ultimately brought that about.

Joseph Smith was, and is, opposed by those who claimed to follow him, or to belong to a church that was founded by him. If you don't understand the extent to which the opposition to Joseph Smith arose out of those claiming to be Mormons, take a look at the book *A Man Without Doubt* and you'll see that Joseph's greatest opposition came from those who claim to follow him.

Opposition in scripture seems clear, but when we struggle in our environment, it becomes much more difficult to make decisions about what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad, what is of God, what is deception, what is truth, and what is false. That is not a correct understanding because the scriptures may reveal the conflict in sharp contrast but it was no different in that day than it is today. Deciding between opposing sides was not any more clear to those living at the time the scriptures were written than the opposition you encounter every day of your life.

The scriptures were written by or about prophets who took clearly opposing positions from those who were deceived. The clarity you read in scripture is because the views and opinions of prophets were used to tell about the events. But as the events happened, those living at the time had to have faith to distinguish between truth and error, to believe or to ignore a message from the Lord. It is no different for them than it is for the dilemma that we face today. Does the message invite or entice you to believe in Christ and to do His works? Does it get presented in a way that displays patience, long-suffering? Does it use gentleness and persuasion, meekness and love, and consistency with the revelations and commandments found previously in scripture? Or does it appeal to your vanity, to your arrogance? Does it make you proud of yourself, or does it make you instead wish you were a better person?

Humility is absolutely required to progress. The more we think we understand, the less willing we can become to receive more. Joseph said, *"It is the constitutional disposition of mankind to set up stakes and bounds to the works and ways of the Almighty."* He also said, *"I never heard of a man being damned for believing too much but they are damned for unbelief."* James 4:6 says, *"God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble."* Damnation is limiting progress or stopping progress. Setting up boundaries to what the Lord can do is voluntary damnation. No matter how much you believe you know, if you will be humble you will learn a great deal more. We must continue progression or, if we don't, we accept damnation and that, too, voluntarily.

Earlier dispensations have had scripture projects. Adam with Seth composed a book of remembrance written by "the spirit of inspiration."

Enoch kept a record of the patriarch's generations, priesthood, and Adam's prophecy about everything that would befall man till the latest generation of mankind.

Abraham received the records of the fathers or the first patriarchs which is how he knew about, inquired into, sought for, and ultimately obtained the right of the first born belonging to the first father or to Adam, in a fullness, and thus continued what began in the beginning.

Moses was handicapped by centuries of slavery separating him from Abraham. And so Moses re-wrote an account of the creation, and of Adam, and of the first generations. He established a new body of commandments adapted to the capacity of Israel at that time, and then the people voted in order to accept these as their governing principles.

Nephi was told recovering the scriptures for his people was essential, otherwise they would dwindle and perish in unbelief. When the record that Nephi was able to obtain on the brass plates was studied, it included an account of the creation, Adam and Eve, and God's dealings with mankind down to the time of Lehi, including their genealogy and prophecies of Joseph of Egypt.

When Christ visited with the Nephites, He asked them to bring to Him their scriptural records so that He could review it. He reviewed the things that they brought that constituted their scriptures and He commanded them to fix omissions that had been made in the record. Christ then dictated two chapters of additional scripture to be added to the Nephite record. Only then did He expound all things to them using the scriptures.

With these predecessor events to inform Joseph Smith, in more recent history, Joseph Smith, like Moses who restored the account beginning with Adam and the first generations, Joseph restored the Book of Mormon as his first assignment. But he was required also to revise the Bible. Joseph referred to the revision of the Bible using the term "the fullness of the scriptures." The Book of Mormon he called "the Book of Mormon." The revision to the Bible he called "the fullness of the scriptures."

In the minutes of an October 1831 conference Joseph made this statement, *"God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the church. Said the Lord would cut his work short in righteousness and except the church receive the fullness of the scriptures they would yet fall."*

The fullness of the scriptures, or the Bible he was then revising, has never been fully in print. Even the version that has been published by the RLDS Church misses several of the revisions Joseph made. All of them, and in addition a handful of revisions that Joseph made orally during talks that he gave in the Nauvoo era, for the first time are published in the new set of scriptures, in the volume, the Old Testament, and half the volume called the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. The fullness of the scriptures, without which the church would fall, are for the first time now available.

The people who acknowledged Joseph teachings, also like God's people before them, accepted the new, and then expanded the scriptures. This is the process by which scripture expansion took place:

On 17 August 1835, the Doctrine and Covenants, including the *Lectures on Faith*, were sustained. This is a quote from that event: *"It was deemed necessary to call the general assembly of the church to see if the book be approved or not by the authorities of the*

church that it may if approved become a law of the church and a rule of faith and practice of the same."

The church published an account explaining how the sustaining of the original *Doctrine and Covenants* occurred. I am going to read from an article in the *Ensign* because it contains some important information. This is a fellow who worked on the *Joseph Smith Papers* Project years before the *Joseph Smith Papers* Project was underway (and who uncovered dilemmas in the record of the history of the LDS church, including the lack of certitude in the Church's account about how the sealing power got restored. If you think that the ambiguities about the claims to have the sealing power in the LDS church are glaring, you're not alone. One of the scholars involved in the *Joseph Smith Papers* Project concludes the same.) The explanation provided in the LDS Church's *Ensign* is as follows: "Since the book was to be presented at the conference of 17 August 1835, several priesthood leaders were apparently given unbound copies to read ahead of time. They were then able to testify at the conference, to the truthfulness of the revelations. After hearing the testimonies, the whole conference voted, first as quorums, then as a congregation to accept the book as arranged. Our present section 134 was also unanimously voted into the publication, as was the section on marriage penned by Oliver Cowdery, which was deleted from the book in 1876 and replaced by Section 132 on the Eternal Marriage covenant. Members who could not attend the conference were informed by the publication of the high counsel minutes of the 17 Aug 1835 in the *Doctrine and Covenants* itself and in the *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, the Kirtland newspaper."

I have a real problem, as I hope many of you likewise have a real problem, with the concept that some man or men can vouch for something and say, "*Trust me, it's gonna be GOOD for you to go ahead and take the pill we're asking you to swallow.*" The view that replaces that is the view no one of us is greater than another. No one has the right to dictate. No one has the right to tell you, "*trust me.*" Instead, everything is being made available in advance for everyone to view so that no one need stand, as was done in the ceremony on the 17th of August when the *Doctrine and Covenants* was first sustained, when the audience only heard second-hand people telling them, this is a good thing, go ahead and adopt it, without ever having had the opportunity to review it. We ask no such thing. And none of us should expect to be treated that way. We're all equal, we're all accountable, and we all should be shown the respect of being allowed the opportunity to review, and that review critically and to comment and to make suggestions, and to advance criticisms and to deliberate, so that when the end of this is reached and people raise their hand to accept it as the basis for governing a body of believers, a body of equal believers, a body of believers who respect one another, they do so knowingly and they do so with the full light of understanding and not trusting some group to tell them, "*Trust us — we're not going to let you read it, but we're telling you — it's good stuff.*" You're going to be able to read, to pray, to examine, to criticize, and to determine that for yourself.

In 1876, Orson Pratt published a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants making numerous changes including adding 22 sections, among which was section 110, for the first time. He altered the text from the third-person to the first-person for section 110. No sustaining vote was taken to approve the changes to that addition. It was simply done and published.

In the October 1880 general conference, President George Q. Cannon held up copies of the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price* and said, "As there have been additions made... by the publishing of revelations which were not contained in the original edition, it has been deemed wise to submit these books with their contents to the Conference, to see whether the Conference will vote to accept the books, and their contents as from God and binding upon us as a people and as a church." Then Joseph F. Smith moved that that be done, it was seconded, and the congregation voted affirmatively." That is published in the *Deseret Evening News* in October 1880.

In the 1921 edition, which is referred to as the Apostles' Edition [of the *Doctrine and Covenants*] – it's a title that's given because by 1921 it was abundantly clear to everyone that the apostles had completed their overthrow of the church and that it belonged exclusively to them. In 1921 the Apostle's Edition of the D&C eliminated *Lectures on Faith* without a vote by a general assembly. In 1921 the Lectures on Faith were removed, "not because they were called in question, for they are excellent lectures of great value on the principles of faith, but because they were not revelations." That was the story that was told, and therefore, what had one time been adopted as the rule of faith was eliminated simply by fiat, just like they said *trust me* in the beginning to get it adopted without people reading it, so likewise it was removed but it was done without a vote.

In April 1976, N. Eldon Tanner, during a Saturday afternoon session, as part of sustaining Church leaders, got approval for Sections 137 and 138. [Section] 137, in the form that is published in the LDS version of the scriptures, is an excerpt from a larger revelation given to Joseph. The larger version of the same document is provided in its entirety, rather than as an excerpt, in the proposed Doctrine and Covenants.

As we stand here today (or sit, as the case may be) there is not a single church, body, congregation, or assembly anywhere that has published and is claiming as their body of governing scriptural material, a set of scriptures which includes: 1. The *Lectures on Faith*, 2. Fully print the fullness of the scriptures for every revision Joseph made to the Bible, 3. Faithfully reproduce the original revelations and their original wording, and 4. Adapt punctuation for the Book of Mormon text that avoids imposing doctrinal errors, or which function to govern the existing fellowships among us. But there is a draft, and it's available for your review, and you'll have at least half a year to review it.

Today's project began more than a year before I was directly involved with it. Chris [Hamill] said that there were two groups that functioned independent of one another, and that's true enough, but there was one fellow, on his own, who began this project – as daunting as it is, alone – before he discovered that there was a group working and

then he joined their group. For the most part the work was done by two different groups. Significantly, they felt themselves called to do this. "*If ye have a desire to serve God ye are called to the work*" was included over and over again in sections of the current LDS version of the scripture.

These two independent groups, called only by the spirit to do the work, began and completed their work about one week apart without knowing of each other. One of the two groups brought the finished product to me and gave it to me, telling me they wanted me to publish it and they wanted to remain anonymous. They don't want their names to be included. That group had asked me for permission to include some of the material that I have written and I told them, "Do what you want with it."

I began the process of reviewing what they had done, and it was markedly different than the current set of LDS scriptures. But I had only had it for about a week, and I had not accomplished much at all in reviewing it when the second group put their preliminary project up somewhere and Adrian Larsen made note of it on his blog. I was surprised to find out there was a whole 'nother project out there, and I'm sitting here with an electronic version of the whole thing. I contacted Adrian and I said, "Do you know who is doing that project?" I had heard rumors that there was a scripture project, like I'm sure many of you had heard rumors. But I didn't know who was doing it and I thought the one delivered to me was it. It turns out there was another one altogether different.

Adrian gave me the contact info for Chris Hamill, who stood up here and is going to take criticism for all this, and he is welcome to it.

I contacted Chris and said, "Have you had anything to do with...?" and he had nothing to do with, and so I said, "Look, this probably ought to be something more than two groups. We probably ought to do something to assemble the parts." It was still, I think, over the holidays. At my office everyone who was local came to my office and met face to face. Everyone who was in far-flung parts of the world, including across the ocean, who participated in this work joined in on a notebook computer screen and we had a meeting of everyone.

As it turns out, each group had faced essentially the same group of questions but they had reached slightly different conclusions for good and sufficient reasons to them. But as they reasoned together – one example is both had concluded that *Lectures on Faith* needed to be put back into the *Doctrine and Covenants*. One group however, had concluded that the catechisms (the questions and answers) would be eliminated because those were simply pedagogical tools (or teaching tools) used in the School of the Prophets to try and prompt the students in the School of the Prophets to be able to retain the content of the lecture, so that wasn't necessary. They had eliminated the questions and answers. The other group had included everything, including questions and answers, because at least one person and perhaps more, but one gave voice to the argument [and] said there was some slight ambiguity between the *Lectures on Faith* and the question-and-answer which allows you to reach a more fulsome interpretation of the meaning of the lecture itself when you consider the question and the answer, and

he found value in the catechism. As a consequence of that discussion, everything from the original *Lectures on Faith*, including the catechism, is now included in the proposed set of scriptures just as it was in 1835.

In addition, one group was aware (as Chris read to you) that Joseph Smith had announced the intention of publishing both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon in a single volume and the other group was unaware of that. Therefore they reached agreement that that is the way it ought to be done. Questions about sourcing, questions about what was and what was not to be included, how to authenticate, what steps were taken by one group, what steps were taken by another group, what solutions were reached. They reasoned together. Then there were the difficulties of spelling. It is annoying to spell "vail/veil" two different ways, particularly when veil has a well-known accepted spelling today. There was also the spelling of the name of "Noah", N-O-E or N-O-A-H. The decision was made to standardize all spellings and to use modern convention so that to the modern eye it looks familiar.

Both agreed that they would work together to review again from beginning to end, after they had adopted the same protocols, the entire project. And so more than a year's worth of work was then redone and re-reviewed by both groups from beginning to end. What you are getting is a chance to review the entire project, gone through carefully twice by teams. Each team reviewed it internally repeatedly while they were doing it.

When it comes to scripture, corruption happens. Each new dispensation is responsible for fixing the canon of scripture to reclaim truths, to correct errors and to adopt guiding principles applicable to their day. Again, remember the statement Joseph Smith made at the [1831] conference: "*God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the church, said the Lord would cut his work short in righteousness and except the church receive the fullness of the scriptures that they would yet fall.*"

Sustaining is planned to happen at the next conference after a chance has passed for review of the material. This is necessary for the gentiles to claim they have accepted a covenant and a law. "For behold I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off for the Lord covenanteth with none such save it be with them that repent and believe in His Son who is the Holy One of Israel. ...*For the time speedily cometh that the Lord will cause a great division among the people and the wicked will he destroy. And He will spare his people, yea even if it so be that He must destroy the wicked by fire* —" (2 Nephi 30:2, 10, emphasis added).

Zion will include people who are willing to receive revelations from God and obey commandments. God does this to bless His people. "*Blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my Gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the Earth and it shall bring forth in its strength. And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few and with revelations in their time —they that are faithful and diligent before me.*" If you want Zion you necessarily must want commandments and you must necessarily be

willing to receive revelations, and you must set aside your covetousness and receive the fulness of the scriptures if you plan to not fall.

If you take a look around at all those who claim they descend in faith from a tradition which reckons from the prophet Joseph Smith, every one of them is in a state of disrepair. It is like Joseph's last dream of his farm, overgrown with weeds, with the siding of the barn falling off, which is a vision of Joseph's not published in any current set of scriptures adopted by anybody but is included among the things that are in the proposal that we would have you make or adopt as a rule of faith.

If you go to 3 Nephi 21 (which is going to be a different chapter if you adopt a new set of scriptures.) As an aside, I got my set of these. My intent was to read it with a red pen and only mark what I thought needed to be fixed. I didn't get in it very far before I'm highlighting. There are no cross-references, I'm writing my own cross-references. I'm treating them like I treat scripture. So far I haven't noticed anything that needs correcting because I've been so distracted by the substance of what I'm reading in there. You're going to have to fix anything. I'm otherwise distracted. When I study the scriptures, and when I read the scriptures or I quote from the scriptures, I'm familiar enough with them so that – in the Book of Alma, if you're looking at your set of scriptures, it's on the left hand, it's on the back side of the turn page: "*It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart...*" I see where it is in my head because I'm familiar with them. D&C 130, right hand side, far right column, top of the page: "*There is a law, irrevocably decreed before the foundation of the earth, upon which all blessings are predicated –* " and so on. I can't find that in here. I don't know where any of the material that I know and can quote. For me this is a journey into new terrain. I get more out of looking at these because I cannot read them with anything other than a fresh set of eyes. They are completely different than what I'm so familiar with. I don't know when the last time the scriptures seemed new to you, surprising to you. These are surprising to me. They are like a gift to have come into existence. I think if you'll pick them up with an open heart and with a desire to learn something you are going to be taken on an exciting journey into the restoration itself that has become flat, stale, and unprofitable in what is going on around us.

Christ's prophecy in the 21st chapter of 3 Nephi of the scriptures that we're familiar with – I would have no clue how to find or cite it in there. By the way, if these ever get adopted, from then on I intend only to cite from them, and then if you're reading something I've written or said you're going to have to go in here and figure out how to tie it back into what we've got in other publications. I'm not going to do that for you. You're going to have to pick them up.

Christ said that it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles. He says, "*...the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and be baptized in my name and know the true points of my doctrine, that the Gentiles may be numbered among my people.*"

In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland temple, Joseph Smith dedicated the temple and identified the Latter-day Saints as "*we who are identified with the Gentiles.*" If we enter into – as gentiles – a covenant so that we know the true points of Christ's doctrine, then the gentiles who do so may be numbered among my people. "*And when these things come to pass it shall be a sign unto them that the work of the father hath already commenced. ...In that day for my sake shall the Father work a work which shall be a great and marvelous work among them. And there shall be among them those that will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them. ... It shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, they shall be cut off from among the people who are of the covenant.*"

Joseph Smith brought forth words that have never been preserved or accepted. It's high time that some people, however few, do so. It is high time that you and I do so.

"Wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent. ...At that day, whosoever will not repent and come unto my beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, Oh House of Israel." It has been a gift that the people before have failed, because the clock hasn't been ticking but if a people adopt a covenant and receive what has been restored, the clock will begin to tick.

"If they will repent and hearken unto my words and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them." "Church," not, as sister Adolfo explained, [an] institution. "Church," as she explained, meaning a spiritual body of believers. "Church" as defined by the Lord in the revelations, not "church" as defined by filings with the corporate Secretary of State identifying an institution that owns property. If you want one of those, go choose, there is an infinite variety. We want that group of believers, that assembly who accept covenants from God and who are spiritually connected, not institutionally connected.

Many of us suffer from post-traumatic religious stress. We don't need to go there. We don't need to repeat their mistakes. We should learn from them. I don't care who it is among us. I don't care how soft your heart is, or how inclined you are to follow God. The institutions are such a perfect mouse trap that if I were to call any one of you to be the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve or the new president of the Relief Society, you couldn't fix it. It cannot be done. The only way is to begin anew and to learn the sad lessons of where it takes you if you go down one route. No matter who it is you trust at the beginning, everything is susceptible to corruption and abuse. Therefore we need to be equal, we need to be on the same footing.

If we will repent and *"hearken unto my word and harden not our hearts, I will establish my church among them and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among THIS remnant."* *"This the remnant of Jacob unto whom I have given this land for an inheritance."* It is talking about the gentiles but it's talking establishing His word, which is a prerequisite to establishing His people. *"Numbered among this the remnant of Jacob unto whom I have given his land as an inheritance. And they shall assist my*

people, the remnant of Jacob and also many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city which shall be called the New Jerusalem. Then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in who are scattered over all the face of the land unto the New Jerusalem and the power of heaven shall come down among them and I also will be in their midst. At that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea even the tribes which have been lost which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem."

Take another look on your own at 3rd Nephi chapter 21, and in particular pay attention to how the words in the covenant play into the fulfillment of the prophecies and the reclaiming of the gentiles to become part of His covenant [people] and then those who likewise inherit, as their possession, this land.

Recognize that if you want a sign that the work of the Father has commenced, I can think of no more tangible, physical sign to hold up than that the work has commenced and is now available for your review, and if you will receive it can become a covenant that the Lord intends to vindicate.

Remember that there are more scriptures that are coming. 2 Nephi 29:11-13 tells us that there are records that are out there that have been kept by yet other parts of the ten tribes that are yet to be gathered in. The Book of Mormon itself has significant omissions that are intended to come forth at some future date. But the record that has been given is given to test and to try the people to see if they will accept it.

As Paul Durham mentioned, no one took seriously the Book of Mormon, really until Hugh Nibley. I wrote about that in *Eighteen Verses*. When David O. McKay approached Hugh Nibley he wanted to know if he serious about believing in the Book of Mormon. How can you do that because no one was reading, studying or believing in it.

With respect to this project, expect there will be opposition. There will be imitation and pretenders. There will be both deceived and deceivers who will be emboldened because there is always a necessary opposition in all things. It doesn't happen any other way. Therefore don't be surprised when, on the one hand, when you take a step in one direction that there isn't a step taken in the opposite. But at the end of all this, assuming there is some group, however small – as Gideon and his group were reduced from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300; whatever remained was sufficient for the triumph.

Everyone is free to vote when we have reached the end of the line and they are free to reject it. But if there is some small group who are willing to enter into that covenant, whatever that number is, that will be sufficient. I hope those who remain opposed will allow those willing to enter into a covenant to depart in peace because we've allowed the LDS Church, or any of the other various sects to Mormonism, to depart from us in peace. I hope that those willing to vote are likewise given the opportunity to depart in peace.

Now I'm going to change topics and clarify a few points.

Sustaining of a priest is only required in order for that priest to function outside a family and as part of a larger fellowship of believers. Inside the family there is no such requirement. I did not go to the trouble of being sustained by anyone until someone outside of my immediate family asked me to perform a priestly function. At that point I told them, while I'm perfectly at liberty inside my family; I have to meet the criteria. So I had to delay what they had asked and I had to go and get sustained because I'm now acting outside of my family. Until that time it wasn't necessary to do so. Many of you were qualified before I was but God spares no one. I would not dare proceed without meeting the criteria once the criteria had been set.

Seven women must sustain, one of whom is the wife, if the man is married. This ought to be done; we haven't talked about this but it ought to be done. I've talked with people on the scripture group about this. Before sustaining, in any fellowship group, you should first ask if any are opposed. If there are people who are opposed, they should be given the opportunity to explain the reasons before there is any further vote taken, so that they know why there is opposition. Those who vote to sustain should consider the opposing views and the opposition reasons, and deliberate about that before they go forward. But if seven women are still willing to sustain, go forward.

There are three steps. The first is ordination. Any man holding priesthood can ordain another man; anyone can do this. The second, if you're functioning outside of a family, is sustaining, which requires seven women. Thirdly, and this can be done at any time, confirmation, which must come from heaven. Heaven must ratify.

All these should precede performing any ordinance in a fellowship. You should keep a record of the line of authority from the one who does the ordination. I would have a written certificate signed by the seven women proving the sustaining vote, and everyone involved should record it in their personal records, particularly when the Lord confirms the authority to the man, he ought to keep that in his personal record.

I'm changing subjects again: There is an effort to collect funds for a temple project that transcends every group. Other than that one "transcending each group project," there is no other general fund or aggregation of funds between fellowships. Each fellowship is independent in their own funds. There is no general fund collected even at these conferences. But conference sponsors may ask for donations to help defray the cost of the conference. That's up to them.

The relief from the donations for "the poor among you" refers to the poor among the individual fellowship. If there are no poor among you, then excess donations should go to the temple, but they can be shared as your fellowship determines by common consent, and that's up to you, using your common consent.

When a temple exists, there will be a box in the main courtyard where people can make donations. Donations to the temple will go for two purposes: First is maintenance and repair of the temple. Second, that fund, when that happens in that time and those

circumstances, is a general fund for the poor. That fund can be called upon by any fellowship needing assistance with their poor. Anyone who is part of any fellowship is entitled to a request for assistance from that excess temple fund.

There are entirely local and independent fellowshipping groups that are comprised primarily of family and friends. That's the way that this has and will operate, with only two exceptions. First, conferences can be called that are area-wide, region-wide, or general. Like this one and the one in Boise, and the one coming up this next September in Boise, those are all general and everyone is invited to come to those. Those things operate in addition to local fellowships.

Secondly, the temple by its nature is general and is the one place that involves all believers, wherever they are located throughout the world. When the temple is functioning, there will be general conferences regularly conducted there. It should be expected also, when the temple is fully organized and operating, that there will be festivals or feasts that will be observed whereas, in the present state of things, such things are not yet expected observances.

I don't think the Lord cares whether you want to practice or not, that would be up to you. But the Lord has plans for a temple that go beyond what you might associate typically with a temple from some of your past experiences.

Funds that are donated to build the temple are going to be fully transparent. At present, the GoFundMe site is public and the funds donated to there are open and public. But in time every cent that is donated will be fully accounted for. The Lord requires a record of donations and expenses. They are supposed to be gathered and ultimately maintained at the temple, and be open for inspection, and I expect will be disclosed at some point online when the full accounting can be made.

Now I want to refer to a verse, and refer to this verse in the context of the temple. Apply these words solely and exclusively for a moment to the temple. *"Do not expect to eat the bread or wear the garment of the laborer in Zion."* If you oppose the work, if you stay your hand, if you refuse and others do the labor, don't expect to eat the bread or wear the garment.

Now, I want to address the Spirit of Elias, Elijah and Messiah. Or in other words, work to be accomplished by those operating under the mandate of the Aaronic, Melchizedek and Patriarchal division of labor.

Let me reiterate it again, because there is at least one angry foolish soul out there who persists in redefining the terms when I have defined the terms. So let me be yet again redundant:

Joseph spoke of three divisions of priesthood. He entitled these the Aaronic, the Melchizedek and the Patriarchal. Joseph defined the greatest of these as Melchizedek priesthood because it comprehended all others. I'm not using, and have not used, and

have explained before, since Melchizedek has acquired a definition in the heads of Latter-day Saints, I'm not going to try and extract for the bull the line of thought that reckons from that. I'm just leaving that alone and saying, Okay, let me re-define the terms. In my re-definition of the terms, Aaronic refers to the least of these, Melchizedek refers to the next level of these, and Patriarchal refers to the greatest of these, in my nomenclature, not Joseph's.

I do this, as I have explained, because in the beginning, there was a unitary priesthood. It was the Holy Order After the Order of the Son of God. But in order to prevent the too frequent repetition of the name of the Son of God it got renamed, first after Enoch and then later after Melchizedek. But it is referring to one original, unitary priesthood which is the Holy Order After the Order of the Son of God. Yet Joseph spoke about three great divisions. In the beginning, because the first patriarchs had that original unitary fullness of the priesthood after the Order of the Son of God, and because Abraham acquired the rights of the fathers or the first father, Adam, and therefore like Adam held the Holy Order After the Order of the Son of God, I use the term "Patriarchal" priesthood to refer to that original fullness, and to nothing else. I divide them up into three categories and three nomenclatures using those terms.

There is the Spirit of Elias, there is the Spirit of Elijah and there is the Spirit of Messiah. These three great spirits unfolded in the work of God in the generations of man in a steady descent. They will be likewise inverted like a chiasm and return in an ascent so that at the end it will be as it was in the beginning. "Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall in the end of the [earth] also," was the prophecy that Father Adam gave, Enoch quoting Adam, and Moses quoting Enoch, the prophecy being contained in the *Book of Moses* or soon, in the *Book of Genesis*.

The first spirit was the spirit of Messiah. Adam dwelt in the presence of God. Adam represents that original fullness. Adam was the first man. Adam received instructions and spoke to God face to face. He dwelt in a temple, from which he was cast out, but he dwelt in a temple. Therefore, Adam represents the Spirit of Messiah.

The Spirit of Elijah is represented by Enoch who, when the Earth was threatened with violence and men were to be destroyed because of the wickedness upon the face of the Earth, was able to gather a people into a city of peace, and to have the Lord come to their city of peace and remove them from the coming violence and destruction. He is a type of the Spirit of Elijah because Elijah would likewise later ascend in the fiery chariot into heaven. He is a type of the Spirit of Elijah, because it is the Spirit of Elijah in that ascent into heaven that must prefigure the return of the Spirit of Messiah in the last days in order to gather a people to a place that God will acknowledge, will visit and will shield from the coming violence that will involve the destruction of the world. And so Enoch becomes the great type of the Spirit of Elijah, although the name "Elijah" is associated with a man who lived later still but who duplicated, among a hardened people in a fallen world, the same achievement as Enoch had accomplished, albeit Enoch did so with a city, and Elijah did it as a solitary ascending figure, yet it will be Elijah and his spirit which, in the last days, will likewise prepare a city for salvation and preservation.

Then there is the Spirit of Elias which is represented by Noah, in which everything that had gone on before was lost. Things begin anew and Noah begins a ministry of attempting to preserve what was before by preaching repentance. And so Noah as the messenger, or the Elias, bears testimony of what once was.

In the end, before the Lord's return, these same three spirits need to have been brought into the world, in order for the completion of the plan that Adam prophesied about and that was in the heart of the Lord from before the foundation of the world. The Spirit of Elias declaring the gospel has to come again into the world, and it did in the person of Joseph Smith, and in the message that he brought, and in the scriptures that he restored, and in the message and the practices that he was able to bring about, however short-lived that success may have been. Elias and the Spirit of Elias came through Joseph Smith into the world.

We have yet to take the Spirit of Elias seriously enough to move on to receive something further. But we are now facing a crossroads in which it may be possible to restore again and continue the work and move forward. Moving forward successfully however, will require the Spirit of Elijah. This time the Spirit of Elijah is not to prepare a people so that they might ascend into heaven but instead to prepare a people so that those who come will not utterly destroy them. There must be a people prepared to endure the burning that is to come. Just as Enoch's people were prepared, shielded and brought worthy to ascend so as not to be destroyed by the flood, the Spirit of Elijah must prepare people in order for them to endure the day that is coming that shall burn the wicked as stubble. That will be people living in a place of peace and they will be the only people who are not at war one with another. They will be people who accept a body of teachings and allow them to govern their daily walk; both with each other and with God, so that they receive "commandments, not a few" and "revelations in their day" because that is what the people of Zion must necessarily be willing to do.

We are promised that one will come who will be part of Jesse and part of Ephraim who will set in order, whose identity will be established by the work accomplished and not by the foolishness and prideful claims made by someone who has done nothing. If the work is done, once it's completed, you might be able to guess. But any fool can run around claiming themselves to be whatever their peculiar schizophrenia allows them to claim.

The third spirit that is to return is that spirit which was in the beginning. It is the Spirit of Messiah, this time the Messiah Himself. This time He will come to His house. He will dwell there. Everything must be prepared in order for Messiah to return. And so in the end, as it was in the beginning. Adam being a type who represents dwelling in the presence of God, or the Spirit of Messiah. In the end it will be Messiah Himself who returns to dwell among a people who are prepared. This is a chiasm. It is returning to the beginning as the work of the last days walks backward in time to the point where it all began.

Elias goes before to prepare for a greater work that is coming after, just as the Aaronic ordinances go before. Joseph Smith said the Spirit of Elias was revealed to him, but "the Spirit of Elijah holds something more. It holds the revelations, ordinances, endowments and sealings necessary to accomplish turning the hearts of the fathers to the children by securing an unbroken thread between the living and the fathers in heaven. This can only be done in a temple prepared for that purpose." I'm reading Joseph. Without sealing of living children to the fathers in heaven, who dwell in glory and who sit upon thrones, the return of the Lord with Enoch and the other thousands who will accompany him would result in none escaping the judgments to come.

I do not like the gentile reaction to the word or understanding of "not lawful" or the term "forbidden." I think those words convey an idea that today can be easily misunderstood. I think I would prefer those words to be understood that: it is not wise to tell gentiles because they will abuse it when they learn it. It is because of that potential for abuse why man is not capable of making it known but is only to be understood by the spirit. When it comes to a person by the power of the spirit, it comes to them in a way that helps them understand who our Lord is and what He is about.

Likewise, the word "dominion" in the understanding of the gentile can convey the impression of a prison warden who is exercising control over captives. I think the word "dominion" should be understood instead to convey the idea of a gardener who is responsible for making the garden thrive and grow and bear fruit. To be clear, the three greatest examples of wielding "dominion" in the correct manner that we should understand it are, first: Christ, who is probably without any peer, unquestionably the greatest example of one holding the greatest dominion, and who also likewise showed the greatest example of how to wield dominion. He beseeched people to believe. He pled with them for their own good. He knelt to serve them. He denied that He had a kingdom of this world. He tried to prepare people for a better one. But He was more intelligent than they all and He was the greatest of them all, unquestionably holding the greatest dominion and He wore it as a light thing. His yoke was easy.

Adam likewise, after Christ in this world, held the greatest dominion. But Adam taught and pled and instructed but did not abridge the agency of his children, even when one of his sons killed another of his sons. Adam did not execute Cain. Cain was sent away. Adam held dominion, but he exercised that like our Lord, pleading for the best interest of others, inviting and enticing them, hoping for their best interests.

Then there is Moses, who is called in scripture "the meekest of all men," and gentiles depict him as a bully and a strongman. Yet Moses saw no reason to be jealous when others were out prophesying; would that all men would do that. Moses, like Adam, like Christ, is an example of how the word "dominion" should be understood.

All three were gardeners responsible for trying to make their garden thrive, grow and bear fruit. In reality, those who have held the greatest dominion given by God have all lived lives of meekness and service. They were the opposite of what gentiles regard as a strongman, the opposite.

To be clear on what we are trying not to do, which implies what we are trying to do, I want to use a verse from The Book of Mormon. We have to avoid what is explained in Church then in scripture:

"The time speedily shall come that all churches which"...and now here's a list of the "whiches" that must be avoided because it's going to end with "need fear and tremble and quake." They are going to be brought low in the dust. They are going to be consumed as stubble, and this is according to the words of the prophet. That's where it's going. This is the list of the stuff that identifies those churches which will be burned up. We can't do this:

~"built up to get gain." The people who put on this conference sacrificed, and lost money to do so. The people who put this project together volunteered their time to do so. I helped contribute in order to make 25 complete sets of these available for any of those of you who cannot afford to purchase them online. My assumption is that there are young marrying couples with children, or perhaps single mothers, who can better use the money than spending it on getting a set of scriptures. And for at least 25 of those, money has been gathered, books have been purchased and they are out in the lobby. I think not all of them were taken yesterday. If there is anyone with a financial need they are free and available online as an electronic version. But in my view, particularly in households with children, these are important to have as objects in the household for the children to see. They are going to assume a form that is less hefty than this. You may as well have the gold plates with this stuff. Eventually we are going to have onion-skin, and the size is going to shrink, and they will be a lot easier to carry around. You won't look like a pharisee if you happen to have your scriptures with you, and you won't need to work out in order to be able to take them places. But for now, and until they get sustained and they get printed in a more portable and carrier-friendly version, we want to make sure that anyone that can't afford it gets a copy. If there are still some left, someone reading about the proceedings of this conference online and identifies, through the website that will be available, the need, they will send them to fellowships anywhere in the world. They are only in English at the moment. I'm sure there are volunteers who are willing to do that in the future. "Built up to get gain" is the one thing we don't do. If you participate in a fellowship you're probably losing money. If you're conducting a conference you're probably losing money. If you are giving talks as I do, or you are writing as I do, or you are assisting in projects as I do, you are probably losing money. I think you'd be surprised at how much money I've lost trying to do some good in the world. I won't tell you the number because I think that ought to remain between me and the Lord. Far from being supported, I work hard to produce a living so I can afford to do some preaching.

There are churches that are built up to get gain. We can't do that. We shouldn't even tempt one another to do that. Realize that every one of us is required to sacrifice and that is a good thing. That is a godly thing. It is a reflection of the sincerity of your heart. If you are losing money because of this, then you are probably pleasing the Lord. And if

you are building something up to get gain well, I read you the punch line; you are going to be burnt like stubble, so enjoy the gain.

~"And all those who are built up to get power over the flesh...." Now, having power or influence is as deceitful a thing as riches. I married me a critic and she don't let me to get proud. We spent two hours hiking. I have joked (she has heard this, a lot of people heard me say this) that my wife "can bitch the varnish off wood" and that's a really good thing. She has trolled for criticism of me, doesn't matter how unfair, doesn't matter how untrue. But she will use that to question, to explore, to require a response to. Some of the most interesting stuff I've ever been involved with are private conversations between me and my wife in which I am on the defense! Since I have no influence with her apart from being able to persuade, and since it is my constant requirement to persuade, to explain, it doesn't matter that there are some people out there who think I have some kind of big whammy influence. The truth of the matter is I believe it is absolutely required of me, every time, to persuade, to use gentleness and meekness, to demonstrate knowledge, and I do not cut myself any slack in requiring of me what I would expect of any man who advances a proposition and declares it to be true. One of the things my wife is constantly on the patrol for is: "Is this your opinion? Is this your best guess? Is this based on evidence that you've got, or does this come from the Lord? Because if it's any of those first things then shut up! But if it is that last thing, then help me understand, because that becomes touchy proposition and we want to be sure on that."

I do my best not to get any power over the flesh or, in other words, to put myself to the burden of persuasion. I've been trying to expound scriptures in everything that I've done, and I've been backed into a corner by the Lord on occasion and forced to say something that isn't just expounding scripture, and I hate that. I hate it when I'm put in that proposition. Because I would much rather tell you what is in the mind of the Lord using the body of scripture to persuade you so that, as one question asked over there: "Who are you?" that won't matter. It shouldn't matter. There is only one thing that matters: what does the Lord expect of us? What does the Lord expect of you? What does the Lord expect of me? Let's figure that out and then do that.

I don't care if a group of people get together and accomplish the work. As the work was winding down there were several imponderables that weren't known how to solve the problem. One of them involved about a two hour long discussion between me and Mike Hamill. He wrote up something following that and that's in here. Mike Hamill's name is on that because after I had spent two hours explaining the proposition to him, I didn't want to write it up and he was willing to do so. He wrote it up; he sent it to me as an email. I made very small edit changes because he really got the gist of it, he really got it correct, then I sent it back to him. He wrote it; therefore his name is on it. There was another about an hour and forty-five minute discussion between me and Jeff Savage on a point that had come up. Fascinating point, and we spent time doing that. Once again, Jeff Savage... I didn't want to write it. I'm a busy guy and I didn't want to take that time. It was clear in his mind. He wrote it and he actually wrote it up in a way that was better than the way in which I would have written it. My wife would have edited it. She cuts out

words all of the time. But his name is on it because he wrote it but it wasn't done just freelance, it was done with a lot of discussion and understanding preceding it. Just knowing the right question requires a lot of thought.

~"Built up to become popular in the eyes of the world..." As far as I'm concerned it doesn't matter whether we have 10 people, 300 people, 10,000 or 32,000, it doesn't matter. What matters is that we get it right. If we get it right, God will provide the increase. So "built up to become popular in the eyes of the world" is an irrelevancy and it may sap you of the kind of redemptive power necessary for your religion to matter.

~"Those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world..." We can't do that.

~"And to do all manner of iniquity. Yea in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear and tremble and quake. They are those who must be brought low in the dust. They are those who must be consumed as stubble. And this according to the words of the prophets."

So let me read the list again of what we are not to be. (I've got just another moment and then we're going to take a break, and then I'm going to sit down and we're going to answer some questions that have been given, for the last bit of this.) The list of what we are to avoid: We cannot be built up to get gain, we cannot be built up to get power over the flesh, we cannot be built up to become popular, we cannot seek the lusts of the flesh or the things of the world, and we cannot do all manner of iniquity. Those are the things that must be avoided and those who avoid it, however few, however small, that is who the Lord is looking for. That is the group who will be inclined to gather, receive commandments and obey them.

And then finally, this is leftover from Boise. I didn't have enough time there. When it comes to signs, faith does not get produced by signs. You can't do that. That is why Pharaoh never got impressed. Signs are inconsequential. Whatever the sign is – it was like brother Pratt was explaining. So what, bad weather happens all the time. The plagues are still going on in Egypt. The remarkable nature of the sign is that it happened on cue, not that the sign happened. I'm having a conversation with a fellow. It involves a true gospel principle. We're standing in the back parking lot of my office while we are finishing the conversation. I say, "Do you see the dove sitting atop the pole in the distance?" And when he saw the dove it took off. It flew clockwise one circle around us and it landed back on the pole. To him it was a sign. To me it was a sign. If it was a crow and it went counterclockwise I would say, "Hey, there's something wrong with you. The Lord told me I'd be okay but I'm pretty sure..." Signs are not controlled by men but are God's to give as God determines. Signs are not supposed to be the subject of boasting. Some of the most remarkable signs that have been given to me are silently recorded in my journal but are astonishing. Signs exist. Many of the signs recorded in the lives of believers may be unknown to you, but nevertheless there are signs in rich abundance among believers today. The adulterous are the ones who seek signs, according to our Lord, and He said it twice. We know he said it twice because Matthew's account

includes him saying that to two different audiences on two different occasions. Adulterers are sign seekers.

I would include within the definition of the adulterous, as did the Lord, those who commit adultery in their heart; hence the need to reject polygamy by men. It is adultery in your heart to continue to entertain the possibility that you will one day have 72 virgins, or whatever the hell it is that you have going in your skull. Just get rid of that crap. It does not belong in the life of a meek and a humble man, it doesn't belong there.

It is supposed to be a 15 minute break. Let's start again at quarter to twelve. I plan to get out of here by 12:30 so be forewarned. If you can get the books now do it but if not this place is still going to be available for a few hours thereafter.

2017.03.19 St. George Conference Q&A

General Conference Q&A Session

March 19, 2017

St. George, UT

This is based upon both email and written questions I have received.

Question: Please explain Brigham Young. ...

Answer: (Well, there's a period there.) [Audience laughter] No. [More audience laughter]

Question: Why would he [Brigham Young] be seen in the Celestial Kingdom with Joseph Smith by Joseph F. Smith?

Answer: Okay. D&C section 138, which is the vision of the Redemption of the Dead, was received by Joseph F. Smith in the waning days of his life. The Church was facing enormous challenges and problems at the moment. He had sufficient health issues that he was contemplating his own imminent death and concerned about what comes next. The vision of the Redemption of the Dead has nothing to do with the problems confronted by the [LDS] institution at the time. It is not an institutional answer. It is a personal revelation to a dying man.

It was enough (or important enough) to him that he returned to the meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve and said that he had recently received a series of revelations and that he was going to write them up. They were received in the October time frame, written up, read in the conference, and he was dead in November. So, the message (or the revelation that he received) concerning his apprehension about death was more than justified. He was dead the next month.

When the document got written up, it got channeled through the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve before it got released. And as a consequence of it getting channeled-through, the language had to get approved.

What Brigham Young is doing in the middle of that doesn't hold any reassuring value to Joseph F. Smith about his imminent death, but it is a great comfort to the Church and to the members of the Church. And so...

What we do not have is a Joseph F. Smith Papers Project. What we don't have access to are the minutes of the First Presidency and the Quorum of The Twelve—those are guarded very selectively, and what we don't know is if the reference to Brigham Young was in the original draft or if it was added by someone—and if so, when? We know all that about many of the Joseph Smith revelations.

Now, when it comes to Joseph F. Smith, when he testified in the Smoot Senate Confirmation Hearings and he was asked point-blank if he'd ever had a revelation and

he denied that he had ever had a revelation, I believe him. I believe that he testified honestly.

A month before his death, however, worried about dying and perhaps more contrite and humble and reflective than he'd ever been in his life, when that rolled past his attention, I don't think he lied then, either.

What I don't know is how trustworthy the manuscript is for the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead (Section 138), because through the Joseph Smith Papers Project we know the LDS Church makes changes and edits to historical materials, including revelations of Joseph Smith, Jr. What the Church has later published in many important documents was not the original content but altered documents to support later Church priorities.

So, if you want to know what Brigham Young was doing in the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead (which is not a document that appears in this new set of Scriptures, as Chris Hamill explained), then you will need to ask Joseph F. Smith. It is not one of the questions I put to him because, frankly, I was not interested in that during my visit with him.

Question: Is it better to sacrifice "individual truth-seeking" for the sake of marital unity?

Answer: One of the documents that is in the new set of Scriptures is the letter that Hyrum Smith wrote—his general epistle to the Church giving advice. I put a copy of that up on my website—you can read it there—but it gives marital advice, and the relationship between the man and the woman is given high priority, above religious obligations, including even baptism. And so, get the new Scriptures, read Hyrum Smith's advice, then you reach your own conclusion.

Question: Did the event involving the woman taken in adultery happen? It is not in the Testimony of John.

Answer: Here's my understanding: The incident involving the Lord and the woman taken in adultery really did happen. It was a well-known story that had been handed down all the way back from New Testament times, but it was never in the record of John. As it turns out, the only place that we have it is in the version of the Gospel of John that's been handed down to us. But that got added by a monk who, like everyone else, believed the story to be authentic. Everyone believed the story to be trustworthy, but it wasn't in any of the gospel accounts. Therefore, a copyist put it into John's gospel, but John didn't put it in there. Accordingly, I did not put it into the Testimony of St. John. But I don't doubt the incident happened, and I don't doubt that the Lord handled it in the way in which it's told. It's just not John's story.

Question: Will you comment on the Testimony of John and explain how it was received?

Answer: I don't assert or claim interpretive authority over the text. I will testify to you that the text is a revelation, that it came from God, that it is a gift given to us, and it's His.

Ultimately, everything that is part of the Gospel narrative belongs to the Lord, and therefore, I believe it would be a mistake for me to begin to announce interpretations related to a document when I don't believe that I own that right. If I do so, I run the risk of cutting off other people's insight or inspired reading of a text that may bless and benefit me if I were to hear it. If I close their mind, if I shut their mouths, if I get out ahead of them when they have the right to do so, then I'm the poorer for that, and you're the poorer for that.

Joseph Smith once said that he may have made a lot of mistakes, but there's no mistakes in the revelations. That was his way of saying they are not his property. And I think careful and solemn and ponderous thought about what failed before and the list of the stuff I read that said, "this is the criteria of the churches that God intends to destroy" should make all of us look at the life of Joseph Smith not merely as a marvelous work by a prophet called of God who accomplished great things, but it should make us ask ourselves:

1. Why did it result in what we see now?
2. Why did it not result in Zion?
3. Why did it not result in a temple to which Christ came to restore the fullness or that which has been lost unto you? (see D&C 124:28)
4. Why did it not work?
5. Why is there a multi-billion-dollar institution and a number of extraordinarily wealthy splinter cults, all of which have absolutely no interest in turning everything back over to the Lord?
6. What if we don't have anything to give Him?
7. What if you don't have an office to bestow upon Him?
8. What if we don't have anything other than the one thing He requests? A temple.
9. What if that's the only thing we have to give to Him? We don't have a synagogue. We don't have a chapel. We don't have a cathedral. We don't have an executive office building. We don't have a Zions Bank. We don't have real estate developments. We don't have anything to give to the Lord because we gave it to the poor.
10. What if the only thing we give Him is the only thing He's ever asked of us and that is a house where He can come?
11. How much different would all of the whore and her daughter's belongings look?
12. How much different would the people that belong to the faith—how much different would their lives be lived?
13. How much more equal would we be with one another?

It is like a quip from one of my friends, "It's a terrible thing to find out your mother is a whore." And yet, that is where Mormonism has gone. In all its iterations it has become part of the Great Whore. So, let's not build ourselves another whore. I pose these questions for you to consider, but I'm not going to answer these questions.

Question: Was the wedding at Cana Jesus' marriage?

Answer: No. In answer to this one, it says on page 3, Jesus and his followers were invited guests at the marriage. That is my understanding. Not His wedding. Not that He didn't have a wedding; it's just that this is not an account of His wedding.

Question: Could you lay out the Plan of Salvation more exhaustively?

Answer: Yes, I could. To the extent that it has been necessary or advisable to do so, I have been speaking and writing on the path to follow Christ from the first book I've written to the latest talk I have given. Although they may seem disconnected, this has all been one talk, one book, one record. It builds from precept to precept. The most important thing for us in this life is to come to know Christ. A great deal can be learned from studying the accounts in Scripture written by those whose lives of devotion and obedience equipped them to know the Lord. Testimony from prophets in ages past give us a standard by which to measure everything in our lives today. Through the language of Scripture, we grow to know the voice of the Lord.

When we are well enough acquainted with the Lord's voice from past Scriptural records, we can know when His voice is speaking to us today. It will sound the same. It will point in the same direction. It will encourage you to have faith, repent, and be baptized, and the voice will grow into a constant companion, and you will have a Holy Spirit, a Comforter, a light, the truth of all things, the record of heaven, or the Rock of Heaven to abide with you. As that Holy Spirit endows you with greater light and correspondingly greater faith, you will eventually be brought into the presence of the Lord. Then you can say you know Him. He is in you and has filled you with life and light, and you will be able to distinguish between voices who testify of themselves, proclaiming a message to divide and dispute, or if they speak the words of our Lord who wants to gather us into unity. He wants us to become one.

We cannot become one when we give heed to divisive voices. Those who do nothing, sacrifice nothing, labor to promote themselves, and idly stand on the sides not providing support and encouragement for us to become unified cannot know the Lord. He does not divide His sheep. He gathers them. He intends to gather us as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, if we will heed His invitation and labor to complete His work under His direction. Disunity does not come from Him. It comes from our adversary who opposes our unity, our brotherhood, and our peace.

Question: Is there a tradition we brought over from the LDS Church where influential people rely on the authority of their persona instead of putting God's word as they received it, likely because they haven't actually received it. Do you think we need to be more careful about this? And is Sidney Rigdon an example of pushing and pulling Joseph to damage the restoration?

Answer: Well, yeah, but I try to be. This one was good.

You can't just dismiss Sidney Rigdon as an invidious influence. That would be a mistake. Emma Smith was better educated than was Joseph. Emma Smith was a sounding board for Joseph. You don't need to know much more than one incident in order to grasp what I'm telling you. Joseph Smith was translating the beginning of the Book of Mormon, he found out there was a wall around Jerusalem, and he inquired of Emma, "Was there a wall around Jerusalem?" Emma says, "Yes," because she knew it, and he didn't. Emma had a better education than did Joseph, and Joseph deferred to her and relied on her.

The Lord called her an "elect lady," and that was not an inappropriate title to have been given to Emma, It's a title that the Lord's given to another woman about whom a great deal could be said, but I'm going to pass over that. We're talking about Rigdon.

Rigdon came to Joseph as an accomplished, polished, Campbellite preacher who succeeded in church building, congregation development, ministerial persuasion. He was a polished orator, and by contrast, Joseph was emerging from a frontier farm cocoon. He was emerging out of an isolated role as a translator. He had not had any requirement to address an audience of any significance. And then came Sidney Rigdon, essentially to the rescue. Here Joseph received a built-in mentor who was capable of providing Joseph with input about the very role to which Joseph was now being transferred. And Rigdon helped him.

Rigdon was so influential that even in his late King Follett discourse, he made an aside to Rigdon. "Mark it Elder Rigdon, I'm going to prove it from the Bible," and he went on to preach the greatest sermon of his career. This shows the influence—the positive influence—that Rigdon had on him.

Rigdon declined over the years. There were reasons for that: The mobbing and the fairly significant head injury that Rigdon suffered resulted in the inability thereafter to do what he'd been doing to help. His age and infirmities made his confinement in the Liberty Jail more difficult for him because he was older and unable to survive in that environment as others who were younger and more vigorous. There are a lot of reasons why Rigdon may have made some missteps later on.

When Christ established and organized the New Testament dispensation, Christ patterned what He did as a reminiscence—or an homage—to the family of Israel. He ministered among the Jews who prized their family connection to Abraham. The Gentiles would not be approached until after His death. But during his immediate ministry, Christ served among the Jews who repeatedly claimed they were the children of Abraham. And as children of Abraham, that gave to them the credential that would allow them to pass into heaven. And so, He organized His dispensation with Peter, James, and John to mimic Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and the twelve apostles to mimic the twelve princes of Israel, and the seventy to mimic the seventy descendants of Jacob that entered Egypt in Exodus 1:5. And so, Christ made an homage, a stand up, a

mirror, a structure to resonate with the people to whom He was serving to remind them of the family of Abraham.

Sidney Rigdon was caught up in the fire of completing the Protestant Reformation, which had never achieved the potential of a return of the spiritual gifts. Rigdon believed spiritual gifts belonged to the true New Testament religion. The Campbellites did not share that view. Rigdon was a renegade Campbellite by holding that belief. Then Joseph published a book by miraculous means, and Rigdon was intrigued by the Book of Mormon, leaves his flock and his congregational success to travel to Joseph. When he joined Joseph, a lot of fellow Campbellites converted as well.

Rigdon and the Campbellites already believed in a New Testament church. They wanted to fully restore it. They already had faith, repentance, baptism. They already had some expectation of the Holy Ghost. The first principles and ordinances of the gospel did not start with the Wentworth letter's list (Articles of Faith)—they started with Rigdon and the Campbellites and were imported into Mormonism.

When Rigdon came to Mormonism, he already had followers, and they all aspired to recover the New Testament church with miraculous gifts included in the bargain. They thought if they could get that, they would then have it all.

Joseph had the dilemma of how to organize the people, and Rigdon, who was a trusted confidante and who had been provided to Joseph for good reasons, helped Joseph in the next phase. Rigdon gave the only kind of counsel one would expect from a restorationist New Testament vantage point. He counseled Joseph to inquire how to structure a New Testament model. Joseph inquired, and the Lord answered.

The organization of the restoration through Joseph took the form of a New Testament church. And in the long run, it didn't work. But with time it has managed to aggregate the very list I read you: gain, popularity, influence, etc. It has produced the antithesis of *no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (D&C 121:41). Well, so, do you have priesthood? In truth it is nothing to allow you to control others, no administrative right. It is no power over others. It is no influence. How do you then minister? Persuade, pure knowledge, invite, and entice—exactly as did the three men: Adam, Moses, and Christ, who held the greatest dominion in the history of mankind. That must be how we proceed.

When you create a structure, particularly a hierarchical structure, explain how you become of one mind? How does a people become of one mind and one heart when there is no equality? It is the problem that Sister Adolpho raised about the difference between religion and institutionalism, on the one hand, and spirituality, on the other. If they are distinct, as she said (and she persuaded me yesterday that they are distinct), then why can we not forget the institutionalism and the religiousness of it all and simply seek the spirituality of it all? So that we might one day become of one heart and one mind, as the excerpt from the email in the announcement of the Scriptures Project suggested? Hearts unite first, and minds follow after.

If we can knit our hearts together, eventually our minds will follow. And some of you are pretty tough-minded, but if you can get your heart united, eventually your mind will come around.

In the draft of the replacement for Section 20 (which you'll find in here), there is a suggestion that one fellowship, if it doesn't have needs, can assist another fellowship by providing them with sharing resources. I think that should be possible. But it should be by common consent; it should be a one-time-only occurrence. If it needs to occur again, it should be again by common consent and, likewise, a one-time-only occurrence —because when the church at Rome began to aggregate wealth, they used wealth to gain influence and preeminence over other congregations in the Mediterranean world. The influence of wealth led to political influence, and over time, they obtained universal, hierarchical command of a vertically-integrated church structure. Then all that was needed to corrupt the whole institution was to corrupt the top.

In fellowships, if they are all independent and all equipped with the same instruction and they all function independent of one another, it does not matter how corrupt any single fellowship may become. It will be necessary to corrupt every single one of them to kill the whole. You can't kill the whole by corruption of a single, influential, wealthy entity. Independence and equality provides the truth a better chance to survive.

I think you must be free, as fellowships, to help one another, but if there is a wealthy, regularly-financing fellowship, those who receive from it should be just as concerned about the potential for "strings" accompanying the money as the people who are giving should be concerned about the perversity of viewing that as an opportunity to gain power and authority over others. The path of God is razor thin. It may lie in a straight course, but the way in which the Lord walks that straight line—He doesn't even cast a shadow to the left or the right. When you walk that line and begin to see the shadow, you've already departed from the path even though you think you're still on it. You have to question every step of the way, every step you take, and measure every word you speak because you and I are going to be judged on that basis.

Question: Can you describe the process involved with The Testimony of St. John?

Answer: I'm going to talk for a moment about a context. And I'm only talking about context in order to answer the question. The context is this:

While the Testimony of John is being put together, I have the benefit of a word-processing program. At times the rate at which the material is being put into the word-processing program is so fast that the language is cryptic, and I know what it means, and I know what it means to say, and I'm getting it down, but it needs to be.... It needs to be dealt with. The entirety of the thing gets finished, and as soon as the entirety is concluded, I go back to the very first, and I work it through.... And I work it through from beginning to end in order to make sure that the language—what will be in the paper—accurately reflects what was revealed. So, I work it all the way through, and when I'm

satisfied that everything is there, with one exception because I fought to not write a part of the record—I did not care that John said it, I didn't want to say it as something I recorded....

I fought to keep something out, also, so that I could answer inquiries about whether this was the completed record of John—I could then say, "No, it's not complete." I fought to eliminate one part of that story that I did not personally want to see in there, but the project couldn't be done until it was added. It was the last thing reluctantly added, and it is in there.

But I went through it another time, this time looking for punctuation and extraneous words. I wanted everything to read like we read, because this is written now. Let's talk like we talk. I mean, *thee's* and *thou's* and *ye's* and all that, that may have had a place back in colonial America and in an age where people were still calling one another "thee," but today that is off-putting. When I went back through it in another review, I was looking for that, and I found two of those; also, a couple of words that were in there twice. I don't remember the words at this point, but there were some words two times. I had to delete one.

When that was all done, then I asked my wife to read it, start to finish. She was not to change it. I asked her to read it to see if there were any errors that she could see in the way the thing was laid out, in the sentence structure, in the paragraph division, in the overall read of the thing. She made several comments that helped me, and some things were turned into staccato sentences instead of run-on sentences—because short sentences are easier to read than run-on sentences. When that got done, I sent it to the committee, and the committee was given free license to do anything with it. I think two people gave to me what they noticed were ambiguous words that could mean this or could instead mean something else or could even have a third meaning. And I knew which word meaning it was, so I fixed it. And then, I don't know which guy on the committee did this, but the idea was to release it as a downloadable PDF on my website so I could say, "Oh yeah, that's been out there for a while." And no one would notice it. But someone alerted the universe, and it came to the attention of Adrian Larsen who has a platform for informing a great number of people. And so, whereas I hoped to disclose it here and to say it had been up for months, instead it has become widely read for months.

I say all that for this reason, as background for this: Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon to scribes, the primary one of which was Oliver Cowdery. Scribes, in long-hand, wrote the Book of Mormon. When he ended each night, set the pen down, they started the next day at the place where he ended dictation the day before. No one read the material back to him. They just resumed the work at the same spot. In that way, it progressed to the end.

Then Oliver took the whole thing and copied it, and he took it to the printer. Then it was typeset and came out in print. It was at that point Joseph Smith got to read the words of the Book of Mormon in the typeset copy from E.B. Grandin's shop. So far as I can tell,

from the material I have reviewed, between the time Joseph dictated the Book of Mormon and the time Joseph Smith saw it in print, he had almost no opportunity to do anything with the text. It did not matter what he meant or that he could have clarified something, nor if he would have even punctuated it differently—he did not get that chance. He didn't have a word-processing program. He got one chance to dictate it as he translated it, and then it got written by someone else, and it's off to the printer.

So, when the Book of Mormon was reprinted in the 1837 second edition, Joseph Smith supervised the work and made edit changes. He made further edit corrections in 1840. It was the consensus of everyone, myself included, that we should allow Joseph the right to correct it by editing. I can't even write a short letter at my law office without rereading it and sometimes correcting punctuation, sometimes rewriting sentences to have them be more clear. Joseph Smith had the right to do that, and so, the version in this volume is the one that Joseph edited in 1840. The material will all be in the research notes online and available for public view. We do not hide it. But for the published project, the version that he had a chance to work through in the 1840 edition is the one that was the starting point.

Question: Was Jesus married?

Answer: Jesus would not have been accepted as a legitimate rabbinical teacher if he had not been thirty years of age and married. If he was thirty years of age and unmarried, he would have been considered illegitimate. He would have been considered irresponsible and not worthy to teach others—as Mission Presidents say, "A hazard to society." But He was addressed as Rabbi and accepted as a legitimate teacher. He had to be thirty years of age, and He had to be married.

That is no longer part of some factions of Judaism. Some divisions recognize unmarried Rabbis. Some accept women Rabbis. I am not answering about the current practices but only about how it was dealt with at the time of Christ.

Question: What is the significance and meaning of the new name David?

Answer: Okay, the advice I got was to not even mention this subject. I wasn't going to do it, but Steph and I will discuss me addressing this question on the drive home.

I don't claim anything from having the name. As far as I can tell, there's only one way in which it matters to me. I do not claim anything of any significance associated with the revelation of a new name/of the giving of a new name. To me, the only things about it that were noteworthy are:

- I was first baptized on September 10th.
- I was also excommunicated forty years later on the same date, September 10th.
- I was also given a new name on September 10th. The September the 10th on which I received a new name was 9/10/11, and to me, that was an interesting alignment.

The account accurately depicts that I was not happy with the name. To me it was an unwanted, unlovely appellation. Understand, the name "David" associated with other people is just fine. I know a lot of Davids, and I like their name. I have a partner in my law firm whose first name is David. David is a perfectly good name. But the name David, when spoken by God, suggests to my mind not my partner or other people I know and respect having that name. When the name is spoken by God, I think of only one individual—that was the ancient king of Israel who, to me, was a moral failure. And so, my mind did not run to my partner or to other people I know and love. My mind ran to that man, the king of Israel, who murdered Uriah. To me, that man and that context is a harbinger of an ill wind, to say the least. So, it wasn't wanted.

The response of the Lord—after I had finished my complaints and I'd worked myself up into an obnoxious and complaining outburst—the Lord's response was so mild but cutting that I thought it reflected so well on Him, that when I was told this has to be included in the Scripture Project, I thought it reflected great credit on the Lord.

I was willing to go to the grave with no one knowing a thing about the new name. I thought that, for the most part, the entire way in which that unfolded reflected credit upon the Lord and showed you how a master teacher can convey, in the mildest of ways, a cutting rebuke to teach. I needed to be taught. His mild rebuke contrasts with my ingratitude, complaining, and upset. He was gracious to the inappropriate and ungrateful man He addressed. That contrast shows His brilliance. I think that is the meaning of the event.

Now, I don't make any claim for anything beyond that.

As far as I can tell, the new name has one utility that I have found. When I cannot otherwise get an answer from God to something about which I'm inquiring, I will remind Him of the identity that He gave to me and state that it is I who makes this inquiry. When I do that, He always answers.

If God gives to you a new name, as far as I can tell, its greatest value comes from obtaining an answer to prayer. If you cannot otherwise get a reply, remind the Lord who you are by referring to your new name, that He gave the name to you, and tell Him it is that person inquiring. The answer always comes (in my experience).

We do not have Zion. We do not have the land or even the final location identified as yet. Some of you believe a tradition about its location, but I have written the history involved in identifying Independence, Missouri and will not repeat it again.

We have not built a house, and He has not accepted it. Therefore, anyone claiming they are significant to fulfilling prophecy is foolish. Until the work is done, no claims can legitimately be made. Identity of those mentioned in prophecy is only established by accomplishing work on behalf of the Lord. Until they have done the work, none of us are significant. And that will involve work that matters, not such things as writing a vanity blog and barking out your witticisms or expounding on your vanity or writing revelations

with a lot of personal pronouns referring to themselves. This ought to be obvious to everyone, but apparently it is not obvious, because there are a lot of people that are impressed by such vanity.

I hope all of you will feel at liberty to carefully read, mark, and to respond to the project that is now underway. I have met with, corresponded with, and spoke with the people who are working on this project. And it goes without saying (but it probably shouldn't be left unsaid): Their wives helped! It is important, I think, that there were women who worked on this project as well. We tend not to say that (but I hope you always just assume that), but given some of the questions that came in, apparently people don't assume that! Which is another thing—I didn't get to that question, but at some point, I do intend to address the man and woman issue. A lot probably should be said. I don't want to write it up. I want to talk about it. And the next conference in Boise is going to be dealing with the Scriptures. It will probably be a year from now, but I intend to deal with this subject. I drag my feet on a lot of things to make sure that the Lord gives me no alternative before I proceed. I am a more cautious man than any of you probably could ever dream.

There's still an enormous amount to be accomplished, and there's probably going to be departures of many people along the way. That's a good thing, because if they are clamoring and complaining and are like the children of Israel in the wilderness with Moses, it would be better to leave them with the fleshpots of Egypt. We won't have contentious people and also Zion. We really do want people to expose their ambition, their pride, arrogance, vanity, lusts, and desires. If it is in their heart, we want them to let us see their complaining hearts and to hear their bitter, acrimonious, and false accusations. We welcome that, because those are people that ought not be gathered. They should be free to gather into their own collective and do whatever it is they think will bring them joy. But they are not part of God's people, and they cannot be broken by us. Therefore, let God break them. Don't bring them with us. If people decide to depart and have no further going with us, remember that many people departed from Christ after his "bread of life" talk. So many departed that He turned to the apostles and asked, "Are you leaving, too?" Peter said, "Where are we going to go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." That was not a particularly ringing endorsement, if you think about it. But it was true. There was and still is no other place to go. The Lord alone has the words of eternal life.

I do hope that you understand how weak and vulnerable and easy to be distracted this world is for one of us. I am keenly aware of my weakness. We have one enormous advantage: We know that what Joseph did failed to establish Zion. The people who followed Joseph did not accomplish what the prophecies foretell. That is an enormous advantage if we will take advantage of it. We don't need to envy anything in any of the various "Mormon" sects, because it didn't work. Therefore, we do not need to try to repeat that. It is a dead end.

I've met some of these men for the first time in connection with the Scripture Project. They are now my friends, brethren to me now, but we were strangers when this project

began. I didn't know who they were or what they were getting me into when I began my participation. And I was gratified to discover that strangers to me were brethren in Christ. Every one of them is valued to me now. Some of the email exchanges that went back and forth thrilled me with the substance and the light and the truth that was commanded by some of these brethren. Clearly, they were called to the task and equal to it, and valued by me, valued by the Lord. And putting it all together and combining everyone into the one group and confronting several imponderable dilemmas gave me an opportunity to prayerfully address some issues that are now incorporated into the text. It is not finished. It needs some corrections. I hope the proposed Scriptures are prayerfully considered by people who are going to consider it. It was a privilege to be involved.

Chris Hamill is exactly right—this is not my project. I came late to it, and I helped unite the two separate groups into one whole, and I acted as moderator on a couple of occasions as it came to this point of completion. But the labor has been done by volunteers acting on their desire to collect the most accurate restatement of the Restoration Scriptures.

One of the interesting things about the gathering of Zion is that, apparently, even though there may be more revelations and commandments for us, apparently, it will only be in Zion where the "rich treasures" or the records of other scattered tribes are to be added (see D&C 133:30-33). These records will allow a great deal of lost information to be recovered. If the revelations and prophecies are correct, the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites will be gathered first (see 2 Nephi 29:13). But eventually, there will be many others that get added as well.

The prophecy of returning Israelites bringing the rich treasures to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains refers to the place that will be built by a covenant people who have the legal right to the land. But we must take care to only do as the Lord leads.

I believe we could choose, as a people, a place to build a temple, and we would get exactly the same response we see in the Doctrine and Covenants given to Joseph when the Nauvoo Temple began, *Ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it* (D&C 124:43). Then we probably would reach exactly the same conclusion and fail to have Zion. I will, therefore, not choose a site. If God doesn't choose the site, it will remain unchosen. If God chooses the site, it's His, and then He has the responsibility to defend it.

If you read about the approval for a temple in Nauvoo, the Lord said it was acceptable, and He would approve it:

- *If ye labor with all your might...* (v. 44)
- *And if my people will hearken unto my voice...* (v. 45)
- *But if they will not hearken to my voice...* (v. 46)
- *[P]rove yourselves unto me that ye are faithful in all things whatsoever I command you...* (v. 55)

Instead of volunteering and asking for God's permission, we should wait for Him to choose the place of His choosing. Then it is His, not ours. And if it is His, there is no condition on His ownership and, therefore, His protection of His house. It's His land. It's His to defend. It's His choice. It's His house. It's His Zion. It will be His New Jerusalem, and therefore, no man is going to ask, "Is this acceptable to you Lord?" It must be His, and if it is His, it carries the weight of God having chosen it. He's known where it is for millennia, and He has had prophets describe it. It will be in the everlasting mountains, not on the plains of Missouri. And the people that are going to go there will say, "Let us go up to the mountain where the Lord has an ensign erected" (see Isaiah 2:2-3). That will be His house. He must come and accept it, or we won't have Zion.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that however improbable, however unlikely, however even unpleasant it may seem to you that this work by God is happening now and among this people and in the way it is happening, it is nevertheless true that God is behind this work. However off-putting that may seem to you, the test for you is exactly the same test that has been taken from the beginning of time until now. You would not have liked Moses if you do not like this work. You would not have wanted to be with the people of Enoch if you do not like the people whose hearts are softened and who resonate with the message here.

I'm pretty sure in the many mansions to be built for people in the afterlife, there will be plenty of places for folks who hurl groundless invectives at one another, attributing the worst motives to one another, where they enjoy the company of one another and retire each night saying, "I made a great argument today, and I look forward to getting up and bitching up a storm again tomorrow."

The work of God really is of deep import. We must respect it as a serious matter to contemplate. "Light-mindedness" doesn't have a single thing to do with a sense of humor or laughter. Light-mindedness has to do with treating lightly things that are really important. Light-mindedness means that you do not assign the correct value to something that comes from God because you treat it lightly. I don't care how much you laugh—and yes, God has a sense of humor. When I'm all dour and desperate and pleading, very often the first response of the Lord is a quip about how inappropriately I'm behaving. The first message in the first talk of the ten talks [40 Years in Mormonism] was to be of good cheer because our Lord is of good cheer. He takes seriously the things that will save us, but he really does enjoy our company and wishes that we, likewise, enjoyed one another's company, as we ought to do.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2017.06.10 A Day of Faith and Connection

Youth Conference Address

June 10, 2017

There are more of you here than I was told would be coming. So that's probably a good thing. I had prepared a short talk. Your questions might be more interesting than a short talk. So think of questions and I'm going to see if I can say something while you're composing your question that would be of use to you.

I think there's a difference between resisting temptation and avoiding temptation. And I think if you're going to choose in life to fight battles where you resist temptation, you're probably going to lose that battle a lot. But if instead you choose to avoid temptation, that's a battle you can win.

It's like confronting a giant that is stronger than you, faster than you, meaner than you, more cruel than you ever thought of being, and taking that fight on. The outcome is probably not gonna be in your favor. But if you can sneak around that giant and never take him on, then he doesn't matter.

You kids probably do not yet know what your weaknesses are. You have to be older when you confront that. But everyone's got weakness. The scriptures say—and this is the Lord talking to Moroni while Moroni is working on translating the book of Ether. He's not very happy with the job he's doing translating the Book of Ether and he complains to the Lord saying that: "the gentiles when they read this they're going to mock. They're going to be amused by what I'm doing here" (See Ether 12:23-25).

And the Lord says, "*Fools mock but [they'll] mourn;... I give [to] men weakness that they may be humble; [and if they'll come to Me I will] make weak things ... strong*" (Ether 12:26-27).

How God makes weak things strong is not necessarily making you able to resist your weakness. It might be by making you smart enough to know what your weaknesses are.

I have friends with weaknesses that I do not even understand because they aren't mine. I have friends who have literally ruined their lives with gambling. And I don't understand gambling. I can walk through a casino and laugh at what I see going on there because it does not appeal to me. When I'm in a casino and I'm going to gamble, I'm trying to get rid of the change in my pocket and I'm putting them into the one arm bandits to try and get rid of the change and if I win something that's an enormous setback because now I have more change than what I started with. Gambling doesn't appeal to me. But there are people whose lives are caught up and destroyed by that.

When it comes to the greatest example of how you avoid temptation, like everything else that's good it's Christ who sets the example. In the Book of Hebrews we find out that Christ was in all things tempted like we were. What if instead of Jesus Christ being

the strongest man in terms of his self-will that ever lived, what if Jesus was in fact the weakest, the most vulnerable, the most tempted of all men?

The Book of Hebrews says that he was tempted in all things like us. Thankfully some of us only have one or two or three weaknesses that they have to deal with in life. What if the Savior had to deal with them all? What if he had to deal with everything that you will find tempting throughout your life and more even the things you find non-tempting?

The Savior's ability to resist temptation did not come from a head-on fight. After he was baptized, He went into the wilderness for 40 days and He fasted for 40 days and at the end of 40 days when He was hungry the adversary came to Him and suggested that He use the power that he had, use the influence he had with Heavenly Father, to turn stones into bread. It's pretty clear that Jesus did not start thinking about bread and which bread would taste better right now—whether unleavened bread or flat bread or sourdough bread or leavened bread or German Schwarzbrot, which may not have been invented yet, but He's the Lord. I mean He could foresee it.

He didn't do that. He dismissed it. Man does not live by bread alone. He just put an end to it. He did not entertain the thought because certainly at that moment it would have been a temptation to him. But the thought was simply dismissed. He avoided the temptation and by avoiding it He overcame it.

When the adversary was desperate because the Savior had rebuffed two attempts, he asked the Savior to do something that the public would notice and acknowledge that this was miraculous, that this was the Lord. Do a publicity stunt. Christ was unwilling to do that. Then he offered Him everything there was in the world because Lucifer has control over that as you'll find out. And He resisted that.

We learn the secret to what the Savior did in a short statement about the Savior: "*He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.*" (D&C 20:22)

I know friends whose lives have been compromised by any number of terrible failings. But if they had given no heed to them and had gone on with life as the Savior's example said, some of their lives would have turned out remarkably different. When you recognize what your weaknesses are, don't choose to fight the battle on those grounds. Go somewhere else. Do something else. Get out of there. Don't fight it. Choose instead a different route. You can fight all day long with weaknesses or bad habits, but if you simply replace them with a good habit, if you go do something right or productive or good you won't have to fight that battle.

Don't try to fight a battle that you can't win. The weaknesses that you have been given are unique to you and given to you to help you be humble. And every man, every woman that has or ever will live has weaknesses that come from God. They're part of the human condition.

Avoid the battle. Go elsewhere and do something. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, I understand there are questions. Someone wanna ask a question?

[Question asked; inaudible]

The question is: "Am I going to write another book?"

A: Probably for Christians, not Latter-day Saints, but for Christians. Christianity is in terrible disarray, but because there is widespread agreement on a few principles, Christianity thinks it has survived since the time of the New Testament until today pretty much intact. The truth of the matter is that Christianity in the form that you have today whether it's Catholic, or Protestant or Eastern Orthodox really had no agreement about even the most important principles until 324 AD. Between the close of the New Testament in 324 AD, Christians were so divided about so many issues that they were actually killing one another. They were fighting battles—pitched battles about the fundamentals of Christianity. It took a Roman Emperor to impose what the Christian world now believes about the Trinity and that's why they regard Mormons as non-Christian because we don't accept the creeds.

In 324 AD and then again about two decades after that, two creeds were adopted and they include within both of them the statement that you must believe these things or else you are not Christian. And so today it doesn't matter if you're Lutheran, or if you're Catholic or if you're Methodist or if you're Presbyterian. It doesn't matter. Those creeds that were adopted back in the fourth century are what you must believe or else not be Christian. And we don't believe those creeds. In fact, when Christ appeared to Joseph Smith he said, "*their creeds [are] an abomination*" (JSH 1:19). And so, Christianity at its core is abominable and I may be trying to persuade them to take another look at Joseph Smith, take another look at the restoration, take a look at the Book of Mormon and to see if some of what the Christian world thinks is true is not better explained and better understood through the Book of Mormon and through the preaching of Joseph Smith

If the Christian world would take Joseph seriously, it would fix a lot of problems, a lot of confusion, and the inability of the Christian world to get the kind of faith that would improve their communities. I mean if you think that we exhibit weaknesses—the Christian world doesn't even know how to lay hold on some of the gifts and blessings that you're able to lay hold of because you understand God and who He is a little better. So I may be addressing that. I am gonna go give some talks, see if I can get any of them persuaded to consider the restoration, and consider Joseph Smith.

Any other..., yeah...

[Question asked; unintelligible]

Yeah, see, you have extraordinary advantages because of what your parents are doing.
[From the audience:] Can you repeat the question?

Oh, she's asking about the parents that are raising many of these children, are doing what they can and teaching what they can about the restoration and about what's going on. And the kids, on the other hand, have school and other responsibilities growing up. What can they do to help move themselves along in the process?

School is important. In fact, everything that you learn as a skill, as a talent— everything that you learn can be used to help you understand the scriptures more. And it doesn't matter if it's music or mathematics. It doesn't matter if it's geology or political science. They,...Every skill you acquire through your education can be used to help you understand and interpret the scriptures better.

There are things that because I went to law school and I learned how to be a lawyer, that I can see in the record of the Old Testament that explains the legal system that they had back in those days.

Abraham's wife Sarah died, and Abraham wanted to bury his wife. But he was in a land at that time in which he owned no land, so he needed to acquire a burial site for his wife. Well, their system in that day required that whatever the bargain was that was struck between the people that were negotiating, it had to be witnessed by at least two people. And in order for that agreement to be binding, something had to be given in exchange. If you didn't give something in exchange, then whatever you got could be taken back.

And Abraham wanted Sarah buried in a place where it could not be taken back. It would be hers as her burial spot forever. So, he goes to the people of the city to try and find out who owns the field that has the cave that he would like to bury Sarah in. Well, the field has a crop in it. He wants the land, but he doesn't necessarily want the crop. And he wants the land because of the cave and that is where he wants to bury Sarah. (See Genesis 23:1-20)

So he approaches the fellow who owns the cave in the presence of others and he says "I would like to purchase this for the burial spot." and the first response is: "Oh you don't need to buy that from me. I'll give it to you. Go ahead and use it as the burial spot." Which meant that he was really going to retain ownership and he could in fact disturb the gravesite of Sarah because nothing was being exchanged. And Abraham said "No, no you can't give it to me. I want to purchase that" because he wants his wife's remains undisturbed.

And so now that he knows he can't give it to him and therefore take it back, Efron, that was the name of the fellow that owned the field, says: "Well what is it to me to give to you something that is worth (and I think it was) 200 shekels of silver (I think that was the price he named)?" Said "that's a small sum between you and I, and it's no problem." So now Abraham knows the price that is being asked for the property. And he was overcharging. It was an unfair amount. But he had a crop on it so maybe he valued the crop. and Abraham in the presence of the witnesses paid the 200 shekels, secured the ground and he acquired for himself the burial place for Sarah that could not now be

taken back. Well, there are a lot of little legal things that are going on in the process of getting an enforceable agreement so that Abraham owns the ground and Sarah's body will not be disturbed. And I learned about those things by going to law school.

But if you go and you study mathematics, or geology or you study music—there are a lot of things in the Old Testament that are based upon music. There's incidents in the Book of Mormon in which they're singing and dancing going on in a private place among only the daughters and then the wicked priests of Noah come and abduct them and the story goes on from there. It doesn't matter what you study in school. Everything you learn can help you better understand what's in the scriptures. So don't think that education doesn't matter. And don't think that you are wasting time in getting an education because it's not focused in upon directly understanding better the volume of scriptures. That'll come. And everything should be done in its season, in its time.

In fact there is an opening set of words in the Book of Ecclesiastes which Bob Dylan turned into a folk song which The Birds then fixed because Bob Dylan has a horrible voice. The name of the song is Turn Turn Turn and it talks about: *"to everything there is a season and a time [for] every purpose under ... heaven. A time to be born, ... a time to die.... A time to cast away stones, ... a time to gather stones together"* (Ecclesiastes 3:1,2,5).

In your life there will be time for everything. And as you go through phases of life, at each interval take advantage of that. Learn when it's time to learn. Play when it is time to play. And if you get a chance to get over there in the frog pond make sure that you spend some time there. I mean if you don't have questions I could tell you stories about the frog ponds in Mountain Home Idaho that would well, probably keep you from eating for a while.

Do you have a question, 'cause I see you're standing up? Yeah.... [unintelligible from the person] No, it's good. Yeah...

[Unintelligible]

[Question asked by a young man, only partially intelligible] "What was the number one thing that you did personally that helped you cast off the scales of unbelief ... [unintelligible].

Okay, so, what was the number one thing that I did that helped me cast off the scales of unbelief to be able to come to Christ?

My greatest asset was stupidity. Because I actually thought when they, ... well it wasn't the book, it was the pamphlet that they gave me of the Joseph Smith story, I read the Joseph Smith story and I actually thought that's the kind of stuff that happened all the time among people that had become Mormons and rediscovered God's work in the last days. I knew that that was the kind of stuff that happened in the New Testament because we can read all about that. And I had some confidence that you didn't have to

be necessarily really well-integrated into the right course of conduct as long as you had faith in God because the apostle Paul was going around persecuting the believers and Christ came to the apostle Paul. Now admittedly once Christ came to him, he changed his life and he set about and he changed the course of history. In fact, it was the apostle Paul who inspired the Protestant reformation more than anything else that was written in the NT.

So if the apostle Paul who was so ill-fitted to Christianity that he is going about trying to kill Christians can qualify for God's miraculous intervention in His life, then a person of faith as long as they are headed in the right direction should be able to get the attention of God and angels. So I thought, wrongly (I mean I didn't discover through years later), I thought that angels ministering to Mormon believers was a regular occurrence.

So it did not surprise me at all when Joseph went out to pray in the grove and as he began that search he got attacked by the adversary and then calling upon God with all His strength he got delivered. It did not surprise me when I got attacked by a malevolent source before I encountered an angel. And it didn't put me off the trail. In fact, I was again stupid enough to say, "Oh, this is kind of like what happened when Joseph was trying to approach God; he encountered opposition." So to me the opposition suggested the presence of God and God's reality and God's bona fide existence and work. Because if the enemy is there, there has to be the opposite of the enemy also. It was sometime later that I encountered an angel. And I haven't talked much about the miraculous things that have gone on because I don't think it is particularly helpful to put a lot of details out about any of that stuff. But I want you to know that it does happen. And it happens as much today in people of faith as it happens in the course of the scriptures.

I do not believe for one moment that God carefully limits and cautiously apportions the things that come from Him to a select few. I think that God's abundance is meant for everyone. And the regulator, the inhibitor, the limiter isn't up there. It's within us. I think that, you know, the farther up you look the more vast- at a glance if you look up into heaven you can see distances that are so great that they are measured in the distance light will travel in a year. In fact, you can see if you look upward, distances that take billions of years for light to cross them. Those are the distant stars you're seeing up there. Heaven is vast and filled. It's us that limits that. The farther out you go, the more you see up there, and the more you should realize that the vastness of God is beyond anything that we can contain. So let a little of that in. Every one of you has some direct linkage to God. It's called a gift. Every one of you has some unique gift as a way that God talks to you. Let it in. Be sensitive to it.

I was mentioning at dinner last night- Monarch butterflies migrate. Do you see a monarch butterfly up here? Oh look right there! They migrate! That butterfly has probably flown from here to somewhere in Central America, okay? They cover thousands of miles. They do it annually – those little things, okay?. The last time we had a snowstorm (and it was a lot of snow down where we live in Sandy), my wife and I went hiking the next day. It was cold the day before, lots of snow came down, and when

we went out hiking a lot of it had melted off because it was so warm the next day. And on that hike, the next day, I saw a monarch butterfly flying along the trail. A monarch butterfly will be killed by snowfall. When I saw the monarch butterfly on that hike I told my wife "It's not going to snow again. That was the last snow of the season. It's over with." Because the monarch butterfly has a life that is dependent upon arriving when it's safe to arrive.

God talks to us through all kinds of things. When you see the geese moving, flying south, their lives depend upon knowing when to go. There's so many things in nature if you'll just observe it. If you'll just let it in. God is speaking to all of us more or less all of the time. And we determine how much of that we are willing to let in.

Was there another question?

Yeah...

[Question asked by audience; unintelligible]

Mother is trying to talk to other family members who are not willing to listen. Any advice for how you deal with that?

What I have learned by sad experience is that the best way to approach someone is by your example and not by your mouth. And they can really hate what they are hearing you say, but if what they see you do is admirable, eventually they will reach the conclusion that what you're doing is the result of what you're believing. And if what you're believing is on display in what you do, that will touch them in ways that can't be opposed, can't be argued against.

But if all you're gonna do is try to argue someone into agreement with you. Well heavens! There are people that make a living arguing against Mormonism. Well, They've had to spend a lifetime studying it in order to come up with the arguments against it. If information alone was going to persuade, some of our biggest critics would now be converted. But they're not because their hearts are hard. The way to get through to them is with kindness, is with the example. Christ in the Sermon on the Mount said: "*Blessed are [you], when men shall ... say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: ... for so persecuted they the prophets [beforehand]*" (Matt: 5:11-12)

Most people have encountered "religious" folk (and I put religious in quotes) who talk a good fight, but who will not sacrifice to benefit others. If instead you stay the course and you live the example, they're going to at first assume that you're just another religious hypocrite, because that's what we have all encountered. When, however, that example persists, and it persists against mocking, against ridicule, against criticism—when that example persists-

I mean one of the questions that it was a vision, it was a dream and therefore we did not finish the story—but fill that great and spacious building with a bunch of real people who are mocking and ridiculing and laughing at the people that are at the tree of life and let them see the great example of the people who are at the tree of life. Before long there will be some who leave the building and go and join the people at the tree of life because that's what persuades, that's what convinces, that's what touches the heart.

So I would say less preaching and more self-sacrifice and example and even hard-hearted people will find themselves touched by what they **see** being done.

How much more time am I supposed to take, 'cause I don't wanna wear out my welcome. Was there another question? Yeah...

[Question from the audience; unintelligible.]

There's, one of the more.... The question is If we enter into a covenant what does that mean for the youth?

There's more about that subject in the Book of Mormon than anyone has ever bothered to talk about. When the people of Jared were brought to the Americas, they were brought to the Americas by an act and direction of God in order for them to inherit a land of promise. When they inherited the land it was theirs, but they wore out their welcome by their rebellion, their forgetfulness, their failure to honor the God of this land. It is within the Book of Ether that we find out that this land comes with a restriction on it that those that possess it have to worship the God of this land or they will be swept away.

Now the sweeping away sometimes takes generations before it happens. But it happens. It happened to the Jaredites and then the Nephites were brought over—the party of Lehi—and they were also given the land to possess as a covenant. Throughout the time, though, that the Nephites inherited this land as their covenant land of promise, there was a constant reference to a future moment, a future time, a time in which the Nephites themselves would be destroyed. And they'd be destroyed by the Lamanites. And then the Lamanites would inherit the land, and they would in turn be displaced because they forgot the God of this land. And a new group would be brought over, and the new group would eventually likewise enter into a covenant and receive the land of promise. Now very often in order for the Lord to achieve his end you have to have three attempts. You have to have two attempts that fail before you finally have one that succeeds.

The purpose behind establishing a covenant with the gentles in the last days is not so that the gentles get to inhabit the land as a place for them to celebrate and rejoice. It's to bring about the Lord's purposes in creating Zion. If the youth enter into the covenant and then keep the covenant it has one and only one purpose and that is to bring about Zion. We've had persistent failures of humanity to create Zion, but it's happened once in the time of Enoch, it happened again in the time of Melchizedek, and it's going to happen a third time at some point on this land. The existence of Zion in this land will

precede the redemption in Jerusalem, but Jerusalem will also become one of the places where for a thousand years our Lord is going to have a jurisdiction.

What the youth can and should do is enter into a covenant and then abide by it. The Lord's requests of us are achievable—faith, repentance, baptism, accepting the doctrine of Christ, living consistent with the standards. Christ may have come to fulfil the Law of Moses, and He did so, but in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at Bountiful He explained how you don't need the Law of Moses. You will **not** take an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth and you will **not** slay your brother **if** you'll show kindness and love to one another. **If** instead of being angry with your brother, you kill that anger within you, you never get to the point that there is some violent outbreak if you police what's going on in your heart. The Sermon on the Mount is the way to make the Law of Moses obsolete, irrelevant, because instead of lust in your heart you are checking that beforehand. You will never have a King David fall with Bathsheba from grace because he never gets to the point of saying: "Well the only thing I have to stop short of is adultery." Instead, he's saying: "I have to check in my heart lust."

The Sermon on the Mount is a way of **evading** the temptation by not going there. And so enter into the covenant and keep the terms, and God will keep His promises. And His promises include- it's not just prospering in the land. Let me see if I can put this in a way that will get through.

If you go to the Book of Enoch (the Enoch vision chapters of the Book of Moses which will be in Genesis when the new scriptures are out). Enoch is in heaven and he's looking down at the mess that is going on, on the earth and while he is beholding the earth there is a voice that comes out of the earth itself. So this is the voice of the earth and it is a female. It is a she. Our earth is a feminine creature—creation. The earth says "Wo is me, the mother of men." (Moses 7:48). And she laments the wickedness that is upon her by what men are doing. The earth would rather rejoice at our presence and yield her abundance to us.

One of the reasons why there is no paradise on earth as there was in the Garden of Eden is because the earth herself knows the wickedness of men—the destructiveness of men. And so she withholds her abundance because of our wickedness. She asks in that Enoch account: "When shall righteousness return to my face?" (See Moses 7:48) If a group of people give the earth reason to rejoice that they are there on her surface, the earth can reward those people; indeed, the earth can protect those people. And if need be the earth can destroy whatever comes against the people she decides to protect. Rivers can turn out of their course as happened with Enoch's Zion. Mountains can be moved out of their place.

Okay. This is just an exercise for those of you that are willing to entertain the exercise. Go sometime onto YouTube and do a search for videos of landslides. Watch a few videos of landslides and ask yourself: "What army could come up against that?" If mountains are moved out of their course, there is no weapon formed against that that can prosper. It will obliterate anything. Well, the earth has an incentive to protect Zion

because the earth wants righteousness to return again upon her face. It's one of the reasons why I think Zion necessarily has to be built in the mountains because it's built in a place that the earth herself can protect the residents of Zion.

Okay, maybe one more. Huh, yeah..

[Question from the audience:] You said that Enoch would be in the Book of Genesis in the new scriptures...

[Denver:] Yes.

[Question continues:] What new scriptures are you talking about?

[Denver:] There's a project underway right now to put together a new set of scriptures in which the Joseph Smith Translation is not just footnotes and parts of the Pearl of Great Price. Matthew chapter 24 is in the Pearl of Great Price right now, but it was in the Joseph Smith Translation of the bible—it was the 24th chapter of Matthew at one time. The Book of Moses chapters one to seven or eight, however long it is, in the Pearl of Great Price was part of the Book of Genesis in the Joseph Smith Translation.

So we've never had a published version of scriptures that take the entirety of the Joseph Smith Translation and put it in as a single record as a bible. In fact, even what the RLDS church has published does not include all of the Joseph Smith Translation. And what is happening right now is, effort is being made to gather all of the Joseph Smith Translation, Old Testament and New Testament and put it together as the bible in a new set of scriptures and also to get the most accurate account or record of the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon that's printed by the LDS church is a descendent of the version that got printed in Liverpool, or no, in London in 1841 which is based upon a version of the Book of Mormon that Joseph Smith revised in 1837 from the original one printed in 1830. But Joseph Smith revised the Book of Mormon in 1840. The LDS church's volumes have been based upon the '37 revision, not on the 1840 revision, and so an effort is being made to take the last version that Joseph Smith made revisions to and to publish that as the Book of Mormon.

And to pick up some of the material,... when Oliver Cowdery copied the manuscript, Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon. Emma Smith wrote part of it. Martin Harris wrote part of it. Oliver Cowdery wrote part of it. That original version was not what got put into print by EB Grandin in the 1830 version. Oliver Cowdery took that original version and he hand-copied every word of that on another one and then they took that printer's copy to EB Grandin to put it in print. On average, when Oliver Cowdery copied the original one into the printer's manuscript, he made about two mistakes on every page of his copying. Then when EB Grandin took over, he made some mistakes when he put it in print and the 1830 version of the Book Of Mormon has some copy mistakes in it and then it has some printer's mistakes in it.

Joseph tried to fix some of that in 1837 and he fixed more of it in 1840. But in 1842, Joseph's journal records that he was still going to make more corrections to it because it still had not been completely fixed. Work is being done right now to try and get the Book of Mormon as accurate and as complete, and to include everything that was intended to be part of the Book of Mormon when it first got produced. The original one and the copy that Oliver Cowdery made that he took to the printer doesn't have any punctuation. It's just one long group of words with no periods, no commas, no semicolons. The guy that provided most of the punctuation to the Book of Mormon was an employee in EB Grandin's shop named John Gilbert. There's a picture of John Gilbert in the Joseph Smith papers. He's got kind of a fuzzy head. He's a little slight tiny guy and he looks like a dandelion kind-a-like 'cause his hair is kind of wild. You look at him and you kind of have immediate like for the guy just because of his appearance. I mean at least sympathy if not like.

Well he punctuated your Book of Mormon and most of what he did is still in what's in print now. So Joseph did some correcting in '37, some correcting in '40, but there were issues that never got addressed. Part of the punctuation that John Gilbert supplied to the Book of Mormon put commas in in places that actually changed the meaning of the text. I've referred to part of what Gilbert did in his punctuation as "Trinitarian commas" because in descriptions of Christ he put commas in that made the description of Christ appear to be the trinity. And if you just move some of those commas around, then the text reads like Lectures on Faith, which was what Joseph provided to us. Well John Gilbert never studied Joseph's works. He never listened to Joseph preach a sermon and he wouldn't know how to punctuate in any way other than as a Trinitarian Christian believer in the creeds that Christ called an abomination.

[Question continues from the audience:] ...you're not adding to ... [unintelligible].

We're adding to the bible the Joseph Smith additions that have never been included and it is not just additions. Joseph eliminated some things. For example, James 1:5: "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth [unto] all ... liberally.*" The word men, Joseph crossed out. So what God gives liberally is not to men, it's to all. And it's a pretty important little deduction, because there are literally women who read "*giveth to all men liberally*" who assume that means that a man's entitled to receive from God, but not a woman. And so Joseph fixed that by crossing out the word men—"Who giveth unto **all** [including you, including you] *liberally.*" Small change. There are lots of those. And so it's not just trying to fix the text and adding in what Joseph did that ought to be added. Joseph deducted some things. Admittedly, they're small words, but they make a big difference. And so that's going on, and when it's done the text will be an account of what Joseph did on an assignment from the Lord to fix the Bible, to fix the text of the bible. And there are some surprises in it. There are some interesting things in it. The more carefully you examine it, the more you find that—

I wasn't gonna take any more, but yeah?

[Question from the audience:] What is your view on the solar eclipse happening?

Two months—It's in August 21st? August 21st. Well it is part of a pair, you know. There is one August 21st of this year and then there is a follow-on one. And they essentially, yeah, they make an X across the United States. Well, I mean it's a fairly dramatic celestial event that suggests possible meanings like the times of the gentles are coming to an end and they are about to be swept away and replaced as the possessors and the rightful owners of the land, which I've heard some people loudly proclaim.

I am of the view that how we act matters, a lot. I think Nineveh got saved because they repented. And if God will spare Nineveh because they repented, then he ought to be willing to spare other people because they are willing to repent. So the focus of action in what God has been doing shifted from the old world to the new world as a matter of prophecy, as a matter of covenant, as a matter of burden. The focus will be here on this land, primarily, until the Lord's return, and then Jerusalem will reacquire significance that they once had as well. But Zion is gonna be on this the American continent.

Since Zion must precede the Lord's return, and since this land is a land that has a restriction on it that requires those who are going to occupy it to serve the God of the land who is Jesus Christ, I would say that the sign of the eclipse is a rather ominous suggestion that we could be crossed out and we could be replaced—unless of course we choose to repent.

There are two great symbols that are identical in size and identical in the position they occupy in the heaven above us. One is the sun and one is the moon. From the surface of the earth, they are exactly the same size. Now admittedly, the moon is one sixth, ["one fourth" from someone in the audience] one fourth the size of the earth and the sun is thousands, hundreds of thousands of times bigger, but they were placed in the heavens at the relevant distances so that when you're looking at them, they are identical in the area that they occupy in the heaven above.

The sun is a symbol of Heavenly Father. The moon is a symbol of Heavenly Mother. And they occupy exactly the same position on the ecliptic. They move in the same position across the heavens. The movement of the mother as a symbol is far more complex than the movement of the sun across the sky, because the dance that the symbol of our Heavenly Mother is performing is both progressive and recessive. She moves constantly across the sky from the east to the west (once she comes into sight), but every night she moves farther east. And so she begins farther to the east every night and then moves across the night sky to the west. Her dance is far more complex than is the Father's. His is stable and relatively stationary, and relatively predictable.

The symbol of the mother blotting out the light of the sun in the eclipse, which is what you were asking about, is ominous indeed because when a mother loses hope for her children that's a lot more frightening than the father's ire that happens just about every time there is a football game on TV. When a Mother gets worked up enough to send a

symbol across the land that suggests the blotting out of the light of the Father, it 's something that maybe we ought to sit up and take note about.

By the way, all these things were once part of the gospel. All of this. Everything. In fact, the D&C says everything that's above, everything that's on and everything that's beneath the earth— and beneath the earth means from the surface of the earth. It means those heavenly bodies that fall below the horizon and then reemerge like the planet Venus reemerges. It goes under. It's the evening star and then it's the morning star. It changes sides that you see the symbol on. All of these things were once part of the gospel and all of these things will eventually again become part of the gospel once more.

All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, if there be bounds set to the Heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars -- All the times of their revolutions, all their appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fullness of time" [D&C 121:29-31.]

There is a message up there. It was part of the gospel. It will be restored again, but right now faith, repentance, baptism and treating one another kindly and preparing to be the kind of people that are worthy of preservation is far more important than all of that. But I mentioned school and study and I'm telling you, astronomy also has some interesting things that are gospel based. Genesis chapter one verse 14 says all that stuff up there was given us for signs. And they're talking to us. The only way you can obliterate the testimony that's up there is by our apostasy when we lose light and we're ignorant and we can't read it anymore. Because we can't touch that. We can't make copy mistakes and we can't give a poor transcription or make printing errors with that. It's fixed and it's not gonna change. But we can lose light and knowledge such that we can no longer understand that testimony.

Yeah?

[Question from the audience:] What do you think about Revelations... [unintelligible].

I think that anytime there is something going on in the heavens that God means something by it, even if we're oblivious to it. And the challenge is to not be oblivious to it, but to take it in and then assign it its proper weight. What is going to happen is more affected by your repentance and your faith than anything else. And that's really where the hard work gets done —in the hearts, in our own hearts, in our own lives, in how we treat one another.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that when this whole process was set in motion by God on the first day of creation, He had in His heart a plan that was going to unfold through every generation until the end. Three years previous to the death of Adam, in

the valley of Adam- Ondi-Ahman, Adam gathered his posterity together essentially to tell them goodbye. And in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, Christ came and appeared to those that had gathered there.

And Adam, despite the fact that he was bowed down with great age, rose up animated by the Spirit that he was taking in from the presence of our Lord, and he prophesied whatsoever should befall his descendants to the last generation. So he was talking about, among others, you.

That same plan that was ordained in the heavens before the foundation of the world was revealed through Adam in prophecy in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman. And we are on schedule to keep the appointments. Whether we are going to be on one side of the divide or on the other side of the divide, we're keeping the appointment. The times have been fixed, and the seasons unfold and the signs that show up from time to time remind us that despite how hectic and disorganized and how ill-fitted the world may be for the fulfillment of all the prophecies, it's simply going to happen. Hopefully more will repent and return and be faithful, but it really won't matter because there is always enough with the Lord. He has a way of making whoever will come aboard be sufficient for his purposes.

So I hope that as life throws its challenges at each of you, that you remember that some battles can't be won, they ought to be avoided. And that the coming days are really going to be some of the most important of all days, and you're gonna have a ringside seat to 'em. Now whether you participate in the way that you will look back on with joy and rejoicing or you'll participate by lamenting what you failed to do, you're going to participate. That's not an option. It's unavoidable. But if you live according to the light that God gives you, you can live joyfully and no matter what it is you see happening, you can still know that you have favor with God. And I hope all of you are determined to do that.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

2017.07.23 Prayer for Covenant

Covenant of Christ Conference
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Boise, Idaho

Heavenly Father, it is I whom you named David, asking you in the name of Jesus Christ for your mercy and grace to be with those of us who seek to become your people. We hope to repent and return to your path and no longer be condemned and rejected as a people because of those who went before.

Take pity on us all and have mercy for us, as we acknowledge and accept the condemnation and rejection of the latter-day gentiles, and petition that we may overcome it.

We are mindful that in 1832 the gentile saints were condemned for vanity and unbelief because they treated lightly the things they had received and they were warned by you that they would remain under condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, not only to say but to do.

You commanded the gentiles that they bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom and if they failed to do so there remained a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon those who claimed to be the children of Zion.

They failed to bring forth the required fruit and were judged and scourged, and then violently driven out of Jackson County, Missouri.

You explained there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires by them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances.

But they did not repent, and in their pride they threatened to wage a war of extermination against the Missouri citizens, heedless of your warnings.

But it was you who used the Missouri citizens as your hand of judgment to scourge the condemned saints, in your attempt to persuade them to repent and no longer treat lightly your word.

They still saw no Divine purpose behind their distress, and railed against their Missouri persecutors.

Despite their suffering, they were not sufficiently humbled to repent, instead they breathed out threats and expressed hope to gain vengeance against the same Missouri mobs to whom you had given power to afflict the gentile saints to inspire them to repent.

Because of the hardness of their hearts, the gentile saints were again mobbed and slain and in 1838 altogether driven out of the State of Missouri, with Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and other leaders cast into prison and condemned to die.

But you were merciful, and did not suffer Joseph, Hyrum or any of those imprisoned with them to be killed.

In your mercy, the surviving saints and the imprisoned leaders were able to obtain refuge in Illinois, whose people welcomed the saints, and a season of peace followed.

In 1841 you mercifully extended another opportunity to the gentile saints to repent and return, and you approved Joseph's offering and acknowledgements of the past failures of the saints when he petitioned you on their behalf.

You found the prayers of Joseph and the gentiles were acceptable before you and you granted to the saints another chance for you to recover them as your people.

As you stated to the former gentiles, there is not a place found on earth that you may come to and restore again that which was lost unto us, or which you had taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood.

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

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

In those days you warned the people you will not perform the oath which you make, neither fulfill the promises which they expect at your hands, or in other words you would remove your covenant, if they failed to do what you commanded.

And you foretold what you would do unto the people if they neglected to do the work assigned them.

You warned: For instead of blessings, we, by our own works, would bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon our own heads, by our follies, and by all our abominations, which we practice before you.

You foretold that at the end of this appointment our baptisms for our dead shall not be acceptable unto you; and if the gentiles did not do the things you commanded, at the end of the appointment we would be rejected as a church, with our dead, said the Lord our God.

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

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

The former gentile saints were driven into the wilderness, and relocated into a desolate land, where they suffered hunger, cold and sickness.

In that isolation the gentile leaders were emboldened to openly practice abominations and wrongly teach the people to call them sacraments, as they reigned with blood and horror over the people.

Secret murders, open defiance, and the slaughter of over 200 men, women and children fixed the anger and opposition of the entire United States who were moved by your will to curtail the barbarism of the gentile saints.

Even today the gentile saints justify lying to others as part of their religion believing you will vindicate them in their dishonesty. They seek deep to hide their counsel from others, and now deny your judgments against their ancestors, claiming you have never rejected them.

They have, as you foretold, spoken both good and evil of your prophet Joseph. They ascribe many of their wicked practices to Joseph, who correctly told their ancestors that, "they never knew [him]"—for indeed the gentile saints have grown distant from you because of their willful rebellion, pride, foolishness and blindness.

We acknowledge that we must distinguish ourselves from them, admit the errors of the past, and in the depths of humility seek to be reclaimed as yours.

The neglect and rebellion of the saints during Joseph's day and thereafter included how they have treated the scriptures, carelessly inserting numerous errors and transcription problems into the Book of Mormon and other commandments and revelations.

The original Book of Mormon translation manuscript was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House where water and mold destroyed over 70% of the text.

This was a similitude to the restoration provided by you through Joseph.

Just as the original manuscript was allowed to decay, with only approximately 28% surviving, so likewise the restoration has also decayed.

Using that remnant of the original translation we have confirmed there were numerous transcription errors made when Oliver Cowdery copied it for the printer.

We know that EB Grandin's Print Shop also made errors, and the punctuation was supplied by John Gilbert, which changed the meaning of the text.

We know there has been over a century of debate caused by the errors in understanding the text solely due to the way in which the text has been punctuated.

We have labored to make corrections and to recover a truer meaning, but are required to use our best conjecture to sort out the many textual dilemmas we now face.

We have inquired of you and prayerfully sought guidance on even small issues out of respect for your words.

Joseph Smith revised the printed copy in 1837 and again in 1840 to try to eliminate errors and make the text more correct.

Most importantly we know that you have, by revelation, recently supplied corrections to some of the writings in the Book of Mormon quoting you, for which we are grateful.

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

The other revelations given through Joseph Smith have also not been maintained and transmitted to us in their purity.

Many originals have been lost, and some of what we have from Joseph are copies of copies, and many were later recorded by others using their recollections of your revelations to him.

We have used brackets and re-punctuated the texts as we have worked with them, all in an attempt to show respect for your holy texts. We ask that you accept this work and the punctuation and allow us to remove the brackets.

We have also determined to update some words that were in use and understood by earlier people, but whose meaning has been lost or so changed as to render the language foreign to modern usage. We ask for your approval to update the wording so as to clarify the language for modern readers.

Mindful of how mistakes can be made, we have attempted to gather only those revelations which are authentic, attested to have come directly from Joseph in a reliable transmission, and which likewise involve general principles applicable to us rather than a personal revelation to an individual.

We are mindful of the criticism of David Whitmer, who thought the recording and use of Joseph's revelations was never wise and, therefore, we ask to be corrected in anything

we have gathered and ask to be instructed by you to discard what ought to be discarded, and inspired to keep only those things which should be kept.

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

We also have been left with a copy of a copy of a revelation recorded July 12, 1843 that is not in the handwriting of a scribe of Joseph's, and which we believe to have been altered from its original form before it was publicly disclosed.

That revelation has been the source of a great deal of mischief, sorrow, ungodly conduct, violence and adulterous lusts among those who accept the published version of that revelation among the various Mormon factions.

We first attempted to edit it to make it more consistent with your other commandments and revelations, but have ultimately concluded to remove it altogether because we cannot fix it.

We ask that if there are any commandments, principles or precepts involving the marriage covenant you would be willing to reveal to us to become part of our record, we would receive it with gratitude and rejoicing.

We desire as a people to repent and remove the condemnation and to overcome your rejection, and to be true and faithful to your commandments. All those involved have labored to avoid and eliminate the interpolations and uninspired emendations of others, however well they may have meant.

If it is not from you or of you we do not want to acknowledge it as scripture, and therefore we have labored to present this to you in the hope we have shown respect for your word and not the works of men.

We acknowledge that you have inspired and guided this work by your Spirit.

We acknowledge we are imperfect and, despite your inspiration and assistance, we know there are faults and weaknesses with us and therefore we ask for your mercy to cover our weakness.

We have attempted to be unified in this work but have sometimes disputed with one another, and therefore ask to be forgiven for our own contentions as we were laboring beside one another.

I confess my own failure in securing a replacement for the former section 20. You required a unified statement of principles for us to adopt, and I asked others to provide such a document.

I have understood that you required that to be developed by others, and not myself, and therefore I have refrained from any involvement.

Despite three attempts by representatives of twenty-three fellowships there remains disputes and no agreed statement of principles has been composed and accepted by the people, as you directed.

Forgive those who have worked unsuccessfully. I ask that you look at the earnest desires of those involved and forgive this failure.

I would ask that we not be required to provide a statement of principles, but the people be left to govern themselves according to their varying circumstances, needs and desires.

We are mindful of the duties expected by you for any people who would claim to be yours, and ask that our weaknesses be forgiven and our own follies and errors be corrected and not condemned.

We as a people present the result of our labor to you as our best attempt to preserve and recover the scriptures provided to us in the restoration through Joseph Smith at the beginning of the dispensation of the fullness of times.

As you began to roll forth a restoration through Joseph and others, we ask you to now continue that work and to allow your revelations, work, covenant, and blessings to roll forth with us, and things kept hidden be uncovered and a fullness be given to us as a people.

It is written that those who will not harden their hearts will receive a greater portion of your word, until they know the mysteries of God in full.

It is also written that those who will harden their hearts will receive a lesser portion of your word, until they know nothing concerning the mysteries of God.

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

Though only a remnant of the original Book of Mormon manuscript has survived, and though only a remnant of the original faith you established through Joseph has likewise survived, we ask to be reconnected as a people to you, by covenant, to make us yours, connected to a living vine, restored as a people and numbered with Israel.

We seek as a people to honor you and to keep your commandments so that a living body of your disciples may again exist on the earth.

We desire that we may rise up through your grace and mercy so that you will perform your oath and vindicate your promises to the fathers concerning a faithful latter-day body of gentiles to be numbered with the remnant of Jacob; that your kingdom may come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

O Lord, remove our blindness, forgive our sins and weaknesses, give to us a new heart that we may become children of the Most High God.

We acknowledge our unworthiness. We are descended from rebellious and wayward ancestors and know that without your mercy we will remain in an awful state, unprepared for the return of our Lord in glory.

The scriptures foretell of a latter-day recovery of your people, and of natural fruit returning to your vineyard. We seek to be part of that, so you may value us as yours and preserve us against the coming season of harvest.

We have added only things to the scriptures as we have understood to also have come from you and would be pleasing to you.

We ask that you accept these books as yours, so that people of faith may then rely upon this work as your word to this generation; as a standard for governing ourselves, as a law and as a covenant, to establish a rule for our faith, and as the expression of our religion, so we may have correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth.

If this body of writings are not acceptable, we ask that you guide us further so we may correct, remove, or add whatever you would require for the writings to become acceptable for a covenant and law, a rule of faith, as a correct expression of the religion that honors you, so we may be in possession of correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in faith believing that with you all things are possible. Amen.

2017.07.29 Answer and Covenant

Covenant of Christ Conference
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Boise, Idaho

Answer

I, the Lord say to you: You have asked of me concerning the scriptures prepared on behalf of all those who seek to become my covenant people, and therefore I answer you on behalf of all the people, and not as to any individual. For there are those who are humble, patient and easily persuaded. Nevertheless people who are quarrelsome and proud are also among you, and since you seek to unite to become one people I answer you as one.

I covenanted with Adam at the beginning, which covenant was broken by mankind. Since the days of Adam I have always sought to reestablish people of covenant among the living, and therefore have desired that man should love one another, not begrudgingly, but as brothers and sisters indeed, that I may establish my covenant and provide them with light and truth.

For you to unite I must admonish and instruct you, for my will is to have you love one another. As people you lack the ability to respectfully disagree among one another. You are as Paul and Peter whose disagreements resulted in jarring and sharp contentions. Nevertheless they both loved me and I loved them. You must do better.

I commend your diligent labor, and your desire to repent and recover the scriptures containing the covenant I offer for the last days. For this purpose I caused the Book of Mormon to come forth. I commend those who have participated, as well as those who have offered words of caution, for I weigh the hearts of men and many have intended well, although they have spoken poorly. Wisdom counsels mankind to align their words with their hearts, but mankind refuses to take counsel from Wisdom.

Nevertheless, there have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided. I speak these words to reprove you that you may learn, not to upbraid you so that you mourn. I want my people to have understanding.

There is great reason to rejoice because of the work that has been done. There is little reason for any to be angry or to harshly criticize the labor to recover the scriptures, and so my answer to you concerning the scriptures is to guide you in other work to be done hereafter; for recovering the scriptures does not conclude the work to be accomplished by those who will be my people: it is but a beginning.

In your language you use the name Lucifer for an angel who was in authority before God, who rebelled, fought against the work of the Father and was cast down to the

earth. His name means holder of light, or light bearer, for he had gathered light by his heed and diligence before he rebelled. He has become a vessel containing only wrath and seeks to destroy all who will hearken to him. He is now enslaved to his own hatred.

Satan is a title, and means accuser, opponent and adversary; hence once he fell, Lucifer became, or in other words was called, Satan, because he accuses others and opposes the Father. I rebuked Peter and called him Satan because he was wrong in opposing the Father's will for me, and Peter understood and repented.

In the work you have performed there are those who have been Satan, accusing one another, wounding hearts and causing jarring, contention, and strife by their accusations. Rather than loving one another, even among you who desire a good thing, some have dealt unkindly as if they were the opponents, accusers and adversaries. In this they were wrong.

You have sought to recover the scriptures because you hope to obtain the covenant for my protective hand to be over you, but you cannot be Satan and be mine. If you take upon you my covenant, you must abide it as a people to gain what I promise. You think Satan will be bound a thousand years, and it will be so, but do not understand your own duty to bind that spirit within you so that you give no heed to accuse others. It is not enough to say you love God; you must also love your fellow man. Nor is it enough to say you love your fellow man while you, as Satan, divide, contend and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do my will. How you proceed must be as noble as the cause you seek. You have become your own adversaries, and you cannot be Satan and also be mine. Repent, therefore, like Peter and end your unkind and untrue accusations against one another, and make peace. How shall there ever come a thousand years of peace if the people who are mine do not love one another? How shall Satan be bound if there are no people of one heart and one mind?

Therefore, in answer to your petition:

The records you have gathered as scriptures yet lack many of my words, have errors throughout, and contain things that are not of me, because the records you used in your labors have not been maintained nor guarded against the cunning plans of false brethren who have been deceived by Satan.

The records of The Old Covenants given from Adam until Moses and from Moses to my forerunner John were written in holiness and contained light and truth, but the records you have received have not transmitted that which was first written in holiness, nor are they as many as the records on the plates of brass; and the plates of brass also do not contain all my words. Nevertheless the records in the form you have of The Old Covenants given from Adam until Moses and from Moses to John are of great worth and can serve my purposes, and are acceptable for this time.

The records of my apostles containing my New Covenants were to contain the fullness of my gospel, but during the formation of the great and abominable church many parts

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

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

I desire to heal you from an awful state of blindness so that you may see clearly my will, to do it. I promised to bring unto you much of my gospel through the Book of Mormon and to provide you with the means to obtain a fullness of my gospel, and I have done this; yet you refuse to receive the truth even when it is given unto you in plainness. How can you who pursue the truth yet remain unable to behold your own weakness before me?

Unto what can I liken it, that you may understand? For you are like a man who seeks for good fruit from a neglected vineyard—unwatered, undunged, unpruned and unattended. How shall it produce good fruit if you fail to tend it? What reward does the unfaithful husbandman obtain from his neglected vineyard? How can saying you are a faithful husbandman ever produce good fruit in the vineyard without doing the work of the husbandman? For you seek my words to recover them even as you forsake to do them. You have heretofore produced wild fruit, bitter and ill formed, because you neglect to do my words.

I speak of you who have hindered my work, that claim to see plainly the beams in others' eyes. You have claimed to see plainly the error of those who abuse my words, and neglect the poor, and who have cast you out, to discern their errors, and you say you seek a better way. Yet among you are those who continue to scheme, backbite, contend, accuse and forsake my words to do them, even while you seek to recover them. Can you not see that your works fall short of the beliefs you profess?

For the sake of the promises to the Fathers will I labor with you as a people, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace. If you will hearken to my words I will make you my people and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but also to do as you profess.

The Book of Mormon was given as my covenant for this day and contains my gospel, which came forth to allow people to understand my work and then obtain my salvation.

Yet many of you are like those who reject the Book of Mormon, because you say, but you do not do. As a people you honor with your lips, but your hearts are corrupt, filled with envy and malice, returning evil for good, sparing none, even those with pure hearts among you, from your unjustified accusations and unkind backbiting. You have not obtained the fullness of my salvation because you do not draw near to me.

The Book of Mormon is to convince the gentiles, and a remnant of Lehi, and the Jews, of the truth of the words of my ancient prophets and apostles, with all the records agreeing that I am the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, and I was sent into the world to do the will of the Father, and I am the Savior of the world. All must come unto me or they cannot be saved. And how do men come unto me? It is by faith, repentance, and baptism, which bring the Holy Ghost to then show you all things you must know.

If the gentiles unto whom the Book of Mormon was given had hearkened unto the Holy Ghost they would have come unto me in Hyrum and Joseph's day. But they did not hearken, and would not allow me to abide with them in word, and in power and in very deed.

Hear therefore my words: Repent and bring forth fruit showing repentance, and I will establish my covenant with you and claim you as mine.

I instruct my people to add to their records the following writings:

You have eliminated the account of the revelation of April 3, 1836. Therefore add the following account to your record:

On the third day of April 1836 Joseph and Oliver were in the temple in Kirtland, Ohio, The veil was taken from their minds, and the eyes of their understanding were opened. They saw the Lord in his glory standing above them and the breastwork of the pulpit; and under his feet appeared as it were a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the Alpha and the Omega; I am he who was slain, I am he who lives; I am your advocate with the Father. Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice. Let the hearts of your brethren also rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name. For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house. Behold and see: the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings that shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants will be endowed in this house. Behold: the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessings I shall pour out upon my people. Even so. Amen. As this vision closed, the heavens were again opened to

their view, and they saw and beheld, and were endowed with knowledge from the beginning of this creation to the ends thereof. And they were shown unspeakable things from the sealed record of Heaven which man is not capable of making known but must be revealed by the Powers of Heaven. They beheld Michael, the archangel; Gabriel and Raphael, and divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the end of time, showing in turns their dispensations, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the Powers of their Priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; endowing them with knowledge, even here a little, and there a little; holding forth hope for the work God was yet to perform, even the revelation of all things which are to come upon the earth until the return of the Lord in glory with His holy angels—to pour out judgment upon the world, and to reward the righteous. And they were unable to take it in; therefore they were commanded to pray and ask to comprehend by the power of the Spirit, to bring all things to their remembrance, even the Record of Heaven which would abide in them. Amen and Amen.

You have removed an altered document taken from an account written on July 12, 1843, and inquired of me concerning marriage therefore let my people hearken to these things and you will do well:

Marriage was, in the beginning, between one man and one woman, and was intended to remain so for the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve, that they may multiply and replenish the Earth. I commanded that there shall not any man have save it be one wife, and concubines he shall have none. I, the Lord your God, delight in the chastity of women, and in the respect of men for their wives. Marriage was established at the beginning as a covenant by the word and authority of God, between the woman and God, the man and woman, and the man and God. It was ordained by my word to endure forever. Mankind fell, but a covenant established by my word cannot fail, and therefore in death they were not to be parted. It was my will that all marriages would follow the pattern of the beginning, and therefore all other marriages would be ordained as at the first. But fallen men refused my covenant, did not hearken to my word, nor receive my promise, and marriages fell outside my rule, disorganized and without me, therefore unable to endure beyond the promises made between the mortal man and the mortal woman, to end when they are dead. Covenants, promises, rights, vows, associations and expectations that are mine will endure, and those that are not cannot endure. Everything in the world, whether it is established by men, or by Thrones, or by Dominions, or by Principalities, or by Powers, that are not by my word and promise shall be thrown down when men are dead, and shall not remain in my Father's Kingdom. Only those things that are by me shall remain in and after the resurrection. Marriage by me, or by my word, received as a holy covenant between the woman and I, the man and woman, and the man and I, will endure beyond death and into my Father's Kingdom, worlds without end. Those who abide this covenant will pass by the angels who are appointed, and enter into exaltation. Concerning them it shall be said, You shall come forth in the first resurrection, and if they covenant after the first resurrection then in the next

resurrection, and shall inherit in my Kingdom their own thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, all heights and depths and shall pass by the angels to receive exaltation, the glory of which shall be a fullness and a continuation of their posterity forever. Marriage is necessary for the exaltation of the man and woman, and is ordained by me through the Holy Spirit of Promise, or in other words by my covenant, my law, and my authority. Like the marriage in Eden, marriage is a sacrament for a sacred place, on holy ground, in my presence, or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister. But rebellion has kept mankind from inheriting what I ordained in the beginning, and therefore women and men have been left to marry apart from me. Every marriage established by me requires that I be part of the covenant for it to endure, for Endless is my name and without me the marriage cannot be without end: for so long as I endure it shall also endure, if it is made by my word and covenant. But know also that I can do my work at any time, for I have sacred space above, and can do my work despite earth and hell. The wickedness of men has not prevented my will but only kept the wicked from what they might have received. Whenever I have people who are mine, I command them to build a house, a holy habitation, a sacred place where my presence can dwell, or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister, because it is in such a place that it has been ordained to recover you, establish by my word and my oath your marriages, and endow my people with knowledge from on high that will unfold to you the mysteries of godliness, instruct you in my ways, that you may walk in my path. And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will end. Ephraim will not envy Judah and Judah will not provoke Ephraim. And again, I say to you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for he could not be there if not for Sarah's covenant with him. Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and Isaac likewise could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him. And Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him. And all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. Therefore the marriage covenant is needed for all those who would likewise seek to obtain from me the right to continue their seed into eternity, for only through marriage can Thrones and Kingdoms be established.

I, the Lord, say to you, with these additions, what you have gathered as scriptures are acceptable to me for this time, and contain many plain and precious things. Nevertheless whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain the greater benefit, because you need not think they contain all my words nor that more will not be given for there are many things yet to be restored unto my people. It is ordained that some things are only to be given to people who are mine, and cannot otherwise be given to mankind on Earth. You do not yet understand the glory to be revealed unto my covenant people.

And now I will accept what you have produced and you need not labor further to recover my words, but to complete your labors as you have agreed. You have inquired about the details, including punctuation, and what I say unto one I say unto all: I have given to you my doctrine, and have also revealed teachings, commandments, precepts, and

principles to guide you and it is not meet that I command you in all things—reason together and apply what I have given you and it will be enough.

The Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and the language given to Joseph was precious. There were things of beauty in language I revealed to Joseph that have been lost. Your work has been aided by the labor of Royal Skousen, whose diligence has pleased me. When the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon is brought forth, then will you know and understand how great things were lost to you.

There will yet be records restored from all the tribes that will be gathered again into one, and also as I have said, there is some truth in the Apocrypha, including the Pseudepigrapha and scrolls recovered at Nag Hammadi and other New Testament texts recovered since the time of Joseph Smith and findings at Qumran, and there are other records yet to be recovered, and whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit by their careful study.

It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given until they know the mysteries of God in full.

But remember that without the fruit of repentance, and a broken heart and a contrite spirit, you cannot keep my covenant; for I, your Lord, am meek and lowly of heart. Be like me. You have all been wounded, your hearts pierced through with sorrows because of how the world has treated you. But you have also scarred one another by your unkind treatment of each other, and you do not notice your misconduct toward others because you think yourself justified in this. You bear the scars on your countenances, from the soles of your feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Your visages have been so marred that your hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies and anger toward your fellow man bear outward witness of your inner self; you cannot hide it. When I appear to you, instead of confidence you feel shame. You fear and withdraw from me because you bear the blood and sins of your treatment of brothers and sisters. Come to me and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love.

I descended below it all, and know the sorrows of you all, and have borne the grief of it all and I say to you, Forgive one another. Be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need for I have redeemed you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. Rejoice in me, and rejoice with your brethren and sisters who are mine also. Be one.

You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. If you return good for evil you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety.

There are only two ways: the way I lead that goes upward in light and truth unto Eternal lives, and if you turn from it, you follow the way of darkness and the deaths. Those who want to come where I am must be able to abide the conditions established for my Father's Kingdom. I have given to you the means to understand the conditions you must abide. I came and lived in the world to be the light of the world. I have sent others who have testified of me and taught you. I have sent my light into the world. Let not your hearts remain divided from one another and divided from me.

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity, and come unto me and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore if you regard one another with charity then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word and in very deed. For I will come to you if you will come unto me.

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason and persuasion rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me I will tell you my part.

You are not excused from writing a statement of principles that I have required at your hands. I forbade my servant David from participating, and again forbid him. But I require a statement of principles to be adopted by the mutual agreement of my people, for if you cannot do so you will be unable to accomplish other works that I will require at your hands. When you have an agreed statement of principles I require it to also be added as a guide and standard for my people to follow. Remember there are others who know nothing, as yet, of my work now underway, and therefore the guide and standard is to bless, benefit and inform them—so I command you to be wise in word and kind in deed as you write what I require of you.

Do not murmur saying, Too much has been required at our hands in too short a time. If your hearts were right it was a light thing I have asked. You hinder and delay and then you say I require too much of you and do not allow you time, when, if your hearts were right and you prepared yourselves you could have finished this work long ago. Do you indeed desire to be my people? Then accept and do as I have required.

And again, the husband is to hold priesthood to baptize and bless the sacrament of bread and wine in the home, and the husband and wife are to bless their children together. For the husband to use authority to administer outward ordinances outside his own family, his wife must sustain him. I have told you that to remove authority to use priesthood outside a man's family requires a unanimous decision by twelve women. A council of twelve women must be convened either in the man's home fellowship among those who are acquainted with his daily walk, or in private at a general conference also including among the twelve women from the conference those who are acquainted with his daily walk, so that no injustice results. Reinstatement of the man's authority must be considered by the same council of twelve women when the man petitions for the decision to be rescinded, and requires seven of the twelve to agree upon his reinstatement, which can occur at any time. During the period of suspension, nothing affects the man's duties and responsibility in his own family.

There remains great work yet to be done. Receive my covenant and abide in it, not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention and backbiting caused anger, broke hearts and hardened the souls of those claiming to be my saints. But receive it in spirit, in meekness and in truth. I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught that if you forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. How do I act toward mankind: If men intend no offense I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct and forgive and forget. You cannot be at peace with one another if you take offense when none is intended. But again I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself.

I will give to you words to speak to the people to accept my covenant, and you shall read those words to them. Read first to the people these words I now speak, and then read the words of the covenant, and the people who will receive and do my words and my covenant shall then stand and say, Yes.

Then by my law and my word they will be mine and I will be with and lead my people onward through the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, the Record of Heaven, the peaceable things of immortal glory, even the Holy Ghost which will abide with them, and you will be children of the Most High God, fellow servants and numbered with the congregation of the just. Therefore rejoice!

And the angels are given charge to watch over and protect my people.

My eyes are over the whole earth and all men everywhere are before me. Men conspire to overthrow and oppress and use violence to control others through fear. My Spirit restrains the destroyer to allow those who are in the world and willing to give heed to my words time to prepare, but I will not always suffer with the wickedness of man.

The Earth groans under the wickedness of mankind upon her face, and she longs for peace to come. She withholds the abundance of her bounty because of the offenses of men against me, against one another, and against her. But if righteousness returns and my people prove by their actions, words and thoughts to yield to my Spirit and hearken to my commandments, then will the Earth rejoice, for the feet of those who cry peace upon her mountains are beautiful indeed, and I, the Lord, will bring again Zion, and the earth will rejoice.

In the world tares are ripening. And so I ask you, What of the wheat? Let your pride, and your envy, and your fears depart from you. I will come to my tabernacle and dwell with my people in Zion, and none will overtake it.

Cry peace. Proclaim my words. Invite those who will repent to be baptized and forgiven, and they shall obtain my Spirit to guide them. The time is short and I come quickly, therefore open your mouths and warn others to flee the wrath which is to come as men in anger destroy one another. The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me. Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up, for I am with you who remember me, and all those who watch for me, always, even unto the end. Amen.

Covenant

There are four questions I will read. Please remain seated until the four questions have all been read. If after you hear all four questions you can answer, Yes to all four, then you will be asked to stand and say, Yes to accept:

First: Do you believe all the words of the Lord which have been read to you this day, and know them to be true and from the Lord Jesus Christ who has condescended to provide them to you, and do you covenant with Him to cease to do evil and to seek to continually do good?

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

Third: Do you agree to assist all others who covenant to likewise accept this standard to govern their lives to keep the Lord's will, to succor those who stand in need, to lighten the burdens of your brothers and sisters whenever you are able, and to help care for the poor among you?

Fourth: And do you covenant to seek to become of one heart with those who seek the Lord to establish His righteousness?

If you agree, please stand wherever you are located, either here or in a remote location, to be recognized and numbered by God and His angels. All those standing please confirm you are willing to accept this covenant by saying, Yes. Please be seated.

Now, hear the words of the Lord to those who receive this covenant this day:

All you who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings, of lying and deceiving, and of all whoredoms, and of secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts, envying, and strife, and from all wickedness and abominations, and have come unto me, and been baptized in my name, and have received a remission of your sins, and received the Holy Ghost, are now numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel. I say to you:

Teach your children to honor me.

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

And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The Earth will yield her increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you.

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest.

And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure.

But if you do not honor me, nor seek to recover my people Israel, nor teach your children to honor me, nor care for the poor among you, nor help lighten one another's burdens, then you have no promise from me and I will raise up other people who will honor and serve me and give unto them this land, and if they repent I will abide with them.

The time is now far spent, therefore labor with me and do not forsake my covenant to perform it; study my words and let them be the standard for your faith and I will add thereto many treasures. Love one another and you will be mine, and I will preserve you, and raise you up, and abide with you for ever. AMEN.

2017.07.29 Other Sheep Indeed
Presentation at the Sunstone Symposium
July 29, 2017
Salt Lake City, Utah

Micah Nickolaisen: Welcome to Sunstone, everybody, and for attending session 331 titled, *Other Sheep Indeed* with Denver Snuffer. My name is Micah Nickolaisen. I will be moderating this panel. Before we begin we ask that cellphones are turned off and that those attending will be respectful and attentive. It is the mission of Sunstone to host thoughtful and respectful dialogue, please keep that in mind when in engaging in the Q&A portion of the session following the remarks of Mr. Snuffer. Those who cannot abide by those guidelines should refrain from commenting and will be asked to leave, should they become disruptive.

As you listen today we invite you to explore what it means to be Mormon. Who gets to carry that label? What does the history say? What does the theology say? At this conference we encourage you to explore what it means to be Mormon. We don't like labels because the reality is there are as many labels as there are people, which is why you'll see that in our name badge sleeve we have allowed you to label yourself the kind of Mormon you are or want to be. If you have not yet, you are welcome to grab a Sharpie at the front desk to help disrupt the narrative of the "one true Mormon" and instead tell us who you are.

This session is being recorded and you will be able to purchase it after the presentation ends at the registration desk on the main floor. Take advantage of our symposium special by subscribing to Sunstone magazine, seven issues for the price of six, at the registration desk as well.

This session is 60 minutes long and we ask both audience and presenters to keep within the framework of that time so we can allow everyone enough time for lunch. We invite you to purchase your lunch from the cafeteria one floor beneath us following this session. Sunstone is required to meet a food minimum so purchasing food at the cafeteria is strongly encouraged.

A little about this session: Christ's "other sheep" are mentioned in the New Testament and Book of Mormon but remain unidentified. There are important things known to the "other sheep" but still unknown to Mormons. "The least of these" may not be our inferiors but may be needed to complete Mormonism. Mormonism welcomes all truth, wherever it is found, and cannot allow itself to become self satisfied or unwelcoming to new and important ideas from outside. No Mormon should be willing to ignore scripture to conform to orthodoxy. This paper will defend taking a much broader view of the unfinished "restoration of all things".

Denver Snuffer, Jr. was an active member of the LDS Church for 40 years until he was excommunicated in September 2013 on the 40th anniversary of his original baptismal date.

Denver has asked that I leave ten minutes for Q&A at the end of this session, and so I will turn the rest of the time over to him. If you want to present any questions to Denver please come up to this mike towards the front of the room just so we can make sure we hear your questions and that it gets recorded for posterity. All right Denver, the time is now yours.

Denver Snuffer: I can't remember a Sunstone Symposium I have participated in that had so overtly religious a theme as this year. This year's topic is:

The Least of These: Embracing All

Exploring how Mormonism and the Restoration address the invitation of Matthew 25: 40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me".

With such a theme I feel inspired to wax scriptural, and do a little preaching as part of my contribution this year.

Mormonism announced in its founding book of scripture that it is an incomplete, markedly unfinished religion searching for more truth to achieve its destiny. The completion is to be accomplished primarily by two means: restoring lost scripture and continuing revelation. But even the concept of "continuing revelation" has been institutionally curtailed. The only institutionally authorized source for revelation is a single leader.

Of all faiths, Mormonism has the greatest canonical incentive to search for and embrace truth known to others. The "keystone" of Mormonism is the Book of Mormon. That book alerts its readers that there are many others from vastly different places with vastly different scriptures who are nonetheless Christ's sheep. Book of Mormon readers are expected to search for, welcome and learn from them. In contrast, institutional Mormonism of all stripes confine trustworthy new religious ideas to their authorized leaders. Early in the text we learn that our faith, like our scriptures, is unfinished, and to anticipate a flood of additional sacred texts to help remove our ignorance. The portion of the Book of Mormon translated by Joseph Smith is carefully censored, with its greater content withheld.

2 Nephi 29:11-12 states: *For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; ...* Obviously the Gods of Mormonism view Their role as all-inclusive. The entire world and all mankind belong to Them. Their global audience has received and recorded sacred words directly from the Gods' "one" mouth. We have no way to define the extent to which that has happened. Nor do we have any concept of

the number of sacred records that exist somewhere among unknown others, nor any idea what truths they were given that we lack.

Mormonism cannot, or at least should not, consider itself the exclusive possessor of THE sacred canon or that there is only one canon containing *the* Gods' teachings. There are words from heaven spread throughout our world by deliberate planting of the Gods.

Continuing, *for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.* These "books" hold terrible importance for Mormons because we are going to be judged by the Gods based on a comparison between our "works" and "that which is written." With such a warning we Mormons ought to be humble about our claims to know more than other faiths. We should be modest in thinking we are especially graced by the Gods' words and should be anxious to scour the globe to discover the sacred texts of other cultures. In humility, we should invite them to share the truths they value most with us because we have shown that we will respect what they regard as sacred.

To clarify this further the record continues, *For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; ...* So far this describes a welcome Judeo-Christian boundary because the ancient Israelites are the backbone of the Gods' dealings with mankind. The Lost Ten Tribes continued to compose scripture, and their records will in time be recovered.

This passage continues by including yet others who are disconnected from any disclosed connection to Israel: *and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.*

Who? When? What was said?

"All nations of the earth" is broad enough to raise the troubling possibility that the Gods have spoken to others in India, Japan and China – to the peoples of Persia, Africa, and Native peoples of the Americas, Hawaii, Polynesia, and Australia. The Jaredite prophet, identified as "the brother of Jared," had some of the greatest revelations in all history. He lived many centuries before Abraham, and therefore before there were Israelites. We know Egypt was founded "seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the first fathers in the first generation, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam[.]"

If we take the Book of Mormon seriously, the ecumenicalism of the Gods may have no recognizable or comprehensible limits. The Gods of Mormonism are far more pantheistic than Trinitarian. What a cruel embarrassment that proves to be for any sect that proselytizes primarily among other Christian denominations. Imagining Gods who speak to everyone is troubling enough, but for the Gods to expect Mormons to give high

regard, even canonical credibility to the records of these truly "others" begins to buckle the knees and mangle the mantras of today's Mormons.

An unfortunate Mormon truism is the mistaken idea that we have a better and more complete religion than *all* others. 'WE have the most recent revelation, because the Gods spoke last to us' (...uh, well, so far as we know). Therefore, we can be prone to think of "the least of these" as all others who have failed to embrace Mormonism. This paper explores the possibility that we have vastly overrated the scope of our religion, and underrated our ignorance. Perhaps we have no reason to ever consider those outside of Mormonism as "less than" Mormons, or "the least" worthy before our Gods.

This humbling revelation of the Gods' universal attention to all mankind is reinforced by Christ's words to the Nephites at Bountiful. He declared to them in 3 Ne. 16:1-4: *I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.* His declaration was every bit as disorienting to the Nephites as was His mention of "other sheep" to the Jews. Both the Bible and Book of Mormon make it clear that bodies of sheep who have the Great Shepherd standing before them are perplexed at the idea that He has yet others He loves as much as them. Are there no favorites? The sheep probably considered, at least passingly, "You MUST love us best because you're here visiting us, right?" But any thought that audience was special is dashed by the Lord's next sentence:

For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them. But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them. Christ was interested in unifying His sheep. He sought for "one" fold that followed only Him. There is no "Number One" fold among them. No upper class, or special distinct body towering above others.

Our gentile culture is stratified. We divide into haves and have-nots, upper class and lower class, winners and losers. Everything is ranked, from sports teams to television shows, mileage to price-per-ounce. We WANT to have comparisons made: to be more and have more. That is one of the most persistent character flaws of 'gentileness.'

Gentile Mormons were not at Bountiful when the Lord appeared and taught the Nephites. But we would like to have at least a derivative advantage by assuming the Nephites were more special than all the other sheep. We hunger for prominence, and our ambitions extend into all things, even the Gods' regard for us. We reason that the Nephites were apparently visited first after the Jews. And the Jews killed Him, so really the Nephites were the first worthy audience and therefore more special. And this matters because we gentiles are the ones to whom the Book of Mormon was given. So we are sort of first and therefore more better, or Mormon. And, ipso facto, all others are less to the Gods.

That line of reasoning comes to naught when we realize Christ's visit to the Nephites was over eleven months after His crucifixion. He ministered for 40 days around Jerusalem after His resurrection, but He had nearly eleven months to visit undisclosed other sheep before the people of the Book of Mormon. We have no basis for thinking we have the record of those the Lord visited first, after His resurrection. For all we know we have the record of those He visited tenth, maybe eleventh. If He took as long with each group as He took with the Nephites, He had time to visit with dozens of other unidentified flocks of His sheep.

Following His resurrection, as Christ visited with the Jews and Nephites, none of them had enough curiosity about "other sheep" to inquire about them. The account continues, *And I command you that ye shall write these sayings after I am gone, that if it so be that my people at Jerusalem, they who have seen me and been with me in my ministry, do not ask the Father in my name, that they may receive a knowledge of you by the Holy Ghost, and also of the other tribes whom they know not of, that these sayings which ye shall write shall be kept and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, ...* It is perhaps a good thing Christ commanded them to "write these sayings" so we have a record clarifying that "other sheep" are indeed people completely out of view from any scripture in our possession. They exist. They were visited by Christ. They were taught by Him. They recorded what He taught. And we know nothing about any of it, apart from Christ confirming that He did visit and minister to scattered bodies of other sheep post-resurrection. He wanted them to become "one" and understand "plain and precious things" that have been lost from our present, limited version of scripture.

What if they are also all gods to whom the word of God has been given? What if the Gods intend to spread knowledge of how to attain divinity among all peoples? That would indeed be a task worthy of the Gods!

Consider that for a moment. Have we gentile Mormons been told of Gods' other sheep for some important reason? If so, is it to alert us that we are no more special, nor in any greater possession of Gods' words, than many others who have been scattered around the world and are known to the Gods, but unidentified to us? Is it to make us more careful about how we regard strangers? Ought it to suggest there are other religious equals in the world? May it suggest there are perhaps religious superiors in the world? In other words, have we received news of other sheep to help keep Mormons humble?

If these words from Christ are not enough to make us cautious about dismissing others, in the Book of Alma there is another reminder of how the Gods deal equally with all mankind. Alma 29:8 states, *For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; ...* The Lord is concerned about "all nations" and not merely Israelites in their scattered condition. Each nation, in its own tongue, has been given a portion of His teachings. It is measured according to what He "seeth fit that they should have." I do not believe this means that 'while God gives everyone something, we have the most.' I think it instead means, 'everyone is remembered by God, and when you close down revelation, you get less—humble people get more.' This more probable meaning is

suggested by Alma 12:10 which explains, *he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until he know them in full. It is abundantly clear that Mormons do not know the mysteries of God in full.* The farther back we look in human history the more appears to have been lost. Earlier stages, including the patriarchal era, knew God and therefore understood His path better. How else would Enoch and Melchizedek have achieved their heavenly breakthroughs? Like mankind, institutional Mormonism continually atrophies, knowing less and less, year by year. However significantly this may impact the truth-claims and arrogance of Mormonism, we must at least allow for the possibility that there are "other sheep" who are much better informed than are any of us Mormons.

The Alma 12 material helps clarify the remaining statement in Alma 29:8: *therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.* The Gods' wise counsel does not regulate dispensing truth on things external to us, but on what is internal to us. We determine whether we have hard hearts or open hearts. One of the ways to determine if our hearts are open and not hard is the degree to which we regard those who are "other," not only with respect and charity, but also curiosity.

Mormon revelation helpfully defines knowledge of the Gods' mysteries as "riches."²¹ That definition helps explain a prophecy about the coming return of other sheep. Newly awakened dormant prophets in the north countries will lead scattered flocks to the boundaries of the everlasting hills. They will bring with them "rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim" who will welcome them. This will not merely be a reunion, but an exchange of treasured wisdom, or in other words revelation, between those who have preserved sacred knowledge. That reunion, however, will depend on a body of believing Ephraimites established in the everlasting hills that will welcome such riches. These prophetically described people must be humble enough to be taught, and willing to appreciate sacred information from outside.

Think of Mormonism more expansively and you may begin to share its founder's vision for the faith. Joseph Smith explained to the editor of the Chicago Democrat that Mormons "believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous and in doing good to all men." Joseph's list compares favorably with the five traditional Buddhist vows of non-harm to others, truthfulness, non-theft from others, sexual propriety and avoiding intoxicants. Buddha confronted the issues of life by segregating our challenges into "the truth of suffering." Life is filled with suffering from birth until death. Struggling vainly to relieve ourselves from suffering causes us yet more suffering.

To understand our suffering we need to recognize the true "cause of suffering." The cause is found in our desires, appetites and passions. We cause our suffering by what we seek.

This leads to the way to "cease suffering" by forsaking our desires. Or, in a rather Buddhist mantra found in the Mormon temple ceremony, our "desires, appetites and

passions are to be kept within the bounds the Lord has prescribed." Buddha would welcome the Mormon temple mantra as part of the third great truth.

Buddha offers us a final solution found in the noble path: the right view, right thought, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Or, if you are a Mormon, the 13th Article of Faith. Apparently all truth *can* be circumscribed into one great whole.

So are the Buddhists in possession of truths Mormons ought to consider acquiring? Do they have sacred texts they have guarded for generations that will be brought to the attention of Mormons only if we show enough respect and restraint so that their owners share their pearls with us? Does our swine-like arrogance and conceit prevent them from casting their most valuable pearls our way?

Why aren't people from around the world eager to teach Mormons? What would it be like if Mormons sent out missionaries to inquire if others had any great truths to share with us? We cannot learn anything new when the only sound in the conversation is our own voice. Mormons are a very hard audience, hard of both head and heart. Most Mormons "know the church is true" and so what else could possibly matter to them? It calls to mind Hugh Nibley's observations about BYU's students. This is Nibley:

Our search for knowledge should be ceaseless, which means that it is open-ended, never resting on laurels, degrees, or past achievements. "If we get puffed up by thinking that we have much knowledge, we are apt to get a contentious spirit," and what is the cure? "Correct knowledge is necessary to cast out that spirit." The cure for inadequate knowledge is "ever more light and knowledge." But who is going to listen patiently to correct knowledge if he thinks he has the answers already? "There are a great many wise men and women too in our midst who are too wise to be taught; therefore they must die in their ignorance." "I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them . . . [that] will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all [If I] go into an investigation into anything, that is not contained in the Bible . . . I think there are so many over-wise men here, that they would cry 'treason' and put me to death." (That is Hugh Nibley quoting Joseph Smith.) But, he asks, "why be so certain that you comprehend the things of God, when all things with you are so uncertain?" True knowledge never shuts the door on more knowledge, but zeal often does. One thinks of the dictum: "We are not seeking for truth at the BYU; we have the truth!" So did Adam and Abraham have the truth, far greater and more truth than what we have, and yet the particular genius of each was that he was constantly "seeking for greater light and knowledge."

Think about the impression we have made upon the Native Americans with our traditional Christian rivalries and contentions. It was Christian behavior that provoked Nez Perce Chief Joseph to declare: *"We do not want schools: They will teach us to have churches. We do not want churches: They will teach us to quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this*

earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that." Mormons have not distinguished themselves as being any more tolerant or interested in learning Native American wisdom than the contentious general rank of Christians out of which Mormonism emerged.

I have been greatly impressed with Hinduism. There is a significant overlap in beliefs shared by Mormons and Hindus. But it would be almost impossible to have the average Mormon-in-the-pew acknowledge such overlapping beliefs. Many Mormons won't investigate to discover truth if it isn't correlated and approved by the top leaders. Institutional Mormons trust leaders to tell them everything worthy of notice. Their leaders, however, demonstrate every six months just how utterly incomplete and superficial their command of the restoration gospel remains.

Hinduism teaches, *The knowing Self is not born; It does not die. It has not sprung from anything; nothing has sprung from It. Birthless, eternal, everlasting, and ancient, It is not killed when the body is killed.* This compares interestingly with Joseph Smith's statement found in D&C 93:29: *Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be.* There may be important potential Hindu contributions on the topic of the eternal nature of man's existence that could be of worth to Mormons—if we did not regard them as deluded pagans. Rather than invite a Hindu over to listen to our family home evening lesson, we may obtain greater benefit by asking them over to teach us a lesson.

Long before the Sermon on the Mount taught us to bless those who curse us, and do good for those who hate us, The Dhammapada taught, *Let us live in joy, never hating those who hate us.* And when Christ said in that same Sermon on the Mount: *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?* Several centuries earlier the writings of Buddha put it this way: *Do not give your attention to what others do or fail to do; give it to what you do or fail to do.* What higher light illuminated Buddha when he spoke these words? Was it the same light that illuminated our Lord? Well, our Mormon scripture puts all light and truth into one, singular source for this world. That source is God the Son.

Consider the very ecumenical nature of the following revelation given to Joseph Smith: *For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.* Notice this is without any restriction on who can receive the light of the Spirit. "Every man that cometh into the world" receives equally. There is no individual, in any corner of the world, who does not have equal access to obtain "truth" and "light" from that same source, who is Jesus Christ. If any soul in any age hearkens, or listens and follows the "voice of the Spirit," they are in communication with Jesus Christ. To them He bestows light.

Compare the following sample of Biblical Proverbs with corresponding quotes from Buddha:

Proverbs 23:7 – *For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*

The Dhammapada – *We become what we think.*

Proverbs 15:1 – *A soft answer turneth away wrath.*

The Dhammapada – *Speak quietly to everyone, and they too will be gentle in their speech.*

Proverbs 16:32 – *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

The Dhammapada – *One who conquers himself is greater than another who conquers a thousand times a thousand men on the battlefield.*

The Gods of Mormonism literally mean it when they proclaim, *he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.*

I'm going to deviate from the paper and just add this thought: I think he's giving a descending order. I think when you get into scripture there are always orders when you get lists. I think he is giving a descending order in which he clarifies what seems superficially to be the most justified, and as he goes on in the list, what becomes truly petty. So let me read the list again:

- Black and white. Easy, divisive.
- Bond and free. Of course, you look down on those that are bond, if you happen to be free.
- Male and female. Now we're descending into the petty.

All, even those swarthy heathens, are included within the ambit of the Mormon Gods' concern. They speak through the Spirit the same truths to all mankind and have done so since the beginning of creation. To Mormons the Gods declare: *I am no respecter of persons.* To the Hindus the Gods declare: *none are less dear to me and none are more dear.* Both the Mormon and Hindu Gods respect all mankind equally.

At one time the account in Genesis read: *This is my work, to my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. The Gods of Mormonism take seriously their commitment to the eternal advancement of mankind.* That means ALL mankind, including the heathen, and none are above others.

This raises the question of "chosenness" of the Gods' special people. Israel, after all, was at one point "chosen" by the Gods as Their special people. But that does not mean what we think it means. Being "chosen" means we are put on display as either the faithful servant, elevating others, or the unwise steward who is condemned, beaten with a rod, and made the display of Divine ire.

Christ explained He was sent to serve, not to be served. Taoism makes the same observation about how "chosen" ones are to demonstrate their "chosenness" in words that parallel the Lord's.

The Lord:– *If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and **servant** of all.*

Tao Te Ching: – *If the sage wants to be above the people, in his words, he must put himself below them; If he wishes to be before the people, in his person, he must stand behind them.*

(I gave a bunch of other quotes but I'm not going to read them. You can read the paper.)

Interesting comparisons can be made between the Hindu belief in "karma" and the Mormon teaching of "pre-existence." Karma includes the belief that what was done (or not done) both in this and previous states of existence will determine a person's condition now and in the future existence. Whatever blessings or burdens you encounter are of your own creation by your deeds. Your suffering is merited and deserved. But by doing well, acting justly, and showing kindness you can deserve to inherit a better existence in the next state.

Mormonism includes the declaration that what we experience now and in the future is based on our heed and diligence to the Gods' pathway. While the Hindu karma has a robust body of teaching, Mormonism's explanation of pre-earth events is spartan: The spirits of all mankind lived as separate personalities before birth. This world was planned before it was created and people were assigned roles to fulfill in this creation. Some souls were more noble and great than others. Prophets were chosen to have a role to "rule" or to teach in this lifetime. Christ was chosen to be the Savior of mankind in the expected event they fell from grace and required saving. Lucifer rebelled and others followed him. All souls were free to make choices before coming to this stage of creation.

We can infer from these few, settled Mormon ideas that all our choices made before this creation mattered and affect us here and now. Likewise, all choices we make now will follow us into the hereafter and affect things there.

Both the Hindu teaching of karma and the Mormon teaching of "judgment" make us, not God, responsible for the outcome of eternity. Joseph Smith said plainly, "A man is his own tormenter and his own condemner. ...The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone." In the most expressive description of God's judgment in Mormon scripture, God is doing nothing to cause the man's suffering. Man is feeling the "torment of disappointment" Joseph described. Similarly, karma puts all responsibility for all consequences on the choices freely made by mankind. God is immune from responsibility for our self-inflicted fate. The Shawnee tribe also believed, *Each person is his own judge*. Egyptians conceived of a death interview, wherein the individual's heart was weighed to determine where they would go next.

How much might Mormons yet discover if we are open to learn! The truth is or should be our goal.

We fear what we do not understand. Mormons derive security from knowing we are better informed about the Gods than others. No one likes the idea of being surprised by failure because we were too ignorant to avoid a cataclysm, particularly if our failure is because we thought we understood what was on the test, but in fact never studied what we were being tested on.

John the Beloved explained the relationship between two opposing forces: *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* The opposite of faith and love is fear. Fear lies at the root of our hatred, our revulsion, and our unkindness to one another. We fear the "other" because we do not understand them. They are different and we fear they might even be toxic. It is foolish to assume we can be righteous when we allow fear to inform how we react to others.

(Talk, talk, talk. Read, read, read. I'm going to put it up on the website. There's some interesting... this is interesting stuff.) [Audience laughter.]

We are here to learn. We should rejoice at any chance the Gods give to us to become better informed about Their mysteries. But it is easy to become trapped by what we know to be familiar and to allow our fears to keep us imprisoned. The beliefs keeping us bound are like the old story of how the trainers control the elephant. A large, adult elephant can be controlled by nothing more than a small rope tied to its front leg. No chains or cages are needed. It is obvious that adult elephants trained this way could at any time break away from their bonds, but they do not. When they are very young, and much smaller, the same rope is used to tie them. At that early age it is enough to hold them. As they grow, they are conditioned to believe that they cannot break away. They believe the small rope is still enough to hold them, and so they never try to break free. The adult has the strength to be free at any moment, but their belief in their captivity keeps them under control.

One of Islam's great thinkers taught: *We ought not be embarrassed of appreciating the truth and of obtaining it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. Nothing should be dearer to the seeker of truth than the truth itself, and there is no deterioration of the truth, nor belittling either of one who speaks it or conveys it.* This beautiful sentiment is the opposite of institutional Mormonism. Rather than truthful content, Mormonism has been led to believe the focus must be upon authorized sources. Mormon authorities, many of whom are devoid of understanding, vacuous in teaching, and unacquainted with God are trusted. And if truth dares speak up, the contrast it provides is condemned as a counterfeit.

I envision a future for Mormonism where some few believers are willing to seek diligently to recover the truth. That search begins by mining the lost truths of

Mormonism itself, of which there are a surprising number of unrecovered teachings. When the effort to recover a lost and compromised "restoration" has advanced far enough, the search for the "other sheep" can begin in earnest. Eventually if those believers are true to Christ's teachings, and open to welcoming all truths, wherever found, the truth will search out those Mormons. It will draw into it from every nation, kindred and people, and all nations will come up to the house of the God of Jacob. The truth, or "rich treasures" from around the world will come to those who will welcome it.

The seed for that new, more open body of believers is being planted. But until it has an opportunity to grow and take form, it is doubtful the larger body of Mormonism, much less the world will recognize it. But great things often have a small beginning. Like a stone broken out of a mountain that seems obscure and unimportant, until it triggers a greater landslide that eventually fills and alters the whole landscape.

There is a Cherokee prayer: *Oh Great Spirit, help me always to speak the truth quietly, to listen with an open mind when others speak, and to remember the peace that may be found in silence.*

We speak too much and too loudly and we listen too little. The restoration has filled Mormonism with factions holding unstable and shifting beliefs that are loudly declared in words of certainty. But fractious Mormonism has anything but a stable form. Today, every form of institutional Mormonism is hardly related to the faith practiced by Joseph Smith. These deformities and unhealthy mutations are explained as "continuing revelation." While they do reveal a great truth about the instability of Mormonism, instability is no evidence of revelation. We can hope that somewhere in the bizarre assortment of mutated Mormon offspring there can be found a healthy descendant. However recessive that gene may prove, that hope ought not to be abandoned.

I have been laboring for years to attempt to reinvigorate the original. Thankfully institutional Mormonism is so well informed by their conceit that they doubt such a thing can be accomplished. Today's Mormon intellectual cabals are bemused that the idea an original Mormonism has virtue. They assume wife sharing and bed hopping was a fundamental part of Joseph Smith's legacy, ignoring all he did to denounce and oppose such things. Polygamy is Mormonism's most revealing 'inkblot test'.

The search for authentic, original Mormonism is the quest to find a belief system that confidently searches for truth, wherever found. It does not claim to possess all truth, only to be searching openly to find it.

The response of an authentic believer in Mormonism to the discovery of some new truth should be excited gratitude. There is too much fear in the world, and Mormonism has taken that spirit with gusto. A new revelation is greeted with suspicion and dread because the source from which new revelation springs is invariably considered heterodox. Those in control of the most successful brands of the faith are content to count their money. If the road from Jerusalem to Nicea was calamitous, the downward trek from Nauvoo to Salt Lake is typified by the barren landscape itself: from a watered

paradise beside the largest river in North America to a desolate salt flat. That descent into desolation has been as much theological as environmental.

Institutional forms of Mormonism want to claim that God has finished His work for our day and given His authority to a select group of professional clergy. Their jealousy and envy keep them out of the kingdom, and those under their control are prevented from entering in. What an odd outcome this is for institutional Mormonism when the religion was founded on the relentless search for truth, anywhere it may be found.

What then ought we do? Can we still embrace an original once the original has been so deformed and disfigured? Can Mormonism, whose visage has been so marred by its adherents, yet bring Jacob again to God? Can Mormonism provide a covenant of the people for a light of the gentiles? Can it again be a marvelous work among the gentiles of great worth to both them and the House of Israel? Are there any with the inclination or desire to deal prudently with the marred visage of Mormonism so that some believers will yet see and consider the depth and breadth of the religion hidden from them? Will Mormonism ever arise from the dust and become evidence that the work of the Father has begun to prepare mankind for the glorious return of His Son? It cannot be done unless those who accept the challenge of Mormonism become as a little child. We must return to the innocent, child-like quest for the truth where "others" are not dreaded but welcomed with curiosity. We should attract, not repel others by the interest we have for discovering whatever truth they have to offer. Plato observed, *We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy is when men are afraid of the light.* How can Mormonism ever achieve its destiny if it fears both the dark and the light, insisting that it knows only it can be true?

There are indeed other sheep who belong to God; they should be welcomed, not scorned. If we do our part, we can awaken and arise and seek for a covenant from God, and then receive in turn from them "rich treasures" of knowledge.

In their present form, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Taoism have not preserved a Christ-centered tradition. Perhaps if we were to recover earlier writings from these faiths in an unaltered form we would find Christological centers were once part of them all. The post-resurrection visit to the Nephites suggests that possibility.

Avicenna said, *The world is divided into men who have wit and no religion and men who have religion and no wit.*

Mormonism is only a "starter" religion based on an incipient planting by the Gods. We Mormons should be people of wit and religion, willing to consider and value all truth from whatever source it springs. The greatness of Mormonism has not been realized in any of its past, and those who have managed to profit from organizing institutions based on its mere beginning are threatened by the idea that there is yet much more to be added.

Mormonism has been a dismal underachiever. Its most wealthy sect is riddled with errors, controlled by an oligarchy of priestcraft, jealous of their power, wealth and influence. It has a criminal past, an unstable present, and an insecure future. That empire is diversifying its portfolio into land development, banking and business enterprises to replace the now diminishing tithe cash stream upon which the empire was built.

The second largest sect has so watered down its teachings and principles that it can hardly be distinguished from any of the weak and diminishing liberal Christian sects. It barely gives lip service to Joseph or the Book of Mormon.

The scatterling polygamist sects are hardly Mormon at all, practicing what the Book of Mormon identifies as an abomination that has broken the hearts of wives and lost the confidence of their children. All forms of institutional Mormonism are easily compromised because they have adopted a structure engineered by Brigham Young. Joseph established at least four bodies equal in authority, making it impossible for one to rule and reign with blood and horror over others. Brigham destroyed that balance and promptly began to reign with blood and horror. He even succeeded in persuading Mormons to openly practice an abominable form of plural marriage as a sacrament in his deformed vision of the faith. With Brigham Young at the helm, the twelve traveling ministers assumed authority over organized stakes for the first time. It was only a matter of time before their ambition overtook their righteousness. Emboldened by isolation and under the leadership of Brigham Young, Mormons engaged in such excesses, abuses, whoredoms, murders and criminality that the heavens have stared aghast at the wretched spectacle Mormonism made of itself! Marred visage indeed!

The greatness of Mormonism has been hijacked. It is time for devoted believers to find the virtue, glory and aspirations of the original. The disillusioned critics do have a point. But their point is aimed in the wrong direction. Mormonism's institutional factions, critics, apostates, and activists all seem too distracted by what is now Mormonism to contemplate what Mormonism promises ultimately to become. It is that unrealized destiny that ought to fire our imaginations and thrill our hearts. Because of its self-declared lack, the original version of Mormonism, with its confidence and curiosity, remains the only faith with any potential to unite within it all truth; therefore, by extension, the unrealized potential to also unite all people. Thank you.

Q&A

[0:50:53] **Micah:** Thank you very much, Denver. We will now take eight [or] nine minutes to take questions from our audience.

Q: Admitting my ignorance up front with this question. In the effort to be more broad-minded, the rumor has it that you have spoken to Jesus, and by asking this question I'm not saying, have you spoken to Jesus in a vision or dream. Have you spoken to Jesus verbally or in his presence? Secondary question: How can I get it?

Denver: Yes. And, read the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is more or less a handbook on reconnecting to God. It tells history with one purpose in mind, and that one purpose in mind is to track the path that was walked by those who repeatedly wind up encountering the Lord. His original faith included a promise that He will not leave us comfortless but that He would come and ultimately take up His abode with us. That's as true today as it has been at any time.

Q: What's your stance on multiple mortal probations or reincarnation?

Denver: Dude... Multiple mortal probations is probably... Let me put it this way—even if true, a distraction from the test that is presently underway. There are living today, that I've encountered, at least a dozen Peter's, like New Testament Peter, back here again doing his thing. None of them fish, though. I've met a handful of John's. I've met four or five Mary Magdalene's. I've met at least three Mother Mary's. Assuming one of them actually nailed it and they are that, what's that got to do with the price of cheese in Wisconsin? How is that going to help you? Are you honest, are you kind, are you charitable? *No dude, I'm Peter! Once, long ago and far away, I walked on water briefly and I sank. But dude, I did it and you haven't. So okay, watch me sprint into a pool and I'll accomplish kind of the same thing. I'll stay up for a little...* What's that got to do with anything? Yes, maybe there's something to it, probably not in the form in which most people who believe in it, believe in it.

What's the definition of a creation? How often in a creation does one appear? If you look carefully at the scriptures, the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Christ, are given a fulsome vision of everything that is now going to unfold on into the future. And these are the disciples; this is Peter, James, and John standing there on the Mount. They look at this, they look upon the long absence of their spirit from their bodies and they regard it as a form of prison, and so they figure out an escape route. It's in the scriptures. John says, "Don't send me there, let me stay in this arena and do battle here." Peter and James—it's actually Jacob—James say, "Let us come speedily into your kingdom," meaning, don't leave us there, resurrect us. They will miss the resurrection because the first resurrection was when Christ came out of the grave and they were going to die after that. Therefore, they were left there. They said no, don't leave us there, and so they secured an early resurrection, they're not in the spirit world. If a long time in the spirit world is not part of the agenda then they had no reason to take that up as an issue and have that discussion with the Lord and make the choices they did. Therefore, if multiple mortalities is like, on Wednesday I die and on Monday I'll be resurrected or reborn as someone else, then there is no long absence of the spirit from the body, there is a continual return. But then you get into the definition of creation, and how many creations have there been for this world, and topics about which even Joseph kept his mouth shut, and so I'll put a cork in it.

Q: Thanks for your talk. Curious about priesthood, either currently your views on that, and then if that ties in with the other sheep? I don't know if you've thought about that. Just curious about your thoughts on that.

Denver: At the time that John the Baptist visited Joseph and Oliver and conferred the priesthood, the form in which he conferred it was limited but it was durable, and he prophesied that it would not be taken again from the earth until—it depends on whether you read Oliver's words or Joseph's words—that they may yet, or until they do, the impression is still the same. There is some future sacrifice that's expected by the sons of Levi and that the priesthood will endure to then. There's a form of priesthood upon the earth that is remarkably durable. Even the Jews that killed Christ held it. Pretty durable stuff. There is also, in scripture, a teaching that says that all priesthood is one, the original name for which was the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. It's all that, but there are different degrees or portions of that one unified priesthood. Therefore, if you have anything, if you have any priesthood at all, you have some portion of the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, however limited that may be.

I gave a talk in Orem in which I explained that the best way to regard priesthood is as a fellowship. You can have priesthoods among all kinds of people. Women can have priesthoods is a fellowship of women but fellowship determines priesthood. If you have a fellowship with men you have a priesthood of men. If you have a fellowship with angels you have a priesthood that involves something called the "keys of the Aaronic priesthood" because your fellowship with angels has extended into the angelic realm. If you have fellowship with the Son of God you have priesthood that is associated with that. And if you've been in the presence of the Father you have an association with Him, and you hold priesthood that is a Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. The degree to which a priesthood conferral upon a person takes effect is dependent upon the heed and diligence that they pursue the things of God and the degree to which they acquire fellowship with such heavenly things.

(I think we're out of time. Do we have time for one more?)

Micah: Yes, I was going to say, let's do one more question. Sorry. If you have any other questions for Denver there's plenty of time after lunch, and you guys can linger longer in this room as well.

Q: You talked about finding truth in other cultures, other religions. You also touched on the idea that there may be truth but there is also error in all other religions. What keys of knowledge, what tools do you use to help discern between truth and error?

Denver: The most correct measuring stick, in my view, is the Book of Mormon. As long as you have the Book of Mormon you have the ability to make a comparison, and if something reaffirms something I find there then I regard that as having passed the test. If it contradicts that then I regard that as having failed the test. And if it harmonizes with it but it extends it beyond anything known to me then I've got something to pray about, because the ultimate arbiter of truth is God.

Thank you.

Micah: Thank you, Denver. [Applause]

2017.07.30 Unity in Christ Conference

July 30, 2017

Southern Utah County, Utah

Denver Snuffer: Am I supposed to talk now? I assume that pause means: Get up. [audience laughter]

There is a concept that I mentioned just in passing yesterday at the Sunstone conference, that "chosen-ness" does not mean what we oftentimes think chosen-ness means. We tend to view that as something laudable, and it means we're better than someone else because God's focused attention on us, and therefore, since we get His attention, there is something great about us. There is a passage in... (I am using these new scriptures, mind you, so I have no clue where you will find it in your actual Book of Mormon).

Comment: First Nephi 20:21.

Denver Snuffer: Oh, First Nephi 20 [LE]. But I am reading from First Nephi 8. This is the Lord talking to ancient Israel and he says: *"...For I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. Nevertheless, for my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not of. For, behold, I have refined thee, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, yea, for mine own sake will I do this, for I will not suffer my name to be polluted, and I will not give my glory unto another."* (1 Nephi 20:8-11). That doesn't sound like high praise for the chosen people.

I have a new favorite reality show that's on the History channel. I think they've been doing this for four years now so there are a lot of episodes out there. It's called, "Forged in Fire." I don't know if any of you have ever seen it. They start the show with four blacksmiths. The four blacksmiths are required to take something—they provide them the something. Sometimes it's a wrought iron fence, sometimes it's a wrecked car, sometimes it's a pile of garbage. These people have to sort through whatever it is. The first stage is to fashion it in a forge into a kind of knife blade, which they inspect, and then one of the four people are sent home, and the three that have done the best job then have to finish that product and turn it into something that can be sharpened and hold an edge, with a handle on it, and then they test it. It is fairly brutal testing. Things shatter. If they don't hold an edge, they're gone. They have to qualify by producing something that is a fairly well-made knife. Then after they finish and someone gets kicked out, the two that remain are sent home to their own forge and they're given five days to build some weapon from history. It could be something that they used in France to duel with. It could be something that even the contestants don't know how to pronounce.

When they finish after five days, they come back and they present their weapons. The judges then put those through tests. Sometimes the test is to stick it into a metal holder and bend the sword 33 degrees one direction and 33 degrees the other. The people

watching, that have fabricated these things, are anticipating the shattering of what they've built. They hash coconuts with these things. They lock them into a catapult that has a controlled speed, so that every weapon gets tested consistently, and they will smash it down on a metal shield. The objective is to see if it will still hold a sharp edge after they've done all this crap to it. Then when they have finished all the strength and durability things, the sharpness test takes over. One of the judges is a guy named Doug Marcaida. He almost invariably uses a pig carcass. He will attack the pig carcass with the weapon, and when he is done, if it succeeded, his line is: "It will kill." (He is from the Philippines and has an accent.)

I've learned a lot watching four seasons of that show on the History channel. There are some kinds of metal that it doesn't matter what you do with them, they will never hold an edge.

Sometimes what they require the contestants to do is to take metal that will not hold an edge—for example, here's a bundle of barbed wire and here is some high carbon steel. You have to fuse together in your forge the high carbon steel and the barbed wire that will never hold an edge, and you have to produce something that we're going to put through these tests. Now if a person knows what he's dealing with he can take that incapable metal, and he can make a sleeve in which is set the high carbon steel, so that the edge of the high carbon steel is what's exposed to the force of contact. And if they don't know what they are doing—they blend it together in such a way that it doesn't matter what you do—it doesn't matter how much you work with it, or sharpen it, or fashion it, it's simply not going to take.

If you go through and read the scriptures about the concept of chosen-ness, almost always you run into words about forging in a fire the product that God regards as His people, which means that God has a fairly realistic assessment of what people are like, and choosing them doesn't mean He's found a finished product. Choosing them means He's found something with which He's determined to work.

High carbon steel requires iron and it requires a matrix of that carbon to be within the element. Life—all life—is based on carbon. We breathe oxygen. We are carbon based, all of us. In a very real sense, every breath we take, we take and burn it in our furnace. The way that we convey that oxygen throughout the body is by oxidizing iron in our blood. That's why our blood cells turn red when exposed to oxygen, because the iron element fused with the oxygen oxidizes, or rusts, and so it looks red. And then, when it drops the oxygen off where it's going to be consumed in the limbs, it loses that element and it returns and it's blue. Forging us in the fire of affliction, breathing into us the breath of life, talking about being chosen, the example of what it takes in order to fashion something that will withstand and hold an edge, all of these things are types and shadows of what it means to be chosen.

Chosen-ness puts you on display in order for the Lord to either prove what foolishness is in the person chosen, or if they succeed, to put them through an ordeal that demonstrates faithfulness and commitment, desire and earnestness, so that everyone stands back and says: *This people represented God*, either by the shabby performance,

and the persecution, and the failure, and the folly, or it represents God by the diligence, and the effort, and the faithfulness.

I've been pretty hard on Latter-day Saint history because from the perspective of triumphal success it hasn't succeeded. But within the Latter-day Saint history is embedded this strain of diligence, and faithfulness, and sacrifice, and commitment that has preserved enough of what was here at the beginning so that we today have something to work with. The Latter-day Saints are an example of both folly and triumph. It has not resulted in Zion. And it's certainly headed, in fact now galloping, in another direction. But within that, there has been a preservation and a restoration of material which would have otherwise been lost; would have otherwise been forgotten.

What's rolling out now in the Joseph Smith Papers is an extraordinary blessing. Now true enough, if I had the archives in my possession I would eliminate a lot of footnotes and editorial comments and you'd get more than we're getting. I wouldn't try to package it in a way that defends a story that simply isn't true. Nevertheless, they are preserving, they are perpetuating, they are publishing materials, and we're the beneficiaries of that. For that we ought to be grateful.

Within every group of chosen people there are always those who are resilient and faithful enough to pass the test, to hold the edge, to survive when the difficulties come. And when the Lord puts us through the furnace of affliction our burdens are designed to get us to be able to qualify. Our burdens are designed to make us a little more realistic about our own limitations.

I want to talk about a couple of things. I want to remind you that becoming a chosen people or being chosen by God as His, is no guarantee that we aren't going to be remembered by history for our own foolishness, and an example of how to inspire God's ire and fall short. I'm a little more optimistic at this point in history because of the hour, because of the signs in the heavens above, because of the things that we see on the earth. I assume that John Pratt is going to address some of the signs of the timing of what's happening now. And so, someone's going to do this. Someone's going to achieve it. The prophecies are not going to fall to the ground unfulfilled. Perhaps coming out of this group will be that example that is pointed to, not as folly and failure, but as vindication of the Lord's promises.

I've taken personally a lot of criticism and I've gotten a lot of email, and my wife will read stuff and report back to me what the latest round of nonsense contains. One of the things that gets suggested is that I am personally arrogant and haughty and that I'm relatively untrustworthy because I talk with just too much confidence. Try to put yourself into the position in which God has told you something. You respect God and what he's told you needs to be delivered, and ought not to be delivered by a shaky voice, an unsound trumpet, a weak attempt. It doesn't matter how good a trumpeter you are. It doesn't matter what you think of yourself, or whether you would gladly pass that to someone else. If you're going to speak on behalf of the Lord you have to speak in a way that represents Him as well as you can, however incomplete, however unworthy,

however much you may think yourself ill-fitted to the assignment. You're given the assignment, you need to do it, and you need to do it well.

The confidence with which I speak does not reckon from myself. In fact, like I've heard so many people ask about themselves, "What am I doing in this position?" Well none of us really can come down here into this sphere and walk around proclaiming, "*Check it out, this is how you ought to be.*" There is only one. There is only one who is the prototype of the saved man. There is only one that we can look upon and say, "*As to Him, I have confidence in Him.*" Everyone else the confidence is misplaced. But if you have confidence in Him, and He has given you something to say, then say it with the confidence that you have in Him. Announce the message that He has given with the respect that He deserves.

Now I know some people were hoping that I would come down here and talk about what God released yesterday on the answer to the petition for a covenant. I'm not going to talk about it for this reason: I don't believe it belongs to me. I believe it belongs to you, and I believe it is God's statement *to you*. For me to try and take up any attention is to distract you from the Lord's words to you. What kind of a fool would put themselves between you and God and say, "*I would like to interrupt the Lord in order to tell you something that I think.*" What I have or what I think is wholly inconsequential in comparison with the content of that document. It doesn't have my voice, it doesn't have my speech patterns, it doesn't have me in it. If some of it is a little garbled, I'll own that. But the message belongs to the Lord, the words belong to the Lord, and they're words that He was giving to you. Therefore it's yours, and you have as much right to apply the meaning of those words to yourself and to others as anyone. I have no right to get out and say, "Pay attention to me." There is, and they really are quite remarkable.

The other thought that my wife and I kick around (and Steph any time you want to interrupt me, come up here and join and take over, if you would like) is this idea: Take any event at any time, in the Book of Mormon for example. You have the family of Lehi and what went on there, or later in time during Alma and Abinadi in the courts of King Noah. Take any of those circumstances and ask yourself: Let's assume that that was happening today. Let's assume God was doing things today similar to what He was doing back then. What would that look like? How would that unfold? What would be said? What would the response be? How would you react to that if it were going on today? How would you decide if something like that were happening now, whether or not it was authentic and of God? How would you go about deciding that in your own day, in your own time, among your own people, within your own family, what is happening is of God and not of men?

I don't think that just because something gets enshrined in scripture we should lose sight of the fact that it has always required faith, it will always require faith, and it doesn't matter what proofs you can muster for or against belief in something. At the end of the day either God is behind it or God is not. And if God is behind it and your heart is open to it, you'll recognize it; you'll receive it.

The problem we have as people is we don't really believe the Book of Mormon. We believe in long ago and far way. The Book of Mormon is telling us, "Hey, Gentiles, among you, in your day, in your time, there are going to be things that God necessarily is going to have to accomplish." What would that look like? What would that unfold like? How would that come rolling forth? Many of the people about whom scriptures are written, and the pivotal moments in which choices have to be made before great things unfold, have remarkably humble beginnings, almost inconsequential, so much so that the biblical record entirely omits Lehi. So much so that the people chosen by the Lord to flee before the fall of Babylon, and to start a new civilization on the other side of the world, remained entirely obscure to the world from the moment they left Jerusalem until the time that the Book of Mormon rolled forth in 1830.

(You [Stephanie Snuffer] want to join me? Yeah, yeah. This is a historic moment.)
[audience laughter]

[Stephanie Snuffer comments omitted at her request]

Denver Snuffer: We still have 25 minutes left. What are you doing running off for?
[Laughter]

I've thought some of our exchanges [between Denver and Stephanie] on hikes were the best material I've ever recorded anywhere, and it's just in my journal.

I was looking for something. I was asked to find some dates and it required me to go research through piles of journals. As I am going through (I have to skim them) I ran across a number of things where my wife was going after me on a hike and it was in the journal. It's not self-deprecating, it's spouse-deprecating. It was one of those amusing parts of the relationship. She warned me that people reading that stuff later won't know that it's funny. They'll just assume that I'm not telling a joke when I say there are men living on the moon that dress like Quakers, because Joseph made a comment like that and it tells you something about his sense of humor. But there are anti-Mormons that say, "He thought there were men that dressed like Quakers that lived on the moon." It's preposterous.

Yesterday while I was talking... We went to lunch with Carol Lynn Pearson a couple weeks ago and she gave me a copy of her book, *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy*. I read her book. It's a pretty good book, but I told her afterwards I think she is being really unfair to Joseph, because the typical account of history reads *out* of the accounts all of what Joseph did before the Nauvoo High Council, and all of what Joseph Smith did in public sermons, to detect and to denounce and to try and put down the practice of plural wives in Nauvoo. Instead, all of that is skipped over, including the Relief Society statement taken out in the *Times and Seasons* as a joint statement of the women of Nauvoo condemning the practice that Joseph had inspired to take place.

Everyone reads that out and simply homogenizes Brigham Young and Joseph Smith because of Brigham Young's attribution to Joseph, so Joseph owns everything that

Brigham did. After I talked yesterday, she was there and we spoke for a moment. I said, "I loved the book, but I think you are unfair to Joseph, and that everyone is unfair to Joseph. No one really deals with how firmly a position he took in public and before the Nauvoo High Council in opposition to that stuff. But at a minimum you have to admit that, whatever went on Joseph kept out of the public view, and Brigham Young celebrated as something public to be practiced. At a minimum you owe it to Joseph to make that distinction and you didn't do it in the book. But having said that, the book's great, it's wonderful, loved it, and appreciate getting a copy."

One of the lamentations that appear in her book is how troubling and disorienting the whole concept of plural marriage is to currently living Latter-day Saint women. She did a survey and she collected comments from people in the survey. It's remarkable. She put hundreds of these comments into her book. It is remarkable how many women fear dying before their husband because their husband can go get another wife and be married for eternity to her, and then she winds up with another spouse in addition to her husband. There was some preview of an upcoming movie that we saw, while we were watching "Dunkirk". In the preview, it was a comedy, and one woman is talking to another woman and she is saying, "Yeah, I believe in polygamy. I just haven't found the right guy, and gal, and gal." That notion hangs over.

One of the great things that happened in the Answer was we now have a replacement for D&C Section 132 that rather clearly explains that it was not so from the beginning. In one respect we should have been smart enough to figure that out on our own, because in the days of Adam... I know that Brigham Young said that Adam came with one of his wives, because to Brigham Young all things were polygamous. But there is no basis in the Bible for that. There is no basis in scripture for that. Adam received "a wife". Then, in the book of Moses the children of Adam and Eve married two by two, male and female. One of the clarifications that we now have is that the divine purpose of marriage is to multiply and replenish the earth. That answers the question about relationships between the same sex because you cannot multiply and replenish the earth in any other form than that.

Marriage was instituted by God in the beginning. It is an ordinance. It involves the man and the woman, and it doesn't matter what other kind of social relationship you want to form, it's not marriage. At its heart marriage is from God and confined to that relationship. When you define marriage as given by God, keep in mind the definition of an abomination. An abomination is something that you practice that is wrong, done as a religious belief. So marriage that doesn't conform to the pattern of God is, by definition, an abomination. Its result is not only to defile the definition of marriage, but it absolutely precludes multiplying and replenishing the earth. It renders the marriage bed devoid of progeny, incapable of producing offspring. It is desolate. An abominable practice that produces desolation is something that we all ought to take note of. It's not a social issue, it's not a civil rights issue. In a secular society I don't care what people do in the privacy of their own homes. But when you begin to say that that is not merely the right of privacy and the right of association, but is a religious right involving marriage, and it

produces nothing but desolation, we ought to stop short of that. We ought to say: Go and do as you will do.

Lot chose to live in Sodom. What's up with Lot? Maybe they had good music. Maybe it was fashion. Maybe they had great art. (I'm pretty sure they had great performance art, I'm just not into that.) When Abraham went to recover his nephew and the angels came and Lot bargained, it wasn't Abraham who was out to destroy the wicked, and it wasn't Lot that was out to destroy the wicked, it was the Lord. The Lord is going to take care of the abominations that are out there. Our responsibility is to invite people to see a better way, to conceive of a higher and more noble way to live life. Our job isn't to rebuke and condemn and to belittle.

There are really two forces at work in all of creation. One force is generative, creative, and positive. It fabricates new things. It is ongoingly surprising and life-filled and wonderful. What's opposed to that are the forces of degeneration, decay, negativity, entropy, destruction. There isn't enough being done in order to bring that positivity, that creativity, that newness into this world. Even though children are born every day, and life starts over all new again with the birth of every new child, our minds are preoccupied by the forces of negativity and what opposes us. I could spend all day every day responding to negative arguments and negative comments, and if I were to do that I wouldn't get anything new done, covered, accomplished, or out there.

When we take a message out to people about the restoration of the Gospel, the work of Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, the offering of the Covenant, the expected coming Zion, there is no reason to deal with the criticism. It's going to collapse on its own. Here's a great bit of advice: If the criticism level would condemn Jesus Christ, then the criticism is the problem, not the object of the criticism.

Now understand, (this is secondhand, because I don't go there and do this) but my wife informed me that in some Facebook group there was complaining about the Prayer for the Covenant because that was "praying for to be seen of men." It's public. Okay, when Jesus taught us to pray, "*Our Father who art in heaven*", he did it publicly. It got reduced to writing. It's the most widely read prayer in all of western society. So if you are going to condemn, on that basis, the Prayer for the Covenant, you are going to have to condemn the Lord's Prayer and in turn condemn the Lord. If you can resolve criticism leveled at you by applying the test and saying, "Jesus would have failed that test, too," then you don't even need to respond to the criticism. But if they level criticism at you, and you look at it say, "Jesus would have passed that and I would fail," then it's time to start saying, "Well, okay, then I need to clean up something in my own life." Because all of us deserve some level, we merit some level, of criticism and condemnation. We're just not perfect.

It's really hard to sit inside your own life and be realistic about your own personal failings. We always tend to apply tests that are given in scripture outwardly and to say, "As long as I use persuasion and pure knowledge then I can beat you into submission and never yield the argument because I am doing what was said is the criteria."

Gentleness—okay, I won't yell at you. Meekness—okay, I'll be polite enough to let you say what you have to say, I won't interrupt. Love unfeigned—okay, I love ya brother, *I LOVE ya brother*. Persuasion—okay, when I get my opportunity to present mine I'm going for the brass ring.

Wait a minute. What if that's God trying to get through to you? What if the way in which God is trying to persuade you is by the meekness of the humble Lord who speaks to us in plain humility; who comes to us, not to try and overawe us, but comes to us saying: *"You are me in embryo. I know what it took for me to become the Son of God, and I know you can do it, too."* What if the Lord is your greatest cheerleader, and he wants nothing more than to try and get you to be more like Him. You can't be more like Him when the center of everything is yourself and you never self-examine. We all deserve criticism.

I was asked if I would bear my testimony and I'm willing to do that. I've tried to let people know exactly what has and is going on without the need of resorting to a lot of spectacular descriptions of the Lord's direct involvement in my life.

I want you to imagine for a moment: Moses is on the mount. The setting is awesome. The Lord is speaking to him, and in that setting he is overawed, so much so that when the Spirit of the Lord withdraws, he collapses because it has drained all his strength. He comes to himself and realizes man is nothing and he'd never supposed that. The adversary comes to tempt him. He can tell the difference between a merely pretentious soul whose message is dark, and the God of glory whose message is Light. And then the God of glory comes again and presents to him yet more. This is a spectacular event. He is told: "Take your stick, go to Pharaoh's court, throw your stick down and we'll humble the Pharaoh."

Now you've probably got—by the time you walk down the mountain, and you get ready and provisioned and make arrangements for your affairs while you are gone—days before you set off for Egypt. And then when you travel to Egypt, you've probably got a couple of weeks or more of hard trudging across the desert. You arrive in Egypt and you realize, kind of like God, the pylons of Egypt are awesome. They represent a false religion but they do so impressively. You come, with your shepherd's sandals and your homespun garments, into the courts of Pharaoh where you are supposed to deliver a message. You tell me that no matter how spectacular the circumstances were on Sinai some three weeks earlier that it didn't take faith for Moses to confront the Pharaoh and to deliver the message. As the sound of the staff is rattling into a stable position on the floor of the courts of Pharaoh, I suspect Moses was palpitating. *"I sure hope He's God here, too!"* Because everyone thought that gods were local. Everyone thought that gods were from different districts. Sinai may have been Jehovah's. Ra, Fa, who is big cheese here? I can imagine that for a moment Moses held his breath, hoping.

We sit back from our distance with the confidence that this was going to play through triumphantly, and it was going to work out just exactly as the story always works out. Moses had absolutely no such assurance. He was sent out to do, what may be to him

humiliating and embarrassing things to do and to say, but he did them anyway. Not because he knew he would triumph and history would remember him. He did them because God told him to and he really, really, hoped it was going to work out.

I don't know how often it is, that no matter what I've been shown or given, taught or received, that I realize, that at the end of the day, the only proof anyone will have will be the words that I get told to deliver. From my perspective it's like...the stick rattling on the floor as it settles there, while you swallow hard and you hope that there are at least some who have hearts that are receptive, who are willing to say, "God spoke unto the Fathers in times past, and has spoken unto us by His Son, and again spoken unto us by Joseph, and God speaks again today."

It's not Joseph, it's not Moses, it's the One behind that. It's the God of Heaven and His Son. It's the only sound, reliable, and true thing that there is in the universe, and *that* God speaks again. However unlikely it may seem in the circumstances, God speaks again.

There will come a time when there will be people among whom it will not be necessary to say, "*Know ye the Lord,*" because everyone is going to know Him. What He will put us through to get from here to there is up to Him to determine. And how He is going to accomplish that is up to Him to decide. But when we get there and the Lord is among us, none of us are going to be surprised. None of us are going to dance around excitedly because we are going to say, "We knew He was with us every step of the way anyway." It will be ever so nice to come and embrace, and to feel wounds, and to kneel, but you won't be surprised.

What it takes to get us from where we are to that point is entirely individual. It's entirely up to every single one of us. But He's willing to take us on that journey and He's willing to put us through the forge, and melt us until we are pliable, and hammer us until we are shaped. He is willing to put us through what's required in order to take people and turn them into something that is far more like Him and far less like the world.

There is a question He poses about the tares that are ripening and so what of the wheat? We are supposed to be godly. We are supposed to be God-like. Imagine yourself trying to be like God. Well, it almost makes you laugh out loud when you think about such proposition, and yet it's there in scripture and He's telling you that's what He wants of you.

The greatest who was ever among us, knelt to wash other people's feet and did what he could to help those who were infirm. With patience and kindness He dealt with people, till the moment arrived when it was necessary for Him to lay His life down. And then He went exactly where He needed to go, and said exactly what needed to be said, in order to inspire the rage of the people who felt threatened so that they would kill Him, on time, as the sacrificial paschal lamb on the Passover that year. At the end He controlled even the moment of His death. We've got the example in front of us.

I have always been surprised at the humility of the Lord, the meekness of the Lord, and the fierceness of His disapproval. Some of what you read in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* is actually taken verbatim from my journals. I tend to record incidents when they happen, exactly as they happen, and lock down the account at that moment [and] then never change it, because Joseph took criticism for writing multiple accounts of the First Vision. So I write it one time and I don't change the story, so what you're reading in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* is taken verbatim out of the journals. But part of the story is left out because it wasn't necessary, and it changes the focus and it didn't belong there. But, I will tell you because I have been asked to bear my testimony.

After I had seen the events in Gethsemane and recorded that in the journal, it was some time later, trying to take all that in. I saw the resurrection and what happened that day. After I had seen it, I sat down and I wrote the account. I'm writing the account, and I entered—literally into my journal I wrote—*"The joy of that moment made the suffering that He endured in Gethsemane seem small by comparison."* I literally wrote that in my journal. I was instantly... I couldn't write another word; I was instantly condemned. I had no right to make that comparison and it wasn't true. So I closed up the journal. I stopped writing. I went to work, and the whole day was awful.

When I got back from work that evening, I drew a line at that point in the journal across the page and I explained what happened. "What I wrote above I should never have written. It's not true, and I was condemned for writing it." Because there was nothing about the triumph that lessened the price that was paid in Gethsemane, and to suggest that anything mitigated the price our Lord paid for us is untrue and unwarranted. When I explained *that* in the journal I felt back in His good graces.

The Lord, when He lets you know you're wrong, lets you know in a way that's like...our dog Mowgli. She cannot bear to displease her family. She just wears it on her. Everything about her, the ears, the tail, everything about our dog droops when she has familial ire directed her way. That's how you feel when the Lord is letting you know you've offended. I've offended Him far too many times for me to even recount. Sometimes I've wondered why I'm still involved. I assume at some point He is just going to get tired and I'm going to ignite like a match head and He's going to say, *"Well, he probably had that coming."*

The Lord is real. He is working. The time is short. The evidence of what is going to happen and is presently underway is not just in scripture, it's also in nature. The evidence of this is written everywhere. And if some of you are lucky enough to be able to hang around for the 6 o'clock fireside with John Pratt, try to keep him here long enough to let the stars come out. He'll need a laser pointer but then he will really entertain you.

Let me end by simply saying that I know the Lord, and I respect Him enough to confine what I do to exactly what's asked of me, and leave it to Him to determine everything from content to timing. And that if He says go, we go; and if He says not yet, it's not yet. I've learned that He has an agenda. He's known about the moment we're in right now

for a long time. Work on what is underway began two years, and more than a year-and-a-half before I was involved. I didn't look at the people who were involved and say, "Why didn't you include me?" I looked at them and said, "I'm so glad you did the work." I didn't envy them, I'm not jealous of them. I welcomed it. They felt called by God and they did the work. As it turns out, they were. And as it turns out, God is now calling all of us to step up and do some other things. How that will manifest it in each one of our lives is up to the Lord and you.

I bear testimony to you that it is His work. And although it may seem small, great things have small beginnings. By small means the Lord brings great things to pass. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2017.08.20 Lumberjack Story

August 20, 2017
Lake Alturas, Idaho

Denver: And see that works really well if your watch says 11:28 when it's 11:28. Mine probably says 11:28 when it's 11:40. Since this is all over with, and since there's some kids here, I wanted to tell a story. This, this is true story. I, I grew up in Idaho and I actually worked for the Sawtooth Lumber Company, which does not exist any more. Boise Cascade bought 'em out. But there was a time when the Sawtooth Lumber Company could win a bar fight at Featherville against the Boise Cascade boys.

Female from audience: There are kids here. [Laughter.]

Denver: Well, that's who I'm talking to. [Laughter]

Denver: So, when you go... I worked for the lumber company, I cut down trees. When you cut down a tree the tree wants to fall in a very specific place, and when you walk up to it with a chainsaw you have to stand at the bottom and look at it. If a ~~log~~ [tree] is perfectly symmetrical and perfectly straight you can make it fall anywhere you want it to. If there's more branches on one side than another it will only fall that way. If it's leaning in one direction it doesn't matter what the branches are doing, it's only gonna fall that way.

The boss, Junior Ownsby, who never came out to watch us work, one day showed up to watch our crew. And our foreman who ran our crew was named Budd. Budd and Junior Ownsby [Ownsby] were up on the road, the dirt road that had been cut in and they were standing there watching **me**. And I'd walked up to a tree that literally – it didn't matter how long I looked at it – it was like the corkscrew tree in the parable. There was no way to figure out where this thing was gonna fall. And I thought, "Maybe I'll leave this for someone else 'cuz I'm kind of afraid." This, this was a very big tree. It was gonna kill someone and I'd just assumed it wasn't me. But when I turned to leave it, the foreman yelled, "Get on with it!" So I got on with it, and I cut a wedge out. And it looked to me like this damn thing could go anywhere so what difference does it make, if you don't know where it's gonna go, what you do to it. So I cut a wedge out of it and I think, "Maybe they'll leave and cutting the wedge will be enough," but they were still standing there watching me, like, "Let's see what the idiot does!"

In addition to all of the other problems this tree had, termites had it eaten quite a bit of the inside, but the wedge didn't reveal that. I set about cutting the tree down to connect up with the wedge, and about a third of the way through there was not enough remaining support for the tree to stay up, and it started to move. But it didn't move like it was gonna fall. It moved like twisting on the trunk which trapped my chainsaw. So I let go of it as it moved around and I was thinking, "Wow, this is gonna be a disaster!" And I backed away from the thing with my chainsaw left behind, still running, and this was not a model of how you drop a tree. This was a model of: How much insurance do we have for these guys? The tree twisted, it made a horrible splintering sound, exactly what you

don't want to do to a tree, and then it fell. And, I ran like back and forth trying to figure out where it was gonna land because it was not... it was shimmying. And when it finally fell to the ground I picked up where it was going and I thought, "Oh, good. I'll be safe here." Except the tree was like a corkscrew, and when it hit the ground, because of the twist on the tree, it jumped backwards.

I still own the orange hard hat I wore that day. The base of the tree, which was bigger around than about two of those, flew back right at my head and hit the bill of that hardhat and sent it flying up the hill. I managed to duck and leave my head intact but my hard hat is now about half way between me, the owner of the company, and my foreman. I left my chainsaw running and I walked up the hill to get my hard hat back and put it on –because you're supposed to wear it if you're out there cutting trees down –and I can still remember the quote from the owner to the foreman. But because this is a story for the kids I won't repeat it. But he was anything but impressed. So, in addition to every other reason why they would leave that tree up in the parable on the hill and not touch it, messing with things like that gets lumberjacks killed. And there was a time when I was, briefly, a lumberjack. Anyway, that's my story. That's your goodnight story. So there it is. [clapping and laughter]

That really happened.

2017.09.03 Opening Remarks

Covenant of Christ Conference

September 3, 2017

Egyptian Theater, Boise, Idaho

I'm grateful for the opportunity to be here with you today. Preliminarily, I should explain to those who are listening to this or participating in this for the first time, a little about this group. Everything that goes on is voluntary among us, no one is paid for any service that they provide. Tithes that are gathered among us are used for the poor. Therefore, we have no funds because the tithing money goes to assist the poor. The Boise Fellowships volunteered to conduct this conference, they are the ones who organized it, they are the ones who paid to rent the venues. Since we own no buildings and use tithes for the poor and we meet in homes, when we meet in a place like this it requires someone to pay to rent the venue which the Boise Fellowships have done. They are also providing all of the web services for free to broadcast these proceedings. I wanna give thanks to the Boise Fellowship and all of those who helped them and I wanna thank them for the invitation to speak here today.

Before we get to the business of the meeting I wanna try and give a context. Since we do not yet have formatted and available scriptures to use, for today's talk whenever I refer to a verse I am referring to a verse in the traditionally laid out Book of Mormon format with Jacob chapter five being the only chapter from which I refer to a verse. There are many verses quoted but if I give you a verse number that verse is in Jacob chapter five.

Take courage! Life was meant to be a living sacrifice, to be lost in the service to God, only by losing your life will you find it. Saving faith is so rare precisely because it requires courage to engage the opposition in this world and to cheerfully endure the abuse, lies, threats and fiery darts sent by those who fear your faith above everything. Faith in God will save you through His grace, it can render every weapon of this world and hell powerless, but it takes courage. When friends betray you and fear overtakes your associates and causes the knees to buckle under the weight of the burdens God allows to be imposed upon you, remember the Lord descended below it all and when He cried out asking for the bitter cup to be removed, there was no relief. He is the prototype of the saved man and the Father loved Him for his sacrifice. It was the Lord's sacrifice for us that perfected His love for us. He values us because of the great price He paid for each one of us. If you love God you will be given the opportunity to prove your love. You will be proven by the things you endure for His name's sake. Do not fail. Melchizedek's people in the land of Salem were like this people they had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations, yeah, they had all gone astray, they were full of all manner of wickedness but Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the high priesthood according to the Holy Order of God did preach repentance unto his people and behold they did repent.

The Covenant being offered does not require one to reject it, only voluntary acceptance. It assumes mankind's rejection and therefore to reject one need do nothing. Entering into the Covenant offered by the Lord today does not mean there is a church or

organization to be joined, it only means that you affirm that you will accept and abide the terms set by the Lord for being one of His people. You can be one of His covenant people and also hold membership in any church of your choosing.

However, the Covenant imposes the responsibility to **help** others who also accept the Covenant. To regard **them** also as the Lord's, to honor God, seek to recover Israel, teach children to honor God, care for the poor among God's people and to help lighten the burdens of others. None of those responsibilities involve establishing or joining an institution. The words of the Covenant...the words of the Covenant require us to have left behind the destructive and vile practices of the world. It reads in part, "all you who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings of **lying** and **deceiving** and of all **whoredoms** and of **secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts, envying and strife** and from all wickedness and abominations and have come unto Me and been baptized in My name and received a remission of your sins and received the Holy Ghost are now numbered with My people who are of the House of Israel." Those enumerated vile and destructive things must end among us today. **We** are all equal. We all accept the Book of Mormon as a Covenant for us to be numbered among the Lord's covenant people. This land, in particular, is a land of promise to those who serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. The time is coming when those who are not the Lord's people will be swept off the land.

I have been given authority from God to deliver this Covenant, this day. Every formality required from the days of Adam until now for establishing a Covenant has been kept and met. Once the Covenant is established, those sustained by seven women or a man inside his own family, who receive it, also have authority to administer the ordinance to others who want to be numbered among God's people. To administer to others, repeat the ordinance, read aloud the Lord's answer and the words of the Covenant. Ask them to stand and say yes and they will become one of the Lord's covenant people. Do not change the words of the Covenant, for to change an ordinance is to break it. All **our** ancestors have failed to follow the Lord's path. Generations now dead, anxiously wait and hope for us to be faithful. They have part in this through you, if they have a righteous living descendent they are blessed vicariously through that relationship. We are all part of one family and your role in that family can bless the living and the dead.

I have been ashamed of us because of recent events. Subsequent to the Lord's answer we've continued to be quarrelsome, bickering and unkind to one another to such a degree, we certainly must offend the Lord. I thought God would be so disappointed with us that it was wrong to proceed and therefore I prayed to call this off. To my surprise, the Lord did not expect us to do things right at first, He expects us to learn how to do things right. Failure is part of learning. Zion is something that has only been accomplished in the known history of the world by two communities. It's prophesied that there will be a third. What is to be created is something **so** foreign to this world, that there is nothing in the world to use to judge **how** we are doing. Even the scriptures do not give a blueprint to follow. If they contained the necessary information, Zion would've been established long ago. God alone will establish Zion; His instructions are vital and necessary for us. Once He instructs us, the Scriptures can then be used to confirm that

His direction to us now is consistent with what He prophesied, covenanted and promised would happen. But the path to Zion is to be found only by following God's **immediate** commands to us. **That** is how **He** will bring it. He will lead us there. There is no magic, there is no sprinkling fairy dust that will take you to where God is. It does not and cannot happen that way. **He will lead us, teach us, command us, guide us**, but **we** have to be the ones who become what He commands. **We** have to be the ones who do what He bids us do.

The greatest instruction that I know of, given by God at any time, to any generation, is a rule of community found in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon at Bountiful. **Now** we have the answer to the prayer for Covenant, that not only resonates with the message of those two sermons but applies it directly to us in our peculiar circumstances, to fix our peculiar defects and urge us to be more like Him. The Lord revealed His plan for our day approximately 3000 years ago. We now begin fulfilling that ancient prophecy. Our current struggles were foreseen and foretold. The Lord of the whole earth considered destroying all the wicked. But His servant plead for Him to grant more time, Jacob chapter five verses 49 to 50. The Lord of the whole earth hearkened to His servant and decreed that He would spare it and would labor within His vineyard a final time in our day, verse 51. The Lord determined long ago He would use a Covenant to graft back people who had become wild and bitter and connect them to the original roots of the tree of life or in other words restore people in our day to His Covenant. The Covenant offered today is from God and is the first step required to restore the family of God or tree of life on the earth. It will change the lost, wild and bitter fruit and begin to recover them and turn their hearts to the Fathers. This will connect those who are living today, with the natural roots or those Fathers who still hold rights under the original Covenant, verses 52 to 54.

Work for this grafting began years ago and it took a great leap forward approximately two years ago with the effort to recover as near as possible the text of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith revelations. **The initial graft happens today.**

Although the Book of Mormon has remained in print continuously since its first publication in 1830, Latter Day Saints did not respect it as scripture until the 1950s. The book has been a test and not the fulsome revelation of all God's dealings even with the Nephites.

"And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it [shall] so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them." (3 Nephi 26:9)

From its founding until 1937, Brigham Young University did not offer a single course on the Book of Mormon. Only in 1961 did it become mandatory for incoming BYU freshmen to take a class on the Book of Mormon. Hugh Nibley defended the Book of Mormon in a debate with Sterling McMurrin in 1955. Nibley offended nearly all those who were in attendance because of his serious defense, some of whom declared flatly that the Book

of Mormon needed to be abandoned because it was driving the best minds out of the church. Although Hugh Nibley advocated taking the Book of Mormon seriously in the 1950s, the Saints only began to take it seriously after Ezra Taft Benson's General Conference talk in **1986**. "The church was underwhelmed with the Book of Mormon until late in the 20th century", Noel B. Reynolds wrote about this church wide neglect in his article "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the 20th Century" found at BYU Studies, Volume 38. He wrote "The Book of Mormon was largely overlooked throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. A handful of church leaders appealed for more serious attention to the book, however the church as a whole did not respond in any dramatic way to any of these urgent messages until after President Benson's emphatic messages in 1986." Within 18 months of the restoration through Joseph Smith, the Saints were condemned for unbelief. By January 1841 the Saints were warned they would be rejected with their dead if they failed to repent and keep God's commandments. They did **not** repent.

And so, the restoration has been in a pause for four and five generations waiting for God to begin it anew. Today marks a moment when the stirrings that have been underway for years result in God's offering to establish His people, on earth, by a Covenant He ordains. The few ready to receive the Lord's offer today are scattered to the nethermost parts of His vineyard. It's verse 52. Despite this, a live broadcast on the Internet allows them to be grafted in at the same moment this is happening in Boise, Idaho. Correspondingly, those who utterly refused to accept the offered Covenant are plucked from the restoration's tree of life because they're bitter fruit, unable to meet the Lord's requirements. The Lord is taking the step to preserve part of humanity, not to destroy it. That's verse 53. A few descendants of the Covenant Fathers have the natural gift of faith, that gift belongs to the natural branches. That's verse 54. When grafted we are connected to the natural roots or covenant Fathers as heirs of the promises made to them. Even after the Covenant, there will still be those who are bitter and wild, who will be unable to produce natural fruit despite the Covenant. These will remain for a time despite their bitterness, verses 56 and 57. Today only the most bitter, who refuse to be grafted in will be trimmed away. 19:18

We **look forward to more nourishing or restoring of truths, lights and commandments** which will bless those who receive, but for those who will not the continuing restoration will prune them away, verse 58. These bitter and wild branches must still be cut off and cast away. These steps are necessary to preserve the opportunity for the natural fruit to fully return. It's verse 59. **The good must overcome the evil**, this takes time and it means that the Lord's patience is extended to give time to develop and further improve. We are not expected and cannot become natural fruit in a single step. But we are expected to accept the initial graft today. The Lord is taking these steps so that **perhaps**, that's a deliberate word, **perhaps** we may become natural fruit worthy to be preserved in the coming harvest. That's verse 60. **Perhaps** is the right word. Some who are grafted will still be plucked away and burned. But others will bear natural fruit and be preserved. Accepting the Covenant is not the final step. Our choices will determine whether we are bitter or natural fruit, **that** will decide our fate. Just as the ancient allegory foretold, the Covenant makes us servants and laborers in the vineyard,

verse 61. We are required to, this is from the Covenant, "seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto the Lord and teach them of His ways to walk in them." If we fail to labor to recover them we break the Covenant. We must labor for this last time in the Lord's vineyard. There **is** an approaching, final pruning of the vineyard, verse 62. The first step to be...the first to be grafted in are Gentiles so that the last maybe first. The lost sheep remnant next and then Israelites so that the first maybe last, verse 63. But grafting is required for all, even the remnants, because God works with his people through covenant making. There will be more grafting and further pruning. As more is revealed and therefore more is required, some will find the digging and dunging too much to bear and will fall away or in other words will be pruned despite the Covenant. That's verse 64. The Covenant makes it possible for natural fruit to return. The bad fruit will still continue, even among the covenant people, until there is enough strength in the healthy branches for further pruning. It requires natural fruit to appear before the final pruning takes place, verse 65. The good and bad will coexist. It will damage the tree to remove the bad at once. Therefore, the Lord's patience will continue for some time yet. The rate of removing the bad is dependent wholly upon the rate of the development of the good. It is the Lord's purpose to create **equality** in his vineyard.

In the allegory **equality** in the vineyard appears three times in verses 66, 72 and 74. We cannot be greater and lesser, nor divide ourselves into a hierarchy to achieve the equality required for Zion. When a group is determined to remain equal and I am personally determined to be no greater than any other, then it faces challenge that never confront unequal people. A religion of bosses and minions never deals with any of the challenges of being equals. Critics claim we will never succeed because of our determined desire for equality. **None of our critics** can envision what the Lord has said in verses 66, 72 and 74 about His people. **But equality among us is the only way prophesied for us to succeed.** That does not mean we won't have a mess as we learn how to establish equality.

Similarly, Zion cannot be established by isolated and solitary figures proclaiming a testimony of Jesus from their home keyboard. The challenge of building a community must be part of a process. Zion is a community and therefore God is a God of community and His people must learn to live together with one heart, one mind, with no poor among us. Isolated keyboardists proclaiming their resentment of community can hardly speak temperately of others. How could they ever live peacefully in a community of equals? We must become precious to each other. Although the laborers in this final effort are few, you will be the means used by the Lord to complete His work in His vineyard, verse 70. You're required to labor with your might to finish the Lord's work in His vineyard, verse 72. **But He will labor alongside you. He,** not a man or a committee, will call you to do work. When He calls do not fear, but do not run faster than you have strength. We must find His people in the highways and byways invite them to join in. Zion will include people from every part of the world. This conference is broadcast worldwide as part of the prophecy to Enoch that God would send

"...righteousness and truth will He I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my Tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem." (Moses 7:62)

We must proclaim this to the world. Do not despair when further pruning takes place, it must be done. Only through pruning can the Lord keep his tree of life equal without those who are **lofty** overcoming the body, verse 73. The lofty branches have always destroyed equality to prevent Zion. The final result of the Lord's labor in His vineyard is declared by the ancient prophet in unmistakable clarity *"...the trees have become again the natural fruit, and they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning."* Mark those words. That's verse 74. When the Lord explained this to me I realized how foolish it was to expect natural fruit, worthy of preservation, in an instant. The Lord works patiently, methodically and does not require any to run faster than they have strength. We cannot allow ourselves to be drawn into inequality. When the result of this labor is to make us one body equal with one another. We cannot imitate the failures of the past by establishing a hierarchy, elevating one above another and forgetting that we must be of one heart, one mind and no poor among us.

The restoration was never intended to just restore an ancient Christian church. That is only a halfway point. **It must go back further.** In the words of the ancient prophet God intends to do according to His will and to preserve the natural fruit that it is good even like as it was in the beginning, verse 75. This means the beginning, as in the days of Adam, with the return of the original religion and original authority, everything must be returned as it was in the beginning. Civilization began with the Temple as the center of learning, law and culture. The Temple was the original university because it taught of man's place with God in the universe. God will return the right of dominion once held by Adam, to man on earth to make us humble servant gardeners laboring to return the world to a peaceful paradise. The Covenant received today restores part of that right.

There is a land inheritance given to us as part of the Covenant and therefore if we keep the Covenant we have the right to remain, when others will be swept away. Ultimately all rights given to us must be turned back to the Fathers who went before, who will likewise return them to Adam, who will surrender them to Christ. When Christ returns, He will come with the right to exercise complete dominion over the earth and exercise judgment over the ungodly. Things set into motion today are part of preparing the way for the Lord's return in glory.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2017.09.03 Closing Remarks

Covenant of Christ Conference

September 3, 2017

Egyptian Theater, Boise, Idaho

Ok, that concludes all of the work to be performed and all of the business. But I have a few remarks, if I can impose on you for a few more moments before we finish up today.

I was here in Idaho during the recent eclipse. We travelled to be near Lake Alturas, near Stanley in the zone of totality. At that spot totality was a little less than two minutes. During totality in a small lake adjacent to Alturas I performed a baptism. He might be here today.

We waded out and back into the cold water beforehand and we're trying to acclimate to the temperature of the water. At our spot the temperature dropped 20 degrees during totality. I observed as totality was approaching that it only takes about one percent, certainly no more than three percent, of the sun's exposure to give absolutely, adequate light. But obscuring any significant portion of the sun affects heat at our location that day. Both of us were shivering for some time afterwards because of the water and the twenty degree temperature drop.

Those who've entered faithfully into the covenant this day are going to notice some things. The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly more angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. There is increasing anger and resentment of gentiles. In political terms, it's rejection of white privilege.

Language of scriptures description of the events now underway calls it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process with the spirit withdrawing, will end on this continent, as two prior civilizations ended in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as that light becomes eclipsed, the coldness of men's hearts is going to result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked.

The covenant, if it is kept, will prevent you from losing light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. The time will come when you will be astonished at the gulf between the light and truth you will comprehend and the darkness of mind of the world.

Be charitable and patient and labor to reach others. They will judge you harshly, but nevertheless be kind to them. They're going to grow to fear you, but that's only part of how darkness responds to light. Give them no reason to fear you. The time will come for us to gather, but between now and then, be leaven. Preserve the world. Be salt. Preserve the world, even if it hates you.

I hope for myself, when the time comes to gather, that I will have been proven faithful and to be among you.

May God bless you and send to each of you a growing light and warmth. As the spirit withdraws from the world may it continually shine un-eclipsed upon each of you to enlighten your minds and to warm your hearts.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2017.09.21 Christian Talk 1

September 21, 2017

Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, Los Angeles, California

I want to thank all of those who have volunteered and assisted in getting this event set up, the venue rented, the venue paid for, and this evening organized. Everything we do is done voluntarily and without compensation. We do not have an organization that gathers funds and makes it possible to purchase events like this. Everything that is done, including the online live video broadcast over the internet this evening, is being done by volunteers who are taking the time to use their own resources to make this possible. We believe that sacrifice is necessary if a person is to have faith. You can believe a lot of things, but if you're going to have faith it is the order of heaven that you have to make sacrifice to demonstrate your faith.

All the videos that were just shown are on the Christian Reformation 500 Years website [www.christianreformation500years.info] and also are available on YouTube and can be watched at any time. It's my hope that this evening I'll give you a greater reason to have belief in Christ and have confidence in your belief in Christ.

In the book of Matthew, chapter 24 is Christ's most extensive prophecy about the future events including the time of His Second Coming. While He gives some details in Matthew chapter 24 there is a statement that He makes: "*As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*" (Matthew 24:37)

He makes an analogy between the events that occurred during Noah's time and what we will see on the earth at the time of his return. Let me read you a description of the events at the time of Noah—and these are the kinds of events with which we typically associate the days of Noah: "*And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually. The earth was corrupt before God, and it was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.*" (See, Genesis 1:5-7; Moses 8:22, 28-30)

Ominous. Terrible. Reason for concern. That is what we generally think of. But there's another side to that. That other side includes obviously Noah. You can't have the days of Noah without having a Noah. Another contemporary who lived at the same time with Noah was Enoch, who built a city of righteousness where people gathered together to worship the only true God, who were then in turn taken up to heaven. That group of people, taken up to heaven, are going to return with the Lord when He comes again in glory. Book of Jude –there is only one chapter in there. "*Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.*" (Jude 1:14) There were those that were taken up into the heavens numbering in the tens of thousands who will return with him.

So if there is reason for pessimism when Christ predicts that, "*As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the time of His return,*" (Matthew 24:37) there is also extraordinary reason for optimism because we are going to see things like Noah and his family –that included Shem, who would be renamed Melchizedek, about whom the apostle Paul had a great deal to say in the book of Hebrews comparing that man, a son of Noah, to the Lord Himself –actually we ought to flip that. He compares the Lord Himself to that man. And then there is Enoch. And so while we tend to look at the prophecy Christ gave concerning His coming negatively, about how far degenerate the world is going to go, those are the tares ripening.

Christ said, "*We're not going to uproot the tares, bind them in bundles and burn them, until the wheat also becomes ripe.*" (Matthew 13:30) You are here, you are Christian, and God would like you to be wheat. He would like you to ripen in righteousness while the world ripens in iniquity.

Roughly - a little over 2,000 years ago - something happened that changed the course of history. Christ was resurrected. We have in one generation of people a series of testimonies about Christ and His life, death, and resurrection. The authors of those testimonies do not spare themselves from their embarrassing behavior. Christ was taken captive in the Garden and many of those who followed Him fled immediately. Peter took a little time to knock off a servant's ear, which Christ healed, and rebuked Peter and told him to put away his sword.

By the time He gets to being tried there are only two who hung around for the trial, and on the cross the only ones who followed Him, who remained, were women, and they stood at the feet of the cross until He passed. Upon His death there is no mention of a disciple being involved in His burial. They were cowering. They were hiding. And these were they who spent their time with Him as His chosen disciples.

Everything changed on the first day of the week when something turned cowards into men who would be willing to die for the testimony that they had that He is risen! That testimony changed the world, it changed their lives. They no longer lived as though their master had been defeated in death. They lived as though their master had triumphed over death, because He had. Multiple witnesses telling the same story: Abject defeat, fear, and cowardice, followed by triumphant, confident, defiant belief in a risen Lord, many of whom would go to their own deaths rather than to deny their testimony that Christ lives.

You have every reason to have confidence in the fact of the resurrection of the Lord. The lives of those disciples are abundant testimony of the fact of His resurrection. And then we have His greatest persecutor, Saul, on the road to Damascus, being confronted by the Lord Himself, calling him and saying, "*It's hard for you to kick against the pricks. Why persecutest thou me?*" (Acts 26:14) Look at the change that happened in the life of Paul, ultimately leading to his death in Rome. Again, as a witness and a testimony of Him in whom he had confidence of a glorious resurrection. And so, 2,000 years ago, an event occurred that changed the world.

About 1,900 years ago the ministry of that generation of believers and witnesses drew to an end and the apostles then had their voices silenced. It would take until 1,675 years ago before there was an attempt to stabilize and define what it meant to be a Christian. Between the time of the death of the apostles and the council at Nicaea there is an interlude in which Christianity assumed extraordinarily divergent forms of Christian belief, many of which were completely contradictory of one another. If you read the ante-Nicene –the prior to Nicaea—fathers of Christianity, the debates, the contradictions, the descriptions –the content of Christian belief was remarkably unstable, unsteady, and very different irreconcilable versions. 1,675 years ago now the Nicean council made an attempt to redefine what it meant to be Christian and to stabilize the conflicting Christianities into something that would be singular and therefore define what it would mean to be an orthodox Christian. Coming out of Nicaea is a creed –the Nicean Creed –but it would take until about 1550 before the efforts to suppress divergent forms of Christianity succeeded far enough so that we had our orthodox Christian faith in a reasonably stable form.

It was about a 1,000 years ago now, when what is called the Great Schism occurred in which the east and the west divided between the church centered in Rome, the Roman Catholic, or Universal church, and the Eastern Orthodox church, divided from one another and no longer shared communion, hierarchy, or their faith in Christ together. It was 500 years ago when Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses and set in motion the series of events that were discussed in the videos shown just before this talk.

I assume all of you regard yourselves as Christians. I regard myself as a Christian. Today there are approximately 40,000 different Christian denominations. If you go back only 500 years most of what you regard as Christianity, and in all probability the form of Christianity in which you believe, would not have existed. If you go back earlier still, whatever it is that you hold as your Christian belief –even the current form of Catholicism that is practiced - would be regarded as heretical by the Roman Catholic hierarchy itself. Only 500 years ago the only authorized forms of the Bible were printed in Latin and they were the exclusive property of a Catholic clergy that taught in Latin. A group of people who were told what to do and how to regard Christianity. Unfortunately for almost every one of us the form of Christianity that we hold in our hearts and that we look to in faith, believing that it has the power to save us, would be regarded throughout almost all of Christian history as heresy, as false, as damnable.

One of the Protestant fathers - he was a Firebrand, he was kicked out of the Massachusetts colony, he was considered dangerous, as dangerous in the Massachusetts setting as Martin Luther was considered dangerous in Roman Catholic Germany - was Roger Williams. Roger Williams is actually the one who founded the First Baptist Church.

It was mentioned that I was raised within a Baptist family. I made an attempt to get baptized. I had conviction when I was ten years old but the minister didn't think that I was a suitable candidate. Apparently I wasn't much of a character at ten years old, at

least in the eyes of a Christian Baptist minister attempting to evaluate the worthiness of a soul for baptism, and so he punted, and by the time I got to high school the last thing I wanted to do was to be baptized. I got baptized for the first time into the Mormon church and I've apparently earned the same sort of reception from them as I did from the Baptist minister when I was ten. I've been regarded as unsuitable material, I guess because when it comes to the history of Christianity and of the various denominations, what churches want are apologists. They want people to defend whatever it is they're doing, however aberrant, however unjustifiable, however flimsy the basis upon which what they teach is grounded; they want apologists. And the role of the apologist is to defend at all costs.

It was mentioned that I'm an attorney. I practice law. I actively go into the courtroom and I defend cases at the trial level and at the appellate level. The job of an attorney is an advocate, is to present persuasively your side of the argument. However, attorneys are only licensed to practice law if they behave ethically. One of the ethics that is binding upon an attorney is, if the court poses a question to you that exposes a weakness in your position or a fact that you dislike because it harms your position, ethically you are obligated to disclose honestly, forthrightly to the court the true answer to the question that is put to you. Christian apologists have no such ethical constraint. They do not need to tell you the weaknesses. They do not need to disclose to you honestly what the problems are.

I was excommunicated from the LDS church because I evaluated their history, concluded that there were indefensible positions, and preferred to state honestly what I believe to be the truth rather than to support a distortion that is unjustified in fact, in truth, and in all honesty. I supposed in that respect that a lawyer comes off rather better than lawyers normally do because legal ethics governs my thinking on how we ought to treat any discussion of our Christian faith, any discussion of what the truth is.

Roger Williams, the founder of the First Baptist Church, as a refugee went and helped found Rhode Island and continued his preaching, and reached this conclusion. This is a quote from Roger Williams: "*There is no regularly constituted church of Christ on earth, nor any person qualified to administer any church ordinances, nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the great head of the church for whose coming I am seeking.*" I think Roger Williams was telling the truth and I think Roger Williams foretold what was actually in the heart of God, and what God ultimately intended to do.

As I mentioned, the days of Noah have to include Noah, have to include Enoch, or in other words, in addition to all of the wretchedness that we look forward to, the world disintegrating and devolving into, there will be an opposition to that, a hand sent from God in the form of prophets, apostles, someone with a message.

When I use the word apostle I mean the word in the same sense in which it is used in the New Testament, that is: someone with a message coming to deliver a message from God to those to whom he speaks. I'm not talking about some officious chap claiming a title as his rightful inheritance as is done in Mormonism. I'm not talking about someone

who calls themselves. I'm talking about someone to whom God speaks and says, "Go tell the people thus."

I think there has been one such man who came about 200 years ago. His life was brief. After 38 ½ years he was slain largely because of the conspiracy of followers. Shortly before his death he said to those who were among his followers, "You don't know me, you never knew my heart." They would conspire to kill him after they had conspired to put him in jail, and they use his name now, as if invoking it gave them the same kind of moral authority that a man who gave up his life, a man who suffered in prison, had as his moral authority in following and sacrificing to obey God. The man about whom I'm speaking is Joseph Smith, and I would ask you to please not associate that name with the Mormon church, but to allow him to stand on his own, and to consider what he had to say independent of what they say he said.

There are remarkable similarities between the struggle from 1,900 years ago until 1,550 years ago in the Christian tradition, before it adopted a settled, although corrupted form, and the last 160 years of Mormonism following the death of Joseph Smith. Christians could profit from the study of the more recent events involving Joseph Smith to gain insight into the earlier Christian experience.

The Apostle Paul asked questions of critical importance to Christians immediately after his declaration that says this: "*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Romans 10:13) Immediately following that he poses this series of questions. He does that in order to demonstrate to the satisfaction of anyone who comes across this material that they can have confidence in him, in what he's saying, and in what source he draws his information and his inspiration from. The overwhelming majority of Protestant Christians believe and rely on his statement: Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But what of the critically important questions he then asks: "*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*" (Romans 10:14,15)

There's a difference between belief and unbelief. Belief means that you have a body of correct information from which to draw in reaching your conviction concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Unbelief simply means that you're drawing upon information that is either incomplete, inaccurate, or outright false.

With those questions in mind - How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? Who can send? In the Apostle Paul's series of declarations, *WHO?* Who can send? How can they be sent? There were no theological seminaries. There were no doctorates of theology. There was no doctorate of divinity.

The Catholics who believe and rely on Paul's questions to justify their claims. They claim to have an unbroken line of authority traceable to Peter to whom the keys of the

kingdom were given by Christ. If you are a Protestant do the keys of the kingdom matter? If you are a Catholic, what are the keys of the kingdom given Peter, and how confident are you that those can be transferred at all, since Peter got them from Christ directly? And if they can be transferred how confident are you that they have survived intact until today?

Protestants and Catholics must both face the question of whether salvation can be obtained apart from the Roman Catholic Church, but Paul asserts a different point and asks a different question. Catholics and Protestants alike recognize Paul's authority and right to claim that he represented Christ. Paul's conversion, however, was not based on Peter. It was not based on a preacher who was sent to him. It was not dependent upon the keys of the kingdom given to Peter. Paul asserted he was an apostle but his calling did not come because of a transfer of authority to him by Peter. He was called by God. He begins the first few words of his epistle to the Galatians: "*Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)*" (Galatians 1:1)

Was Paul therefore sent? By *whom* was he sent? You think it obvious no doubt, but the principle is critical to finding true faith in Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If Paul was an apostle because Christ sent him – not men or man – then for a preacher to be sent to preach the truth the same should be required today as then. If Christ does not require the same then Christ has changed and we know that cannot be true, for He is the same forever. If, therefore, a preacher must be sent then Christ must do the sending. Then the only preacher you should heed must be one who declares plainly that he has been sent by God. That was the claim of Joseph Smith. It was a claim that ultimately cost his life. It was a claim that, given the hardship through which he passed, and the perils that he faced, and the betrayals that happened, and the lies that have been told by people who have profited by using his name, it is a claim that I believe and I accept.

Another example of one who was sent by God is John the Baptist who is clearly identified in these words: "*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*" (John 1:6) Christ's apostles likewise were sent by Him, according to the New Testament. Christ said, "*I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go forth bringing forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*" (John 15:16) Everyone sent by Christ to preach in the New Testament were given their message from Him. They were sent by Him. Joseph Smith declared he was likewise sent. I would invite you to investigate his claim and see whether it persuades you.

Today - and I say these words advisedly, and I want you to take them seriously - Today all Christian churches have become corrupt. They love money more and acquiring financial security and church buildings more than caring for the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. The institutions claiming to be the church of God are all polluted by the cares of the world. I want you to understand what I mean by that. During the apostolic era there was no such thing as a Christian church building. Christians met in

homes. They did not collect and compensate ministers. They gathered money and they used it to help the poor and the needy among them.

As soon as you get a church building, I regret to inform you you'll have to hire a lawyer. In what name are you going to take title to your building? How are you going to hide title or hold title and deal with succession? What form will the organization take? Do you intend to qualify for tax deductibility? If so, do you intend to file as a charitable institution, as an eleemosynary institution, as an educational institution? Those are all words that you find in 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code. And what do you do if you want to hire and fire a minister, and you want to dispossess the one you fired and put into possession the successor in the building, what rights and who is on the board, and who possesses the right to deal with that? As soon as you own property the cares of this world invade. It's unavoidable.

If you meet in homes as the early Christians did, and if you gather your tithing - one tenth of your surplus after you have taken care of all your responsibilities, all your needs, whatever's left over - one tenth of that is your tithe. After you gather your tithe then you ought to look at your brothers and your sisters who are there in your meeting, and you ought to help those who have needs, who have health needs, who have education needs, who have transportation needs, who have food needs, who have children that need care. Christians should take care of the poor among them, and no one should be looking at the flock and saying, *I need your money to support myself*. Christian charities should be used to take care of the poor among you and not to engage in acquiring the cares of this world. This is why all Christian churches have become corrupt. They love money and acquiring financial security and church buildings more than caring for the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

I speak as part of a very tiny movement but we are worldwide. We are a very small group of people scattered from Japan to Europe, scattered from Australia to Canada, as a small group of people but we are trying to practice authentic Christianity in the form that it was originally intended to be practiced: Meeting in homes. I met earlier today with a group of people from this local area, and there are a number in this local area who believe as I do. We celebrated the sacrament as a group together and we reaffirmed one another in our faith. Jesus Christ taught many principals, truths, precepts, and commandments but He only taught one doctrine. I'm going to read you Christ's doctrine:

"Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for

he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them." –3 Nephi 11:31-40

We believe and practice this doctrine of Christ. We practice baptism by immersion in living waters— meaning lakes, rivers, streams, and oceans, where there is life. We prefer living waters for a living ordinance. We have authority from God to perform baptism and other ordinances, such as the sacrament, but we are not jealous with our authority and are willing to share it with any man who is willing to accept and follow the doctrine of Christ.

As to the commandment to be baptized, even Jesus Christ went to be baptized by John *"to fulfil all righteousness."* (Matthew 3:15) *"And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, even by water."* (2 Nephi 31:5)

If any of you want to be baptized you can request it through our website and someone local will respond. Baptism is an ordinance between you and Christ and does not mean you are joining a formal institution, because we have no institution.

We are all equal believers accountable to God. We do try to fellowship with one another and you would be welcome to fellowship with the few believers in this area. We own no buildings; like the early Christians we meet in homes. We ask for tithes, or 10% of what you have left over after you've taken care of all your needs, but anything collected is then used to help anyone in the fellowship meet their needs. We hope for there to be no poor among us because we use donations to help one another.

Our numbers are small. There are a few here locally nearby you but we are worldwide. At the moment we are composed mostly of former Mormons, and I'm really getting tired of talking to former Mormons. I would really like to talk to Baptists, and to Lutherans, and a Methodist – particularly if they've made Wickliffe's material a matter of study –you would add so much to a discussion among fellowship groups. Mormons know a lot, but Christians know a lot about the Bible. Would love to see a cross-fertilization of the Christian ideal in which we can bring to you some things that we have learned about the Christian faith and in turn hear from you what you have to share in fellowships. We want

other Christians to fellowship with us. The only thing we have to offer is Christian worship to share.

We accept the *Book of Mormon* but not as a book that belongs to the Mormon church or the Mormon hierarchy. We view it as a testimony of Jesus Christ. I'd invite you to read it. You don't need to go buy a copy from a Mormon. You don't need to go get one from one of us. You can go to Barnes and Noble. The copyright has expired. It is now one of the Penguin Classics. If you feel a little self conscious about buying a Penguin Classic *Book of Mormon* then get the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *War and Peace* and the *Book of Mormon* and you'll look like some eclectic reader. And you needn't face the shame, the awful shame of buying a *Book of Mormon*. Or, you can get it on Amazon, you can do that privately.

I believe if you read the *Book of Mormon* and you give it a fair shot, not with the Mormon missionary coming back every few days on your door with their name tag and pressuring you, rooting for you to, "Come aboard, come aboard! We really want you within our clutches." Dispassionately, at your leisure, contemplating it, mulling it over.

The *Book of Mormon* confirms that Christ was resurrected. It confirms that He had other sheep that He mentions in the Gospel of John, to whom He said He intended to go minister. It confirms that there were scattered bodies of believers throughout the world. It confirms that Jesus Christ is the same Lord yesterday, today, and forever. It confirms that Jesus Christ is a keeper of covenants. If Christ cared enough to speak to others in times past does He not care enough likewise to speak to us? Can He not speak in our day?

Let me read you a few lines presented as part of the very closing of the *Book of Mormon*:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men? For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens. And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men... And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ... And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come

unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved.

And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and God will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true has the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made." –Moroni 7:27-38

We believe we are approaching a moment in which the Lord is about to return. Read that chapter, Matthew 24. All of the signs that He speaks of will occur in one single generation. If you've not noticed, the signs have begun to appear. It means you are living within a generation in which a great deal is to occur. As it was in the days of Noah so is it about to be. That means dreadful things are coming on the one hand, and it means prophets are going to be among us again, people with messages that come from the Lord.

I'm not here on my own volition. I've not done anything that I've done throughout the last number of years on my own volition. I do what I do, I preach what I preach, I testify to what I testify to, because, like Paul, I've been sent.

I would rather understate than overstate the case but let me end by telling you Christ lives. He died and He was resurrected. I know this to be true because, like Paul, I have seen Him. I don't tell you that to make this seem sensational. I tell you that to give you cause to believe in Him. He is real.

Encountering Him as a resurrected being changed the course of history. It turned cowards into courageous, willing, and enthusiastic witnesses who faced down the Roman empire to their death. They died willingly. They died as evidence of the truth that they were testifying to. That kind of faith needs to return again to the earth. That kind of faith is possible again in our day.

Christianity has taken so many turns and so many different forms from the death of the apostles until now. But however you may regard yourself to be a Christian, what every one of us needs, is for heaven itself to reaffirm to us what it is that heaven would like us, as Christians, to be and to do.

I mention that Christ gave many commandments, precepts, teachings. He also gave a law. His law can be found in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. That is how you and I should practice our Christianity.

Thank you for coming this evening. Thank you for listening. This has been streamed live over the internet. It will be available in an improved form in which graphics are going to be inserted in a couple or three weeks.

I'm going to be speaking in Dallas, Texas and then in Atlanta. All three talks will be different from one another. They are all intended to give you reason to believe in Christ, and at all three of them I'm going to invite people to go to the website. Some people who are participants in local fellowships are here. But go to the website and if you would like to be baptized, if you would like to attend a fellowship, if you would like to meet some of these people that are essentially believers in Christ trying to practice an original and more authentic version of Christianity, and to bear with one another's burdens, and to help one another in Christian charity in an attempt that there be no poor among us, then come forward you will find us very welcoming. You'll find us very welcoming. Although there are a number of believers in your area, we remain few. But we are undaunted by that and we intend to address as many as will hear us, including this evening, by doing so on the Internet so that anyone worldwide who may have an interest can tune in.

Thank you all very much for attending this evening. Let me end in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2017.10.19 Christian Talk 2

October 19, 2017

J. Erik Jonsson Central Library, Dallas, Texas

No matter how interesting or uninteresting proves to be this evening we have to vacate this place in its entirety by eight o'clock. And so we'll end at 7:30 sharply, even mid-sentence, perhaps.

I hope to strengthen your belief in Christ this evening and to increase your confidence in Him as who and what He really is. First verse of the Bible reads: *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1). When it was created it was God's. Everything belonged to Him. Twenty-six verses later it says: *"...God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over..."* (Genesis 1:26) the creation. God, who owned the earth, gave dominion over His property to man, to the man, Adam, and the woman, Eve.

John tells us who it was that did the creating and who it was that gave man dominion over the earth; the Word, who was with God. John describes, quote: *"All things were made by him;"* (John 1:3). That's in John 1:3. Christ is the light and the life of man. That's the next verse. Luke explains in the book of Acts: *"...he [meaning God] be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being;"* (Acts 17:27-28).

Another prophet explained our relationship to Christ in these words: *"...God [who] has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and... he [who] has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another... Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but [behold] it belongs to him who created you."* (Mosiah 2:20, 21, 25).

We borrow from Christ the power to live and move. Christ is sustaining our lives from moment to moment. Because of this, Christ knows our every deed, even our every thought, because we use His power to have our being. Christ can therefore understand us perfectly. And at the end of all of this, Christ can therefore judge us perfectly, because it's not just what you do, it's why you did it, and he knows that too, about every one of us.

Do not imagine Christ as a being who is distant from you, that's incorrect. You should envision Him as someone who is intimate with you.

I'm glad to return to Texas. I spent nearly two years here while I was in the military. My oldest daughter was born here in Texas. And was, it was mentioned a moment ago that I graduated; I got a Bachelor's of Business Administration from McMurry University in Abilene. In Abilene there were three colleges at the time and every one of them is

supported or sponsored by a religious institution. The one that I attended was sponsored by the Methodist church.

I was raised by a Baptist mother. At age 19 I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; it's commonly called the Mormon Church. After 40 years to the day from the day I was baptized, I was excommunicated from the LDS Church because I wrote candidly about Mormon history and disagreed with the institution's questionable retelling of its history.

One of the things about the Bible is the characters about whom we read are not spared. When they mess things up, committing adultery and murder as did King David, we know about it. When errors are made and Peter denies the Lord three times before the cock crowed twice, we know about it. That's not true about Mormon history. What you get there is very sanitized and somewhat misleading, and in some places horribly so.

If you, as a Christian, were to read what I wrote of Mormon history you would think I was a defender of the LDS Church, but because I questioned the validity of their authority claims and exposed some of their un-Christian and deplorable acts that provoked the judgements of God against them, the institution considered me an apostate. They viewed my account of history as threatening to them.

Let me be clear: I have faith in Christ and know our salvation is found only in Him. I also believe Joseph Smith was an authentic Christian and inspired advocate with a message from God. I do not believe the LDS Church has been faithful to the message God spoke through Joseph Smith, nor has the LDS Church told an honest account of their many failures to follow God. You do not need to join any institution, and certainly do not need to become LDS, to respect Joseph Smith or find inspiration in the Book of Mormon. I think the LDS Church is in a fallen state and growing darker year by year. But I'm not here to talk of LDS history. I mention this only so you can understand and know what my views are. We're here to reflect on Christian history and to honor the Protestant Reformation.

In 1517, a Catholicism was a religious, economic, land and military monopoly in Europe. Market control leads to laziness, indifference to the needs of the public, and excesses. Catholicism became abusive. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York today, commented on how the Catholic Church cannot deny it had become corrupt. Dolan said Martin Luther was responsible for the "striking of a match, creating a bonfire, the flames of which are still burning."

Martin Luther was not the first open critic of Catholic abuses but he succeeded where other earlier critics were burned at the stake. Luther's timing was aided by the Gutenberg printing press, making it possible for Martin Luther's 95 Theses to be turned into a pamphlet that turned out to be history's first best seller. But after a millennium-and-a-half of Catholic hegemony it was not possible for Martin Luther or the other Protestant Reformation fathers to envision Christianity as something that could exist apart from an institution.

For a millennium-and-a-half the Christian church had a hierarchy, professional clergy, cathedrals, icons, pageantry, and provided social structure. Anything like Christianity's original independently functioning groups, meeting in homes and using donated resources as charity for their poor, was long forgotten. The Reformation did not attempt to restore an original Christianity. The Reformers were victims of a structure that confined even their imagination. Their aim was much lower. It sought only to reform an admittedly corrupt institution into something marginally better. The rebellion of Martin Luther led to the establishment of a new Christian institution that mimicked its mother. The Lutheran church bears striking similarities to its Catholic mother. To a casual observer of a Sunday service in both of these churches they can seem identical. The differences are not particularly cosmetic but are based on Lutheran rejection of the pope's authority.

There are three great Lutheran principals: First, grace alone; second, faith alone; third, scriptures alone. These deprive the Catholic pope of religious significance and the Catholic rites of any claim to be the exclusive way to obtain salvation. But none of these were part of original Christianity.

As to grace alone, in original Christianity baptism is required for salvation. Christ's simple command to "follow me" was given repeatedly; three times it's recorded in Matthew, twice it's recorded in Mark, once in Luke, and twice in John. Christ showed the way and as part of that He was baptized to—according to His own mouth—"*...fulfil all righteousness.*" (Matthew 3:15). It was only after Christ was baptized that the Father commended Jesus and said He was well pleased.

Christ also had His disciples baptize his followers; you can read about that in John chapter four. Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and converted Him by that contact. Following his conversion, Saul was healed of blindness, renamed Paul, and immediately baptized. Paul tied baptism to resurrection in Romans chapter six. He declared that to be baptized is to put on Christ, in Galatians three. There is only one faith and it is in only the one Lord whom we worship and it requires one baptism to be included in the body of believers, according to Ephesians [4]. Peter explained that baptism saves us, in First Peter chapter three.

Christians who follow Christ will all be baptized. If you've not been baptized, or would like to be baptized again, there are those who have authority to administer the ordinance, who will travel to you, or there are some locally who are available to perform the ordinance. The ordinance is free. The service is provided without any charge or expectation of any gift or donation. If you're interested you can make a request on the website that's identified in things that are around here, christianreformation500years.info.

Christ taught only one doctrine. He taught a new law. He taught principles, precepts, parables, teachings and commandments, but he only taught one doctrine. This is the doctrine of Christ:

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

32 And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given [unto] me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

33 And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

34 And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

36 And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

(3 Nephi 11:31-40)

Accordingly, original Christianity believed and taught that baptism was essential to salvation, not merely grace. As to faith alone, the original Christians not only believed in baptism but they also believed they could progress in knowledge, obedience, and virtue. Paul denounced the idea that Christians could sin and follow God: *"...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Romans 6:1-2). Paul envisioned the Christian as becoming a new creation through baptism after which we walk in Christ's path with sin destroyed: *"...we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the*

dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4). It's in Romans chapter six.

Peter taught that Christians would progress in godliness until the Christian has his or her calling and election made sure: *"...that by these things ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. [And] beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall ~~be~~ neither [be] barren nor unfruitful **in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."* (2 Peter 1:4-10, emphasis added)

As to scripture alone, Luther translated the Bible from a second language that was not commonly spoken—that is, Latin—into the common language of Germany, in order for the common man to read it. If scripture alone defined faith, given the illiteracy that had gone on for a millennium-and-a-half before Martin Luther's day, and given the fact that even the literate would've had to been bilingual, (whatever country or language they spoke, Latin had become a dead language; they would have to be able to read and understand a dead language) then, by definition, if that's one of the keys to defining Christianity, Martin Luther just defined the overwhelming majority—practically all of the Christian world—was incapable of salvation because scripture alone was unavailable to them as one of the required premises of Christianity.

There was no New Testament during the era of original Christianity. The idea of compiling a New Testament originated with a second century heretic who was excommunicated for apostasy. The only scriptures used or cited during the time of original Christianity was the Old Testament, containing none of the teachings of Christ, none of the letters of Paul, Peter, James, or Jude, and none of the four Gospels. It took until the fourth century for a New Testament canon to be settled. By that time many of the writings had been altered. Further, neither Christ nor his apostles handed out a New Testament. They testified of what they knew to be true and administered baptism as a sign of faith and repentance.

Despite this, Martin Luther was entirely correct in condemning Catholicism for its errors and excesses. Following Luther's example, other Protestant churches reformed Christianity in marginal ways. But reconsidering institutional Christianity, in attempting to return to its original form, was not even attempted in the Protestant Reformation. Therefore, Protestantism is only a marginal improvement from its corrupt mother church. It has never been, nor attempted to become, original Christianity.

A return to original Christianity would require a restoration. That did not begin until God spoke to Joseph Smith in 1820, but Joseph's followers also wanted an institution and now have one of the most wealthy and self-interested institutions claiming to be a

church. They are undertaking approximately a trillion dollar real estate development as part of the Church's enterprise, in the state of Florida, constructing everything that it will be necessary, from schools and streets to fire stations and homes, to house over half a million people just outside of Disney World, on what used to be 133,000 acre cattle ranch. That church owns about 3% of the state of Florida.

Unlike the institutional Christianity of the 1500s, early Christians were called the *ecclesia* meaning "a congregation or an assembly". But early Christians were not institutional and certainly not hierarchical. The first century of Christianity had no formal organization and no central control. Christians met informally in small groups and worshiped together in homes or public places. In this earliest form, small groups led by both men and women, who were called *deaconisse*, a word that is translated into English as either "deacon" or "deaconess"; that Greek word means, "servant". It was in these home meetings where original Christians worshiped and learned of Christ and Christianity.

Original Christians had no professional clergy. They operated in a way akin to a method described in the Book of Mormon: *"And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted..."* (Alma 1:26-27). This is how I believe Christianity ought to be practiced today, without a professional clergy, diverting tithes and offerings that ought to be used to help the poor, needy, sick, and afflicted. We need to, and can return, to those early days of Christianity.

Justin Martyr lived from 110-165 A.D., and he wrote in the "sub-apostolic" age. His writings give us a glimpse into how Christianity functioned in its earliest days. In his *First Apology* he describes Christian worship. They met in homes, having no church buildings.

Before being considered a Christian, a candidate was baptized "in the name of God, the Father and the Lord of the universe, and our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit." (*First Apology*, Chapter LXI-Christian Baptism.)

Meetings began with a prayer and "saluting one another with a kiss." Then sacrament was prepared and administered using bread a "cup of wine mixed with water" [and bread] which is blessed by "giving praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands." (*Id.*, Chapter LXV-Administration of the Sacraments.)

The early Christians recognized there was an obligation for "the wealthy among us [to] help the needy." Therefore, after reading scripture and "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets" donations were collected. (*Id.*, Chapter LXVII-*Weekly Worship of the Christians.*) Then the donations were distributed to help those who were poor or needy among that group of Christians.

These simple observances were resilient enough to preserve Christianity after the death of the apostles and before any great hierarchical magisterium arose. It was the power of baptism, the sacrament, scripture study and financial aid among believers that gave Christianity its power. But it was diffused, and therefore incapable of destruction. When Justin Martyr was slain, the scattered Christians continued unaffected. It was just like when Peter and Paul were slain, and before them, James was killed. The power of Christianity reckoned from the vitality of its original roots. These roots were in Christ, His message, His teachings, which were employed to relieve one another by the alms shared from rich to poor.

When a centralized hierarchy took control over Christianity, the money that was used for the poor, the widows and orphans, was diverted to build churches, cathedrals, basilicas and palaces. Ultimately, the wealth generated by the generosity of Christian believers became the tool used by the hierarchy to buy up armies, kings, lands and treasures which were used to rule and reign as a cruel master over a subjugated population made miserable by the abuse heaped on them from Rome.

Even after the Protestant Reformation, Christianity continued to be ruled by hierarchies. Cathedrals and church buildings consumed and consume resources that are to be used to help the poor. Christ built no building, although He accepted the temple in Jerusalem as His Father's house. Peter built no church building, nor Paul, nor James, nor John. Christianity in the hands of the Lord and His apostles needed no brick and mortar for its foundation. It was built on the hearts of believers, brought together by the charity and assistance shared between them.

Today Christianity is not benefitted, but weakened, by hierarchies, cathedrals, edifices and basilicas housing opulence, wealth and art. Although the prophecies foretell of a temple to God to be built in Zion, and another to be built in Jerusalem, there are no other structures foretold to be built by Christians or latter-day Israel. How much stronger would Christianity be today if wealth were reserved for the poor, and hierarchies were stripped of their wealth?

We would not be undervaluing the gospel and overvaluing the churches if all donations went to aid the poor and none went to support the institutions.

We have a hard time even imagining the earliest generation of Christians. We also have a tendency to use what we are familiar with as our guide and standard in trying to understand early Christianity. It affects even how we read our scriptures. I'd like you to try to abandon the picture that you have in your head and imagine a new picture in its place.

Early Christians were very diverse. There was no one in charge and no attempt to standardize Christianity. These earliest believers were divided into the following kinds of Christians:

Pauline Christians: These believers were grounded in a tradition founded by the apostle Paul. They claimed to follow the Old Testament and Paul's instructions. They were located in the areas Paul served as a missionary. Paul appointed teachers who were charged with guarding the doctrine from being changed.

Mathayan Christians: Followers of Matthew centered in Antioch, who attempted to form a compromise between Jewish and non-Jewish, or Gentile, Christians. It was in Antioch that the conflicts in Jewish Christianity were worked out. You read of Mathayan Christianity in the Book of Acts where respect and loyalty to the Jewish temple at Jerusalem is acknowledged but Gentile converts were welcomed.

Johannine Christians: These are followers of John. These believers tried to keep an original focus on the individual's relationship with Christ alive. They emphasized the indwelling of Christ's spirit in each Christian. They taught and believed in the pre-earth existence of man's spirits. Before the creation Christ was the great high priest of heaven who would redeem the creation by his sacrifice. The strength of their teaching was focusing on the individuals' relationship with Christ and no organization could replace that individual relationship.

The idea of the love of Christ was preserved in Johannine Christianity. Spirit, knowledge, and ritual were designed to preserve knowledge of Christ. Although lost to western Christianity, John taught that man would become divinitized, or ascend in stages of progression, **to become just like God**. His teachings have been lost but two passages in the New Testament writings of John preserve that teaching still. First John three beginning at verse one: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it did [doth] not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope . . .purifieth himself, even as he is pure."* (1 John 3:1-3, emphasis added)

And then in Revelation chapter three, beginning in verse 20, it is Christ who is speaking: *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. **To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with***

my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Revelation 3:20-22, emphasis added)

Petrine Christians: These were followers of a tradition that could be traced to Peter. These Christians emphasized authority and viewed their leaders as shepherds over exiles from heaven. It was the Petrine tradition that led to hierarchical control as a central feature of the later kind of Christianity that survived. Peter's original teachings evolved and changed and Peter can't be held accountable for what occurred in a corrupted system. As it evolved, sheep—that is believers—followed bishops, who were the successors to the apostles. These bishops were believed to hold a commission to lead the flock.

There was also Gnosticism centered in Egypt. They claimed to follow John. They believed Christ and John taught hidden knowledge and salvation was related to understanding these mysteries of God. There was also Syriac Christianity, and yet another form of Christianity established through Thomas's teaching in India and Asia.

Almost all knowledge of the earliest forms of Christian practices have been erased by the destruction of records. John's teaching of a pre-earth existence for the spirit of Christ and for all mankind did not suddenly disappear. It lingered for centuries.

Origen, an early Christian, claimed the original teachings of Christ included that Christ came into this world in possession of knowledge He held from before the creation of this world. Jesus had been so faithful to the *Logos*, or "word of the Father", that He was entitled to that as His name. He exemplified the *word of the Father*. You wanna know what the Father said? "Look to Christ," because everything Christ did was an example of that *word of the Father*. Other spirits who were less faithful, and some of whom fell away altogether, are involved also with this world.

Joseph Smith also testified that we all existed as spirits living before the creation of this world, and I believe this is a teaching. Each human soul is at a different point of progression and therefore has different abilities to perceive the truth here. Every person in the world has a distinct spiritual past that began long before the creation of this world. Salvation consists of doing what is necessary in this world to advance individual spirit progression. The greatest way to progress is to follow Christ.

Joseph Smith, like the apostle John, believed and taught that all of us existed as spirits before the creation of the world. We are spirit beings having an earthly experience. There's a veil of forgetfulness because as physical beings our thoughts are processed through a physical biomechanical connection limiting our pre-earth memory. This limit is an important part of God's plan. If we had a perfect memory of our pre-earth existence we would not be required to develop faith in Christ, but our spirits know God, and in our quiet moments we all sense our immortality. We are here to be tested and the test is now underway.

Early Christians were very diverse but they agreed on two things: Christ's doctrine, which I read to you a moment ago, and Christ's law. The law of Christ is found in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapters five, six and seven. Once Christians have these two essential teachings in common you can have differences on other issues just like the early Christians.

Christ's apostle witnesses, like all witnesses, testified from their own background and experience. In the courtroom when you have witnesses testifying to some event that took place, you can have a group of people at the same place, observing the same event, and they will testify under oath, swearing to tell the truth under penalty of perjury—they go to jail if they lie—and their stories will be markedly different from one another. That's because in this world our orientations, our understanding and our perceptions, differ depending upon the spot we stood at, at the moment we witness something.

I assume all of you think you know the difference between left and right. I was in a hospital going to visit a fellow who had had open heart surgery about a week ago, and at the information desk I'm facing her and she's facing me. She says to me, "You go down the hall to the right..." Okay, that's your perception. Mine is: I must go down the hall to the left. It is the opposite of what she's saying but she's giving me the directions from the vantage point she occupies.

From home plate, right field is to the batter's right. But if you're in right field you're playing to the extreme left (and I hope the Astros succeed. No god-fearing Christian would root for the New York Yankees to make it to the World Series. [audience laughter] And I don't know, is that game underway? Do we have a score?)

Because original Christianity was peacefully diverse the differences found in the earliest forms are somewhat preserved in our New Testament. I've got a question from the website. I'm reading you the question that came in: Is it possible Paul and Jesus taught two different gospel messages? There is debate such is the case, or is it Paul expressed the message differently than Jesus did? In other words, did Jesus elaborate more content and less terminology, justification, reconciliation, grace, et cetera, and Paul did the opposite?

It seems Christ, Peter, James, John's messages were sublime and easy to understand, whereas Paul's letters are difficult to understand and require fitting the pieces together. So let's take a look at those two witnesses.

Paul was a strict pharisee who followed the law. Paul persecuted Jesus' followers, even assisting when Stephen was killed for his testimony of Christ. He had a great many things to regret. Everything in his life before his conversion to Christ gave him a context for understanding Christ and Christ's message. Paul wanted grace, reconciliation, and justification because he needed these to have hope.

Peter was a fisherman but he walked alongside Christ for years. He saw Christ heal the sick, heard Him bless the children, saw Him walk on water. He knew that storms were

quieted by Christ's word. He saw the dead rise, and stood on the Mount of Transfiguration when the Father declared Christ was His Son.

Peter was as qualified a witness as Paul to testify Christ was the promised Messiah but we cannot expect two witnesses with such different experiences and from such different backgrounds as Peter's and Paul's to provide us identical testimonies of Christ. Both Paul and Peter understood and explained Christianity according to their background experiences, training, and culture. So long as they agreed on Christ's doctrine and accepted Christ's law that was enough. They were both Christian and provided us with truth.

As the earliest forms of Christianity passed through two generations, mutual respect and acknowledgement of others' Christianity was replaced by competition and conflict. As they competed with one another the original Christianity passed away.

There are many ironies in Christian history. Most of them are embarrassing and therefore not widely mentioned. In that regard, Christian history and Mormon history share this tendency for selective recollection. Christianity changed over the first two centuries. Change of that kind was a signal that the original had passed away. Since God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, a change to His religion suggests that God was no longer in charge. It was during this time that an *apostasía*, a Greek word from which we get the word, "apostasy" or rebellion, took place and the foundation of Christian belief splintered.

Apostasy implies a sudden event and a deliberate rebellion. The original followers of the way taught by Christ gave way to those who wanted to have both a form of Christianity and worldly popularity. Christianity was intended to change the world but the world changed Christianity. Christian converts of this latter time were unacquainted with the original beliefs. As groups struggled for control, instead of Christian tolerance, less and less of the apostles' original teachings were retained. The debates even resulted in changing the scriptures to support one interpretation over another. Bart Ehrman has tracked some of the changes made to what would become the New Testament texts in his book titled, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. (Interesting title, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.)

Even the scriptures we use today were compromised during the second and third century Christian struggles—almost following an identical pattern, which is one of the reasons why I've suggested the study of Mormonism and the history of Mormonism to Christians. Mormons have changed their scriptures and they've only been around 180 years. So within a 180-year window you can see a pattern in what has gone on in Mormonism that mirrors the research that Bart Ehrman has done in showing the orthodox corruption of scripture.

When Christ was originally baptized the voice that was heard from heaven did not say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The original text says, "Thou art

my Son; this day have I begotten thee." (Psalm 2:7) which is a quote from Psalms two seven, Psalms two chapter [verse] seven.

During the second and third century debates, one of the arguments that was put forth was that Christ was just a man and not the Son of God, and he became the Son of God at His baptism when God accepted Him. Now, none of us believe that. We believe He is the Son of God; we've got the account in Matthew and we've got the account in Luke. We know that He was born and the angel Gabriel announced to Mary; we know this story and we know His Father. But it was being debated during the second and third century and that verse tended to support a doctrine that was defeated as proto-orthodoxy converted into orthodoxy. They were winning the debate and they changed the verse. However, when Paul wrote his epistle to the Hebrews he quotes Psalms two seven, and Paul wrote more. They just didn't get around to changing that one. (Shoot, the editors missed one!)

Over time there emerged one interpretation or faction of Christianity that became identified. It was originally proto-orthodox, and then it became orthodox as it won over time, and that became the Roman Catholic religion. "Catholic" means "universal", means "all". Original Christianity did not have orthodoxy or heresy, these are terms that were adopted once the proto-orthodox advocates sensed victory. They branded their view as orthodox and everything else as heretical. Once heresy was identifiable it was suppressible, and proto-orthodoxy could persecute and suppress their competition with the confidence of sensing their complete coming victory. Those who disagreed or opposed could be excommunicated for heresy, and once they gained the confidence to do so, killed; and they were killed, and their version of the scriptures burned.

These proto-orthodox Christians decided to improve the appeal of Christianity by assuring the uneducated that there was no need to learn about Christ or His actual teaching. Men could be saved in ignorance so long as they accepted the sacraments or ordinances offered by those who had authority. Christ was displaced and faith was replaced by allegiance to an institution. This made for lazy believers who accepted a convenient religion. Once there was a universal—or catholic—church, it owned the religion. As property of the institution the religion was used to gain economic power, wealth, control society, and suppress anything considered a threat to its power. Even kings were subordinate to the Pontiff in Rome.

One of the most hotly debated topics by Christians in the second and third centuries was the nature of God. That threatened open warfare in the Roman Empire once Constantine adopted Christianity as the religion of the state for the Roman Empire. He had no clue there was that much debate over the nature of God. But the views were not going to be surrendered easily.

The gospel accounts, letters of the apostles, and common sense describe Jesus Christ as a mortal man. Jesus was carried by a pregnant woman, born after a normal period of gestation, grew through childhood into adulthood, walked, talked, ate, slept, tired, rested, suffered, bled, and died. Every action he took was human. His father, a separate

being, spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism and again on the Mount of Transfiguration, where Christ's father spoke from out of a bright cloud veiling His personage from view. Nothing in the New Testament makes Christ and His father the same personage. I emphasize that: *Nothing in the New Testament makes Christ and His father the same personage.* Even His declaration that He and the Father are one is explained in terms that clarify they are two distinct persons:

"...Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;" (John 17:11, 16-18, 20-23).

The idea that the Father and the Son were only one in the same way mankind becomes one, or unified by agreement and purpose, was unacceptable to many of the third and fourth century Christians. The idea was regarded as polytheistic, and a tradition of monotheism carried forward from Judaism into Christianity made this unacceptable. The earliest Christians thought nothing was improper with the Father and Son being separate and distinct.

The Old Testament begins with plural gods. I read this verse a moment ago: *"...Let **us** make man in **our** image..."* (Genesis 1:26). The "us" and "our" is a word, *Elohim*, which is the plural form of the word, "El", *El* being "God", *Elohim* being "Gods". Indeed, Paul contemplated a structure of heaven that included many lords and many gods: *"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by [in] him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

One of the disputes that was wrongly decided at the counsel of Nicea, called by King Constantine to resolve Christian disputes, was the nature of God. Was the Godhead as taught by Eusebius, *homiosios*, meaning, "of a similar substance," or was God, as taught by Athanasius, instead *homoosios*, meaning, "the same identical substance" as God the Father. The counsel at Nicea did not claim to have revelation or inspiration to answer this question. They only voted and adopted Athanasius' definition of God giving birth to the Trinity, an orthodox teaching that has become the litmus test used ever since for determining true Christianity from heresy.

I am going to pause and make an aside. Original Christianity wouldn't care. If you accepted the doctrine of Christ and the law of Christ and you were baptized, you could believe in either one of these, and Paul would suggest that with time and with

discussion and with fellowship, we would eventually come into the unity of faith. But the unity of faith may be a distant goal, particularly among today's Christians.

They voted. The Trinity became the litmus test for heresy, and I believe they got it wrong at Nicea and had been wrong ever since, because Christ taught in John 17:3; *"And this is life eternal, that they might [first] know thee the only true God, and [second] Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* Christ's definition of eternal life separates the Father from the Son and requires us to know both.

A new dispensation of the gospel began with Joseph Smith and continues today. There are now more revelations and more scripture given to us by Christ. At this moment the work of laying out and formatting all of the scriptures: Old Testaments—and the volume has the plural, Testaments, because it includes covenants made with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, but it's what you know as the Old Testament; New Testaments—again plural, because it was given first to the Jews and then taken to the Gentiles. It's a multiple covenant-making opportunity. And then a third volume called, Teachings and Commandments; are being prepared for publication at present.

The Book of Mormon foretold how the Gentiles would react to new scripture:

"...many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, [and] there cannot be any more Bible.

"Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible.

"...[And] because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because [that] ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written." (2 Nephi 29:3, 6, 9-10).

The new edition of scriptures will soon be available on Amazon in an inexpensive paperback version, and a higher cost, leather-bound onionskin print version should be available by Christmas this year. They confirm that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The purpose of the new dispensation is to make it possible again for mankind to know both God the Father and His Son.

There was a remarkable event that occurred during the last two weeks of Christ's life. And I, I wanna read [to] you and then talk about that.

"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, ~~that~~ [and] thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, and follow me. [And] when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

"Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and

shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." (Luke 18:18-24, 31-34)

That incident occurred when Christ changed the trajectory of His ministry and determined to go up to Jerusalem to be killed, and He knew that's what He was doing. And He invited the young man "dispose of your property, give it to the poor, and come and follow me". In the scriptures Luke calls this fellow "a certain ruler". Matthew calls him "the young man". Mark describes him as "one who came running". John doesn't mention him at all.

What if he had done as Christ invited him to do? He'd have been with Christ during the final two weeks of his life. He would have seen Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He would have heard the crowds shout, Hosannah! He would have heard Christ denounce the scribes and pharisees as hypocrites in the temple. He would have been there for the anointing of Christ to prepare Him for His death. He would have eaten dinner and seen Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. He would have been there when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was first introduced by Christ. He would have witnessed the crucifixion. He would have seen the resurrected Lord. And perhaps most importantly, we would know His name, because he wouldn't have been able to participate in all those events and remain unnamed in scripture. Now, it's possible, had he accompanied them, that we would have another gospel, having been written by him as yet another witness of Christ's passion and resurrection. Instead, he left sorrowful because he cared for his riches.

What Christ asks of us today is no different than what Christ asked of the unnamed man who left sorrowful as he turned to head to Jerusalem. It's never convenient to follow Christ. It's never without its anxieties and its sacrifices.

There is a small group of us who believe, as we do, in an original form of Christianity. We believe in gathering tithes and donations and then using them to help people among us. We don't own any buildings and we don't anticipate ever owning a building unless God commands that that new temple in Zion be built by us, but that would be the only thing. We rent places like this from people who donate to allow the rental to take place. This is being broadcast on the internet by people who have voluntarily come here, brought the resources to do it, and are broadcasting this event right now. People who came down here to prepare the way, paid their own way and sacrificed to do it.

The only way you can have faith is through sacrifice. You can believe a lot of things but faith requires you to act on your belief and to act consistent with that belief, which is exactly what the young man did not do. The only reason why he came to Christ as an advisor, to ask of Him, "what can I do to inherit eternal life", is because he had confidence that Christ could answer the question and give him the truth. He respected Christ. He believed in Him as a messenger of eternal life. But when he heard the message, he stopped short and retained whatever belief he had but he did not develop faith, because faith is acquired in one and only one way, and that is by sacrifice. I hope you do not walk away sorrowful and fail to participate in a new dispensation underway.

We are a small assembly of believers. We worship in homes. We have no buildings. In a larger event like this we rent the facility. Everything is done and all work is done by volunteers and people that contribute. Although we're small we are worldwide. I've come

in part to invite you to participate with us in worshipping Christ and practicing His doctrine.

We have authority to baptize but we're not jealous of our authority and will share it with any man who accepts and practices Christianity as we do.

It may seem odd to you to consider Joseph Smith as an authentic Christian. It may seem odder still to hear me say that Mormonism has rejected Joseph, and Mormons were responsible for persecuting, rejecting, and ultimately killing him, particularly when today the LDS Church claims they have succeeded Joseph as God's vehicle for salvation. The LDS Church, like the Roman Catholic Church, has no inspiration to offer and therefore both rely on hollow claims to have authority. When an institution's greatest claim is in its authority they have lost Christ's message.

Joseph Smith never finished his work. He was killed when 38 years old. His last year of life showed he was headed in a very different direction than where the Mormon Church has now arrived. I would not make Joseph Smith responsible for what you see today in the LDS Church.

Christ came as the least, as a servant, kneeling to wash feet, as a teacher of righteousness. He invited, persuaded, and taught. He did not demand respect for his authority. He submitted to abuse, rejection, and ultimately to being slain. He loved mankind. Those who demand their authority be respected are anti-Christ because they oppose the core of Christ's example. We are most Christian when we are most like Christ.

I've written a book to try and help explain Joseph Smith. The title of the book is, A Man Without Doubt. I've brought 20 copies to give away. You don't need to pay for it. No one's here to take any money for it. We don't want any money from you. But if you will read the book it will acquaint you with Joseph Smith in a way that I think shows he is an authentic Christian. If you'd like a copy it's yours for free. They are on the back table and someone will show you how to get a copy.

I got some questions on the internet. There are some of you who are here and were told you can ask questions, and I wanna leave little time for that. I'm only gonna answer one of the questions that came in that hasn't already been addressed in the talk. And, it's an obvious question from an obvious source.

A Seventh-day Adventist inquired if I keep the Sabbath. So, that cuts right to the rub, doesn't it? The answer is: Yes, I keep the Sabbath. But let me explain to you why I do keep the Sabbath as I do.

In the creation God had a plan for six days of labor and one day of rest, and that one day of rest was to be continually observed, would later be memorialized in the Law of Moses. But on the day of rest Adam and Eve managed to get the boot out of the Garden of Eden, and so instead of a day of rest they were laboring. The reckoning of the week was disturbed by the fact that we lost the first one, and the calendar resulted in a days' disparity from the fall of Adam and Eve. When Christ was resurrected, He was resurrected—instead, it's called the "first day of the week"—because it was the first day of the week reckoned according to the fall of Adam. But Christ's atonement was intended to fix the fall of Adam, to put everything back right again, to repair the damage that had been done. And therefore, when Christ was resurrected, His resurrection coming, as it was, one day late, was actually just on time, and He repaired not only the damage done in the original fall, He repaired the Sabbath as well. Hence the observance of the day of

Resurrection as the day of rest, called the first day of the week instead of the seventh, because that's how time had been reckoned from the fall of Adam until the resurrection of Christ.

I observe the Sabbath as the day on which Christ was resurrected, as a symbol of his repair of the premature fall and the loss of the original day of rest, going back to the time of Adam and Eve. But yes, I keep the Sabbath. Now having said that, the original Christians would let you worship on Saturday and would let me worship on Sunday, because as long as you keep the doctrine of Christ and you accept the law of Christ we'll figure it out together over time and eventually one will persuade the other. Not perhaps by argument and debate but by the quiet example that persuades the heart that there's something more to be preferred in one than in the other.

Before asking if you have any questions, we have fourteen minutes before we have to wrap this up because we need to vacate this entire place on time, as I mentioned when we began.

Let me end by saying that I do believe in the potential for the unity of Christians coming together in one faith. I suspect that sitting here in this room, if every one of you were asked, "are you a Christian?" every one of you would respond, "yes." And I suspect if I asked you to explain what denomination you were, that probably every one but you would tell you what's wrong with your particular version of Christianity. I don't think the measure of your Christianity is determined by whether or not I want to judge, condemn, dismiss, belittle, complain about, your version. The authenticity of your Christianity is reckoned in your heart and in your relationship with God, and if that's authentic and if that's sincere, how dare anyone question that? If I think I know more than you, and I have a better view of Jesus Christ and His atonement than do you, then I ought to assume the burden of persuading you. I ought to meekly tell you why you ought to have greater faith in something else; but to demand, and to insist, and to belittle, and to complain, quite frankly that's exactly where early Christianity wound up when Christians were killing Christians because of doctrinal disputes. What kind of nonsense is that? Let's not go there. Let's accept one another as Christians, if any one of us says that they are a Christian, and then if you think you can improve their understanding, have at it, but let's not dismiss, belittle, or discard.

Do we have a microphone for people that are gonna—well, I'm assuming someone wants to ask questions. Oh, yeah. Does anyone wanna ask a question, 'cause we can always end eleven minutes early. [Muffled audience comment. I gotta question.] Yeah, you wanna hand him the microphone? The purpose of the microphone is so people that are listening on the internet can hear it.

Question #1: You spoke about a sign. That's kind of cryptic but I think you can probably recall it, when the seed of the woman was born, the line of Judah returns, and something about a new star will appear, and people will be troubled. Do I get the gist of it?

Denver: Yes, you've got the gist of it.

Question #1: Can you expound on it?

Denver: Well, the answer is I could expound but let me, let me tell you, let me give you some background about that. For those of you who don't know what he's talking about, I have, I have written up a description of a future event that's going to take place, that I was, I was inspired to write up. But like what happens very often with things that are given to people by God, God tells you what to say and limits what you say about some things for purposes that He may understand a whole lot better than do we. You can read John's book of Revelation, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or Ezekiel, and the debates about the content and the meaning of those more obscure passages are endless. And at the end of all the debate what you wind up with is more confusion than understanding.

The way in which prophecies are handed to mankind by God is in a way that allows us, when the event takes place, to say, as Isaiah explained, "God knows the end from the beginning". Nothing's going to happen that surprises God, but the description that's given is not intended to tell us beforehand where to put our money in the stock market and when to sell, and when to get out of stocks and bonds, and when to get into real estate, or when to buy gold because it's all going to crap. And the purpose is to, once an event occurs, it is to ratify God's foreknowledge. It is to confirm to us that God knew what was going to happen. Sometimes the way that God tells us that is by giving a specific date for an event, but if he gives you a specific date for an event, the description of the event will be such that you won't understand what the event is going to be until the date arrives. Alternatively, he can give you a reasonable description of the event but no date, and so sometimes you wait generations, millennia, for prophecies to be... I mean Isaiah was 725 B.C., and much of what Isaiah wrote about is happening now.

So what I wrote was what I was told to write and confined to what was intended to be conveyed. And despite what some people may think, I try to be exact, obedient, and to take no step to the left, no step to the right, no step forward unless I receive instruction from God. The only reason I'm here giving this talk is because this was something God wanted to have take place. So yes, I could tell you a lot more but what I've written is what I was told to write, and therefore when it happens you'll say, oh yeah, God knew about that beforehand and gave a pretty good description now that I see, now that I see what it involved. Anyone else got a...?

Question #2: In the talk you gave in California you referenced Matthew 24, and the signs of the last days, and that the signs have begun, and that it'll all get wrapped up within one generation. Would you be able to shine more light on the vague description of "one generation?"

Denver: Ha! See, yeah? There probably been as many Bible commentaries written on the definition of "generation" as... One, one offered definition of generation is: "while the teaching/religion/movement remains in an unaltered state". Almost invariably however, the way a new revelation from heaven works is that God will reveal Himself in a generation, and then when the prophet/prophets of that time—the mortals living, the messengers—die, what survives cannot be kept intact. It simply cannot be kept intact. You need another Peter, you need another Paul, you need another Moses, you need

another one with that standing, or it falls into immediate disrepair. So, while there are living oracles that are in communication with God, that's the best definition of the generation. But you don't, you don't add on to the work of a prophet. It, it goes downhill.

From, from the death of Moses until the coming of John the Baptist, the only interruptions you get were when these singular men, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, came upon the scene, and their work was confined to them in that spot. It's...you don't, you don't improve upon what God gives. When God gives something, it is living and it is breathing. It is, it is like a fire that has been lit and it exists until the flame goes out. But when the visions of heaven are gone because the recipient is no longer on the stage—it's what happened with the death of Joseph Smith. Now, I use his name here, and I say that I accept him as an authentic prophet.

You've got probably an image in your mind that's derived from those elders knocking on your door. And, that image I would hope to correct if you take the book and you read it. Joseph Smith was a very deep Christian thinker who confronted imprisonment because of betrayal by his own followers. He confronted the inability to convey the miraculous from himself to someone else, even though the someone else's were sincere believers. He did everything he could to try and bring them along and they failed. Instead of saying, woe is me, he backed up and attempted a project of educating them and bringing them along. And his writings are in the book, and an introduction is in the book, but time and time again he was confronted by authentic Christian dilemmas just like our Savior was. I hope it's an interesting book. They are for free if anyone wants to read it.

And we are, we are out of time so we gonna need to end. Thank you for coming. This is the second in three talks. There is a third one that will be given in Atlanta. That one, like this one, will be streamed live on the internet so if you go to the website christianreformation500years.info, you'll be able to watch the Atlanta talk when it's given. All of them are being recorded and all of them will be available to watch again afterwards. And I assume that when I hit the microphone you guys can work the volume levels to get rid of that, because they're magicians.

Thank you for coming. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

2017.10.29 The Holy Order

October 29, 2017

Sandy, Utah

Denver: Apparently we are still waiting on someone. I am talking about irrelevancies. Down in Dallas there was a bright light shining from where I was standing at the podium and it hit right on the top ledge of the podium. The microphone that I was using was black and it was aligned with the shadow underneath that bright surface so literally, the microphone was invisible from where I was standing and on occasion I would make a gesture and hit the microphone, which was really obnoxious in the room and I assume even more so online. But the recording people have the ability to take those spikes and reduce them down and make them better, but it was obnoxious. What bothered me was I would make a conscious effort to get back from the microphone, wherever it was. I literally could not see it against the black of the shadow that was behind it.

Question: How many people were there?

Denver: The only ones that really matter were Christians. There were probably a dozen of them. One of them, one lady leads a group of about 70 people whose primary ministry is helping feed the homeless. That group of about 70 people are from small Christian groups. None of the mega church people show up to help out. They are very grassroots, very humble, and very low key. I think she brought her son with her and afterwards she said she was going to have everyone of the 70 people that's in her group listen to the talk because she thought it would be good for them. There were a couple from another more organized religion, kind of an intermediate sized church. They started out fairly grim faced and oppositional and by the time it was done they were interested and they were going to do some more investigating on the website. There were three baptisms the day after. There were two ordinations, they had been ordained previously but they got their certification. There is two married couples down in the Dallas area, both of whom have children, who feel themselves really quite isolated and it was very meaningful for them to have a group descend from Boise and Utah and come spend a few days there. Lewis, who's not here with us, actually moved in with one of them for the few days before hand. He was passing out fliers. A lot of good was done, but it's only the Christians that matter. Since the attendance has not filled the venues, for Atlanta we don't care who comes. We don't care if there are members of fellowships. We don't care if they're local or traveling.

[Cross talk, audience banter, and laughter back and forth with Denver Snuffer.]

Introduction: Thank you so much for coming down. Most of our fellowship and a few others have been asked to come. This is kind of a loose meeting. I will bring some water out. Feel free to move around. There is some pop in the fridge and some water. Thanks so much. I know some of you traveled a long ways in the last 24 hours, and some shorter distances. Thank you for coming. One of the greatest faith promoting things to me; there are two things in my life that have brought me here. The rest, I struggle a lot with spirituality. I've said this before to many of you, and those in my fellowship who

know, so it's difficult for me. I challenge about everything that I see and I'm pretty critical about it all, until I kind of beat it up enough that I believe in it. The two things that I believe in the most, and why I'm here, are present in this room tonight.

I just want to let you know how much it means to me to have our fellowship and our friends here, because that is, to me, the reason why I'm here. And because I believe this man has the words of Christ. Those two things are the glue for me. The rest of it is difficult, I'll be honest, it's very difficult for me to come along. Having that here tonight is very special for Angela and I. I appreciate you being in our home. We'll turn the time over to Denver.

Denver, most of these people have been reading for over ten years, so they're well acquainted. We're up to speed on priesthood. We've reviewed most of the stuff that you've now talked about so feel free to do about whatever you can do to give us some more and widen some of those things we've kind of left on the table. We'll turn the time over to you.

Denver: I told my wife when it was time for me to stop that she should walk over and kick me. Very often the signal is I get kicked under the table, so if that happens you'll know that it's time to wrap up.

The biggest problem I can see with the whole topic of priesthood is that everyone's got a context already inside their own mind, and whatever is said about priesthood gets put into that context, so that it becomes almost impossible to make any meaningful forward momentum in understanding the big picture. There's a reason why, when the temple message began to roll out, the message began with telling the story of the Creation and Adam and Eve. We tend to divorce priesthood from the Creation and from the first man and woman, and to insert it into something as narrow and as limited as someone laying hands on someone, and then that person upon whom the hands are laid now having authority to go do something that is part of a bundle of ordinances or initiation rites, whereas priesthood, in it's truest sense, is much more comprehensive and far reaching.

What I would like, is for you to let me talk about what I'll call the Holy Order. Imagine, if you can, that you know nothing about the Holy Order, and that the Holy Order is not the priesthood as you understand it, it's something different. We're going to try and get our hands around that tonight as a new, and as a distinct, and as a more broad-based concept than something that is called and is familiar to you, with the term priesthood. Some of the quotes that I'm going to read to you from Joseph are going to use the word, "priesthood". I may or may not read it correctly, I might change it to "Holy Order", because I want that to be the broader understanding that we hopefully walk away from tonight.

Joseph said, "The [Holy Order] was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency." By the time this statement was made in 1839 there was something official organized in the Church that was called "First (capital F) Presidency (capital P)", and as a result of that, when Joseph Fielding Smith put together the *Teachings of the Prophet*

[Joseph Smith] the words, "First Presidency" are capitalized in here as though they were an office that Adam held. I want to get rid of the capitals and just say Adam was, in effect, the first presiding officer.

"[The Holy Order] was first given to Adam; he obtained the [first presiding position on the Earth], and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He's Michael the Archangel, spoken of in the scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the [Holy Order]; He was called of God to this office, and was the Father of all living in this day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held the keys, first on earth, and then in heaven.

"The [Holy Order] is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven, whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from Heaven it is by Adam's authority.

...He (Adam) is the father of the human family and presides over the spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this grand council. This may take place before some of us leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him, and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe but retains his standing as the head of the human family." (TPJS, p. 157).

The Holy Order really begins at the point that Adam, the first man, who is called "the son of God" in Luke 3:38. Adam, the first man, obtains the Holy Order in the beginning, and included within it, is the right to preside over all of the human family and then the right to minister to his posterity, and to continue to hold that presiding position until the end of time.

Now Joseph skips from Adam down to Noah because Adam had a position and dominion and a right over all of humanity and Noah occupied the same position. All the descendants were looking to him, genealogically, as a father. The right descended down to Noah, through the Fathers, and these held that same Holy Order. But they had siblings and they had relations who were not their descendants. Therefore, although they were within the Holy Order, unlike Adam and unlike Noah, there were other people living who would descend outside of their genealogical connection. They would not be the father of these people, but the Holy Order was passed down in this fashion. Joseph is looking at this from the perspective of who has it all, and all was combined into Adam and into Noah. There's a shift in the landscape that's going to take place later but we'll get to that in a moment.

Joseph says: "there are two priesthoods spoken of in the Scriptures, viz, Melchizedek and Aaronic or Levitical. Although there are two priesthoods, yet the Melchizedek

priesthood comprehends the Aaronic or Levitical and is the grand head, and holds the highest authority which pertains to [I'm going to change the word now to the Holy Order] and the keys of the Kingdom of God in all ages of the world, to the latest posterity on the earth; and is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven" comes through the Holy Order. "Its institution was prior to 'the foundation of this [world] where the morning stars sang together or the sons of God shouted for joy' and is the highest and holiest [order] and is after the Order of the Son of God." I'm going to pause there.

We think that the renaming of the Holy Order to the Melchizedek priesthood, in order to avoid the too frequent repetition of the name of the Son of God, was done out of respect for the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and that's true enough. However, the Holy Order, by its very nature, includes the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God; one of whom was also Adam. When the apostle John wrote his epistle, he described those who had come in by way of conversion through him and received from him what the Lord had given to him, and he says: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."* (1 John 3:1-3.)

I would like to suggest that the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God includes the fact that those who inherit the Holy Order *are* sons of God. Therefore, in a way, calling it the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, is a way of identifying the recipient as someone who has become one of God's sons. I think it's appropriate to regard the primary identifier—that is the subject of who the Son of God is—to be Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Because quite frankly, He's the only one who attained the resurrection, and it is through the power of the resurrection that we're going to come forth. We do not have the power in ourselves to rise from the dead. The wages of sin are death, we've earned those wages; we all will die. The Savior did not earn those wages, He died, and therefore His death was unjust and the law of justice got broken when He died. Therefore, whenever justice makes a claim on any of us He can point to the fact that justice extracted from Him eternal life, and that is an infinite price for Him to have paid. Therefore He has compensated for all of mankind's shortcomings [and] failures.

Christ is the means by which we lay hold upon the promises but it is His intention to make of us all sons of God. Therefore, the Holy Order after the Son of God is when the name is announced, self-identifying the person holding such a Holy Order as one of God's sons, even though they may be mortal, even though they may be in the flesh. The Holy Order is for that very purpose and is after the Order of the Son of God. "...All other priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and

through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time."

Therefore, among other things, the purpose of the Holy Order is to put in place a mechanism by which God can reveal from heaven what is necessary for the salvation of man on earth, in every generation, in order to fix what is broken, in order to restore what has been lost, in order to repair, heal, forgive, and reconnect those who are willing to give heed to the message sent from heaven, so that they can rise up to become sons of God.

The Holy Order descended from Adam in turn. We're not going to do it but if you take the time to go through and look at who got ordained, Seth was a replacement for the slain Abel. Cain was an elder brother. Cain would have qualified as the elder brother if he had been righteous for inheriting the Holy Order. He had lived long enough and he had been observed by his parents long enough so that Eve identified Cain as a man who had been gotten from God. Therefore she knew he would not fail, which means that for at least some prolonged period of time after the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve had drifted into apostasy, Cain exhibited not only an interest but an adherence to what was being taught by the first parents. Eve celebrated that they at last had someone to whom the Holy Order could be passed. Cain was not the oldest son. He was the *oldest righteous son* and as the oldest righteous son it would have passed to him in due course. Abel, his younger brother, was probably in his day righteous because of the positive example of his older brother Cain. If you've got someone in the family who is on the right path, it's so much easier for the sibling to respect the example of someone similarly situated with them than it is to listen to the parents. Abel likewise followed in the path of righteousness.

Satan put it into the heart of Cain to view the inheritance that he was going to receive of the Holy Order as an opportunity to gratify his pride, and to satisfy his ambition, and to exert control and compulsion, because if he were the one in the line then the Messiah would descend through him and he would have a patriarchal position superior to the Messiah himself. This was an important part of the plot of the adversary. If the adversary could gain control over the inheritor under Adam of the Holy Order, then as I just read a moment ago, before the Savior returns, when dominion was given to Adam, it was by God's word and God cannot break His word. The right of dominion had been conferred. It has to be returned to Him. If Cain were the one in the position to exercise control then he could exert whatever conditions Satan put into his heart before he would return the right of dominion back to the Savior. Thus, if a disciple of Satan were to be in possession of that Holy Order in that line holding dominion, all of the conditions that Satan had demanded in the preexistence, which were rejected by the Father and created the war in heaven designed to destroy the agency of man, could become the condition for the redemption of this creation. Therefore, Cain's apostasy represented an enormous threat to the salvation of everyone who would live thereafter. As a consequence of that, the offering by the younger brother was approved and the older brother Cain was told, "You need to stop what you're doing, you need to repent and return, and if you do not, sin lieth at the door. The adversary is ready to enter into your

house." This represented a serious frustration or threat to the second great conspiracy to destroy the souls of men and to capture this creation. Therefore, Satan put it into the heart of Cain to murder his brother and Abel was slain so that, the theory was, by controlling the position that necessarily meant that the Messiah would be a descendant of Cain's, the line would come through him, and he would have the authority, the control, the dominion, and the right to change the plan or the conditions for the salvation of the souls of men in this world.

Question: ...You're saying that it's genealogical then, that the Holy Order gets passed through; it's not verified by God?

Denver: At this point we're at the very beginning, we haven't gotten very far. But it is essential when you begin to talk about the Holy Order that you start here. If you don't start here, if you want to start at the time of Moses and the Aaronic priests, or you want to start at the time of Joseph Smith and talk about ordinations in June 1831, or if you want to talk about the three witnesses identifying the Quorum of the Twelve and then ordaining them, you're not going to comprehend what the Holy Order is all about because the Holy Order has, as part of its implication, the right of dominion over all creation. That was what it was established for and it came down to the beginning. It belonged to God. It is why God is God. In essence the Holy Order is to create of flesh and blood a surrogate for the Father and Mother. That's what the Holy Order was designed to accomplish.

In the beginning, when you're talking about this process, the reason why we have Seth as the next person is because Cain fell, Abel was murdered, and perhaps, because of the example, Adam and Eve in their sorrow were able to inform Seth of things that secured his fidelity to God. It descended in regular course down through these fathers until you get to Shem who was called Melchizedek. Mulek, king; Zedek, priest. It's a new name for the man, Shem, and then it simply falls into disrepair or apostasy and we encounter our first gap in the descent from the days of Adam down, which lasted several generations until we get to Abraham.

Abraham also happened to have a genealogical right but that wasn't what was important. In the case of Abraham "...finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers..." The "blessings of the fathers" after which he was seeking was the Holy Order. He wanted to become one like those that had been in the beginning.

Question: If Cain got the Holy Order and decided to use it for nefarious purposes how come he wouldn't just lose it by virtue of having evil intention?

Denver: When God spoke to Cain He called him to repent. So, God speaks to Cain and tells him to repent. He didn't repent; he did forfeit, but he forfeited by becoming the first murderer. So the first time that you do something wrong, would you want God to say, "There you go, you're done, you're cut off, you will never have an opportunity to become what I would like you to become, a son of God," or would you want him to call you to

repentance? Because God called Cain to repent and he didn't; he went out and he murdered his brother. He just got more determined to accomplish what he wanted. At that point Cain did not die as a result of the murder of his brother. He was driven out but he wasn't killed, and he did lose the right. So, even though he was living and even though he was alive at the time of his brother Seth, the right went to his brother exactly for that reason. The first instance of error, I mean heavens, [the] Kirtland Safety Society may have been out to get rid of Joseph's position.

"...I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge."

When you think of the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, don't think of it exclusively as some sort of status. It's implicit that what that includes is possession of *great knowledge and greater knowledge*. "A man cannot be saved in ignorance," as Joseph put it. "A man is saved no sooner than he gets knowledge," but implicit in those statements by Joseph Smith is that the purpose of the knowledge is so that you can be a greater follower of righteousness. It's not so that you can play spiritual Trivial Pursuit and win because the knowledge has to be implemented into practice in order for it to have the desired effect. Without accompanying obedience to the things that are known there is no salvation in that. It has to be as Abraham puts it:

"To be a greater follower, and to possess a greater knowledge and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir." (Abraham 1:2).

At this point in the creation Adam would have all mankind descend from him and Noah would have all mankind descend from him, and therefore they would be the fathers of nations. Abraham knew that was part of what was involved. It's not merely knowledge for knowledge' sake, it's being put into a position in which there is a posterity involving nations that would look to him as they looked to Noah, [and] as they had looked to Adam, as their father.

Think of fatherhood as an opportunity to nurture, to assist, to provide for, to care for, to bring along, to take what is innocent and malleable, and turn it into something that is God-like, responsible, capable, something or someone who can stand on their own two legs and defend the truth when called upon to do so. Someone that will themselves be a vessel of righteousness. Don't think of a father as a bully with a whip or a belt. What Abraham desired was to be a servant; that was what his ambition to be a father of nations involved. And so he became a rightful heir, holding the right belonging to the fathers. *"It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time... even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me." (Abraham 1:3).* That's where it came from. A son of God descended through those fathers to Abraham, because Melchizedek, after a

period of apostasy lasting generations, reconnected father Abraham into the fathers. Which is the issue raised a minute ago about this genealogical thing. This is non-genealogical. This is a righteous man in a world of apostasy, looking to reconnect to heaven. He becomes the father of the righteous because he's the first example of a generation, a man in a world of apostasy coming out of that apostasy and reconnecting to Heaven.

There were generations separating Abraham from Shem. Abraham qualified to receive the rights belonging to the fathers because he sought for his appointment, he possessed knowledge, he lived consistent with the knowledge he had, and he wished to have greater knowledge, so that he could obey more commandments so that he could gain further light and knowledge by the things that he learned through obedience.

When you get to what happens after he's connected up, the Lord talking to him says: *"My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Holy Order unto all the nations; And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father; (See Abraham 2:8-10).* That's non-genealogical. That's the same process through which Abraham went to become a descendant of the fathers. It's reconnecting. Whoever does that, in whatever generation, is a descendant and can call Abraham their father.

Question: What reference was that?

Denver: Abraham 2:9-10, and I am going on to 11, so right in there.

"...I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Holy Order) and in thy seed (that is, the Holy Order), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of eternal life." (See Abraham 2:11).

Abraham says: *"Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee." (Abraham 2:12).* He's saying, that whenever you receive the Gospel, whenever you receive **this** Gospel, and it's really hard to try and get this Gospel back on the earth. There was still a great deal left to be recovered, restored, and returned when Joseph was killed at 38½ [years old]. But when this Gospel—the one that Abraham had received—was on the earth at any time then whoever receives that is a descendant of Abraham. They are part of the family of Abraham and he is their father, and so he becomes the father of many nations. He instructed and passed along the same

birthright to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to Joseph, and to Ephraim, and then it rather turns into the same sort of mess that we had previously until the time of Moses.

I don't know how much to say. Moses really didn't belong to the tribe. Moses really was not identified with the tribe that held the birthright. There's no question that by the time you get 200 years downstream from the days of Joseph and Ephraim, that through intermarriage Moses would have had in him blood of Judah, blood of Ephraim, blood of Benjamin; they intermarry.

There's a practice among some Indian tribes. The tribes are the nation and inside the nation there are clans. When a daughter gets to be marital age she is forbidden to marry inside her clan. She has to go marry into another clan. The boys from the other clan court girls who are not of their clan and when they marry, the girls go to live with the clan of their husband. If the female is from the water clan and she marries someone who is the bear clan she is now part of the bear clan. Genealogically she is water clan. Governmentally she is bear clan.

How you reckon who Moses was a descendent of, is not based upon doing a DNA search or looking at a genealogy chart to figure it out. That's not how it was done. Moses is an isolated restoration of a single person into the position in which he could have brought all of Israel back into God's presence. We could have had essentially Zion. Israel was, after being habituated to slavery for 200 years, not willing to climb up the Mount, probably felt themselves incapable of climbing up the Mount. They were perfectly willing to go along with Moses. Of course, there were some ne'er do-wells out there in the wilderness too, and they kept them out of the Holy Land, but Moses arises and that brings up a statement that Joseph Smith made.

During the period of time after this, down to the time of John the Baptist, there were prophets who ministered in Israel. Joseph had this to say about those prophets: "All the prophets had the Holy Order and were ordained by God himself. If they didn't have what they needed to have they would not be in possession of the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven. They would not have the ability to hold the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing his glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which he has continued to reveal himself to the children of men to the present time." It was essential that they be put in possession of something that equipped them to be able to minister in a way that guaranteed, if anyone would listen, salvation.

Then we get down to something more immediately important to us and that is Peter, James, and John. I'm not going to read it because I want to move along a little more quickly. Remember a few minutes ago I read to you that Adam holds the keys of all dispensations, and that Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times, those are Adam's. Peter, James, and John declare themselves as possessing the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times. Adam holds keys in order to bring about every dispensation from the time of Adam down to the very end of time, but Adam didn't live through every dispensation from the beginning to the very end of time. Therefore,

although he is in possession of it and although he has a say about who was involved with it, and although he may exercise the right of dominion in the counsels of Heaven, (because he is resurrected now after all), it still requires for salvation that flesh and blood accept and act on the challenge of redemption.

Salvation is a mortal challenge. Whether or not we're saved depends upon what we do. We don't have angels running around fixing all our errors. We have no immortals that are going to come to our rescue, except for the Second Coming, to destroy the wicked and to visit with those who are wheat. The best way to understand it is, once the lifetime of the three Nephite disciples who asked to tarry on the earth ended, the way they continued their ministry was to minister to prophets, mortals, and then the mortals ministered to others. They came and they visited with Mormon, for example, but the people to whom Mormon ministered didn't see them. They ministered to Moroni, but those to whom Moroni ministered didn't see them. They become as a ministering angel, and the ministering of angels is predicated upon the faithfulness of people.

You can read about how the system of salvation works, it's in Alma. Angels minister to those who are supposed to then preach salvation to others in order to inform them about the conditions that are needed to be met for the salvation of others. John the Beloved has become a ministering angel and he has a ministry. There are those people who expect them to step out in public and to do what people of flesh and blood are obligated to do. Why, that's kind of unfair to that generation. An apology will be owed to every other generation, if the angels suddenly assume the obligation to accomplish things, which from the days of Adam had been primarily the obligation of mortals to accomplish, with some to whom angels minister, ministering to others.

This may seem like a diversion but it's really not. I'm going to read to you. This is the fifth volume of the *Documents of The Joseph Smith Papers*. In the regular course of maintaining documents there were patriarchal blessings that had been given some time earlier than this *Volume 5* and the blessings are in *Histories, Volume 1* where they're written down; a whole bunch of blessings given at the same time. They're written down and they take about a page. No, it takes about three pages of typewritten material to put them all in, and it's just person after person after person, patriarchal blessings. When they get recorded in the documents of the blessing, Oliver Cowdery is the one who is acting as scribe to convey them from the notes you get in *Volume 1* of the *Documents* into the separated, separate blessings in *Volume 5*. Before they show you the version that Oliver Cowdery records in [*Volume*] 5, the Church Historian's Office gives a little explanation of why what you are about to read is enormously expanded from what you saw in *Volume 1*: "It seems more likely that Cowdery made the expansions without direction from Joseph Smith. This would not have been the only occasion he did so. There is evidence that Cowdery altered at least one other blessing text, his own, when he recorded it in the volume. There is no direct evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in expanding and editing the 1833 blessings in September or October of 1835 and there are reasons to think he was not." This is the document transcript of what Oliver Cowdery recorded in the 1835 blessing book, and I've highlighted what was in the original. It's part of that last paragraph.

[Inaudible audience comments.]

Denver: No, this is Don Carlos'. Oliver Cowdery's is too many pages. Don Carlos' was the only example I thought I'd copy because it's easy to hold in one hand.

Question: Why did he do that?

Denver: Someone in my handwriting has written in pencil on the margin of my version of this book: "If Cowdery made changes on his own to patriarchal blessings did he also do so for Section 27? Why did he do so?"

Oliver was told in a blessing when he failed to translate the text of the Book of Mormon that he would have other opportunities to write spiritual stuff, and sure enough, he took advantage of the license and he did so. The point I'm on right now is that if the Church Historian's office is being candid about the fact that when we get to the patriarchal blessings, and Oliver Cowdery, on his own, blows up the content and includes a lot of stuff on his own initiative, which the greater proof suggests Joseph had no hand in, the reason why the Church Historian's office is not equally candid with many other parts of the historical record that were altered by Oliver Cowdery is because they like what Oliver added. They want what Oliver said. It helps support a traditional narrative that gives them certain rights that they would love to be able to claim belong to them. It's one of the reasons why it was necessary in the third volume of the new scriptures to go back and to painstakingly examine the original documents of the original revelation that we know that Joseph Smith gave, and then to augment that only with anything that was altered in the handwriting of Joseph Smith, and to limit the revelations given to Joseph to that. It's one of the reasons why the new third volume, *Teachings and Commandments*, are going to be a superior set of scriptures, even though many of the revelations that we're familiar with are going to have greatly reduced content, and some of the revelations will be gone altogether, because they simply have no basis for being able to say Joseph was the originator of that, some of which are foundational to authority claims.

One more aside: the word "apostle". There is no such thing as priesthood called *apostle*. It is an office in the Church like Relief Society president, like Primary president. (Like used to was Scout leader but that's not so much now.) There's no such priesthood as elder, it's an office in the Church. This is why in the office of elder, Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith could function in the Church as elders before the restoration of any of the higher priesthood. This is one of the reasons why we are particularly vulnerable in our lines of authority, because for about 22 years during the presidency of Heber J. Grant, ordinations did not confer any priesthood, they ordained to an office in the Church. And while the person ordained to the office in the Church was authorized to function in the office to which they were ordained, conferral of priesthood is a separate matter. You can have them be apostles without them being recipients of the priesthood.

I say all that to suggest that when it comes to parsing the events of the restoration involving Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, the historical narrative upon which you base your understanding needs to be pretty carefully examined. The best source of material from which to draw is actually a composition that Joseph Smith began after Oliver Cowdery had been excommunicated from the Church. Oliver's excommunication happened in April 1838 and with him and David Whitmer and John Whitmer gone—John Whitmer was the Church historian. He took with him all of the records that had been compiled involving the events of the restoration up to that time. In 1838 Joseph Smith began the recreation of the history of the events in the restoration. Joseph Smith's history is identified in *Histories, Volume 1 of The Joseph Smith Papers*. What he wrote in 1838 is draft one and it's been lost. We don't have what he wrote in 1838. But Mulholland, who was his clerk at the time, recopied it in 1839 and that's called draft two. We have internal material in draft two to suggest it was a really faithful copy because he copied it in 1839 but all of his dating is 1838, the year before. So when the internal dating copied by Mulholland in 1839 is 1838, a year earlier, it suggests that he was not doing anything to revise, change, or alter what Joseph had put down.

In the earliest history that Joseph Smith wrote there's a revelation that's given in March 1829. It's a revelation to Martin Harris that includes some interesting language that touches up against the topic we're on tonight. It says: "*Verily, I say unto you, that woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words; For hereafter you shall be ordained and go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I have committed unto you.*" (D&C 5:5-7). The statement in the revelation to Martin Harris includes this content addressed to Joseph Smith, telling Joseph that he's going to be ordained to go forth and declare God's words. But when he's ordained to go forth and declare His words, he's supposed to say what God tells him to say, "and if they won't believe, that it wouldn't matter if you told them everything that had been committed to Joseph Smith, they wouldn't believe that either. So, you only tell them what I allow you to tell them and then they can receive what they need to receive in that mechanism." Joseph had things which were committed unto him but which he did not reveal to anyone else.

Promise of ordination. Then we get down...this is May 1829:

"We...went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates. While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this

shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me." (Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History 1:68-70).

Joseph was the first to baptize but he was the second to be baptized.

This ordination takes place. At this ordination they have the authority to baptize and get angels to minister to them, but they don't have something else that involves the power of laying of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that would be conferred thereafter. So go baptize. Something more is coming.

You read through the history and there's no mention of the appearance of Peter, James, and John but there is a desire on Joseph's part to get this higher priesthood. There is also in the account a statement in Joseph Smith's History that is the exact same wording that gets used involving ordinations in the Book of Mormon. These are the words: "To ordain priests and teachers, to declare my gospel according to the power of the Holy Ghost which is in you." So the power to ordain in the early days of the Restoration was derived from the power of the Holy Ghost which is within the person that is doing the ordaining. Ordinations continue. Now we're talking about "elders, priests, teachers, or deacons is to be ordained according to the gifts and calling of God unto them and is to be ordained by the power of the Holy Ghost which is in the one that ordains him." Ordination early in the restoration was accomplished in the same way as ordination was accomplished in the Book of Mormon, that is by the power of the Holy Ghost that is in the person being ordained.

Joseph Smith writes a letter while he is in exile in Nauvoo and the letter also tracks what he did in his histories, but he mentions something that is not mentioned in the histories:

"And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!" (D&C 128:20).

I have the keys to my Dodge truck. Do you have the keys to my Dodge truck? Well, they've declared themselves as possessing the keys.

"And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer...and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!" (D&C 128:21).

Joseph Smith is saying that he was in possession of great knowledge but he also came into possession of greater knowledge. Because Joseph was going to be called upon, in a very serious role, to achieve something that involved trying to bring back nations into the Holy Order, that makes sons of God. Therefore, Joseph could not accomplish what needed to be accomplished without having greater knowledge than existed on the earth. Despite the discovery of Dead Sea scrolls, the Nag Hammadi, and research and translation of texts that were not available in English at the time of Joseph Smith's lifetime, the fact remains that much of that material was simply corrupted. If you are going to try and understand the truth, the way in which that is brought about is by having possession of a "...channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from Heaven". Therefore, Joseph needed to not only be in possession of that channel, but the channel needed to respond to, and did respond to Joseph's petitions and inquiries, in order for him to be able to function in the position that he held.

There's a revelation that was given in January 1841, the last lengthy revelation given while Joseph was alive. His last vision—that's a second-hand account, still reliable because it was recorded so quickly after, and that contains... William Smith is going to replace Hyrum as a counselor to Joseph. The revelation in January 1841 records: *"And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant William be appointed, ordained, and anointed, as counselor unto my servant Joseph, in the room of my servant Hyrum, that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right; That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people, That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph; and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive, and be crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery; That my servant Hyrum may bear record of the things which I shall show unto him, that his name may be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever."* (D&C 124:91-96).

Hyrum was put into a position that was once occupied by Oliver, to stand with Joseph, possessing the ability to ask and receive, so that the channel through which you can know and understand what God wants or intends for people is open as the mechanism to save souls. At the end of this it's sole purpose is to save souls. It talks about him, and his name had an honorable remembrance from generation to generation. Only descendants of Hyrum occupied the position of the Presiding Patriarch of the Church until 1979 when Eldred G. Smith was made emeritus, but he still signed everything as Patriarch to the Church and he still kept an office in the Church Office Building. (Dave, I think you went and visited with him before he died?)

Comment: He got changed. Not in the Church Office Building but over in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

Denver: Smith Memorial Building.

Comment: Like in a broom closet or something.

[Crosstalk and audience laughter.]

Denver: But he insisted on attending the Thursday meetings for a long period of time and maybe right up until the end. On 04 April, 2013 he died; the office has not been filled, and so far as we know it's gone forever.

What the Holy Order consists of is being able to have a channel which not only is occupied by God at the far end, but is reigned over by the man who first held dominion over all the earth, Adam. I'm not going to talk about this until March but there's a reason why it was Eve who identified Cain as the worthy recipient to be the successor. There is no authority that gets established on earth that the mother does not approve of. Fathers can be quick to give up hope. Moms hold on a lot longer. Therefore, mothers control certain decisions. When you say that Adam holds the keys at the far end to preside over it, the name "Adam" was given to not just the man, Adam, but the name "Adam" was given to Adam and Eve jointly. When you hear that Adam holds the keys, the best way to read it is in the second way in which the name Adam is applied in scripture; that is to both the man and the woman.

We're running out of time. This subject is bigger than most people have ever grasped. We could talk about it a whole lot longer but I want to answer some of the questions that were put.

If I had children who could not go to the temple today I would not personally induct them into the temple ceremony because despite the fact that I have been excommunicated from the Church I made promises in the temple which I have kept. You may say, "How the hell can you claim that given the fact that you got kicked out of the Church." I have kept the covenants. Part of what I was obligated to do was to not disclose certain things, but that rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken, because I went to the temple before 1990.

Since I am under an obligation not to disclose certain things to people, if it were my children I would not induct them into a temple ceremony because to do so, in my view, would violate my obligation. But if they go and read the ceremony on line—and the pre-1990 transcript is better than the post-1990 altered ceremony—they can learn everything there was in the ceremony before 1990 and I'm not disclosing anything to them. There was nothing in the ceremony or the covenant or the obligation that says, if you already know something and I'm not disclosing it to you, there's nothing that says that we can't talk about what you already know. I'm just not allowed to disclose it to you. Similarly, if I had a kid who goes through the temple today, I would want them to read the ceremony as it existed before the changes in 1990. I wouldn't disclose it to them, I'd say go read it online. Then after they've read it online I'd feel free to discuss what they know and I'm not revealing to them.

I do think that the ceremony is useful even though I don't think that the transmission of it has been altogether correct. I think it is merciful by God that the way in which it came down was altered, because we can enter into the covenants of the temple and take them very seriously. But if we wind up violating them we have not violated an authentically empowered ordinance, so we're really not offending God by violating something.

Ordinances that were ordained by God cannot be changed. If they're changed they're broken; if they're broken they're ineffective. Therefore, an altered ordinance can be informational and if you take it sincerely, and if you adhere to the covenants and if you obey, God can work with that because God can work with any soul. You can ultimately realize every blessing and every promise of the temple. You're just going to get it as a one off from heaven, as God, by the Holy Spirit of Promise, works with you to confer upon you blessings that are intended for you. There's no downside, but there's a considerable upside if you're true and faithful to the things that you obligate yourself to do, and the temple tells you that:

"Brothers and sisters, if you're true and faithful the time will come when you will be called up and anointed kings and queens, priests and priestesses, whereas now you're only anointed to become such. The realization of these blessings depends upon your faithfulness." They dial it right back in the introduction to the ceremony itself, almost as if they're making an admission against interest.

The purpose of a temple is to allow the communication of great knowledge and greater knowledge, to restore what has been lost since the time of Adam in order for people to rise up and receive the Holy Order. You don't get saved in ignorance, and there are so many gaps in what was going on.

The way in which the blessings of Peter, James, and John, and the naming of Peter, James, and John occurs on the Mount of Transfiguration—they went up and they were on the Holy Mount. They were endowed with knowledge. They saw the history of the world right down to the end of time. They were given an insight into things. We learn

about that in Doctrine and Covenants; I think it's 67 but it's in there, you can read it. They were shown essentially everything because they saw what they saw. This was the reason why Peter negotiated a rapid resurrection. He didn't want to camp in the spirit world. This is why John said, "I don't want to go there, let me just stay here and I'll minister here." They made choices as a result of the knowledge that they got on the Mount about what was going to happen down to the end of time. But this is an order. Peter, and James, and John are symbols of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Grandfather, father, and son. It was Jacob through whom the nations, the twelve tribes, the twelve nations of Israel, were established. So John, he produced a righteous son. I don't know about the children of Katura, but Ishmael and Jacob have continued their bloodshed right down to this minute. Esau sold his birthright and the garment to Jacob, who presented it to Joseph. He's the one through whom a great progeny developed.

Peter, James, and John—John is the one who remained to create, as a ministering angel, an analogous progeny by his ministrations as a ministering angel through the ages. When you get to the names of Peter, James, and John in the restoration story, we don't have enough details of what happened to be able to correctly construct exactly how Peter, James, and John fit within the restoration of the Gospel in the last days. If we're going to put them into a context, I would not say that the reason that they came was in order to ordain someone, when that has a really good account provided to us in the account of the conference that happened in June 1831. I described that in *A Man Without Doubt*, beginning on about page 19 and going through the end of that section.

The folks that got ordained at that conference included five that Joseph Smith ordained; Lyman White, who was excommunicated in 1848. Harvey Whitlock, excommunicated in 1835. Thomas Marsh, who left the Church in 1838, signed an affidavit against Joseph which contributed to his imprisonment in Missouri. He was excommunicated in 1839. Parley Pratt, who apostatized and was excommunicated in 1842, but then reinstated in 1843. Those are the ones Joseph ordained. The ones Lyman White ordained; John Whitmer excommunicated 1838, Rigdon excommunicated in 1844, Partridge died in 1840, Ezra Thayer refused to follow the Twelve after Joseph and Hyrum were martyred. (Well, that guy has some potential.) Joseph Wakefield was excommunicated in January 1834. Ezra Boothe apostatized within months and went on to write anti-Mormon and anti-Joseph publications, and it just goes on; you can read it in there. It didn't work out as well as had been hoped.

The way in which I would suggest it would be best to understand is that they came, not for purposes of conferring priesthood that would occur in June 1831, but for reconnecting the genealogical line that required someone to be designated as descendants from "the Fathers". Now, some folks have argued that that meant that Joseph Smith was **the** birthright holder in the line from Ephraim. Given the way in which genealogical lines run, and given all of... If you kill Charles and William and George (and I think there's another one [in] the royal line of England), then it's all the way back to Andrew. You can have a line that goes on a long distance. But if you have the Thirty Years War, and you have World War I, and you have World War II, and you have the Black Plague, and you're following genealogical lines, there's no way to track who God

thinks holds the birthright. Then you have the added complication that Esau was older than Jacob but Jacob was more righteous, and so Jacob got the birthright. Seth had older brothers who were grandfathers by the time he was born but the birthright went to Seth because he was true and faithful.

I would suggest that it may be possible that in this room there is a lot of people who could qualify. Whether or not that ever happens depends upon being a son of Abraham, which requires you to receive this Gospel, meaning the one to which Abraham had been exposed, which requires a great deal of correct information to be restored.

It's almost amusing for people in their arrogance to assume that they know enough to understand what God is doing or has done. The things of God are of deep import, and careful and solemn and ponderous and prayerful thought can only find them out. Your understanding has to reach into heaven itself and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, if you're going to save any soul, including your own. That's not accomplished casually, nor is it accomplished without sacrifice.

The Lord, whose own heart was broken, ultimately requires a great deal to happen to create a broken heart and a contrite spirit willing to endure, however uncomfortable it may make you feel, all that God requires of you to do in order to be a son of God. That's not accomplished in an instant suddenly, it's accomplished carefully and over trial after trial, test after test, temptation after temptation, but ultimately it will be required before the return of the Lord. It will be mandatory, before the return of the Lord, for the original Holy Order to exist in all of its components, it has to. There has to be established on the Earth all of the rites that originally belonged in the days of Adam, because that has to be surrendered back. It has to go back through those that had possessed it in order for God to have the right to come and claim this world as His own, and to exercise dominion over it. Because if the dominion over the world belongs to someone other than Him, His word cannot be broken, and He cannot come and interfere with the right of dominion that exists on the Earth. It has to exist. It has to be fully restored, and it has to be in the possession of those who will not covet it. Those who will not, like Cain, attempt to influence the conditions of salvation for the souls of men. Those who look upon it merely as a burden to be held, under the authority of God, belonging to Him, to be returned to Him so that He can come and fix this broken world and bring wickedness to an end.

If an aspiring, or ambitious, or a vain person is given that position, all of the Lord's plans can be frustrated. Therefore we need to be like our Lord, the greatest of all, who came here and knelt, and served, and washed the feet of others. Who gave His life as a sacrifice. Who trembled and begged not to be put through what the Father commanded that He endure. Nevertheless, that is despite His own will, that is in spite of the fact that He did not want to do it, He partook of the bitter cup, to the dregs. He was slain, and He gives all glory and all majesty to the Father. That's the kind of person you have to become if you're going to be of any utility to the Lord in the final scenes that are approaching.

I hope we've expanded somewhat the context of the Holy Order, and that you realize that the term "priesthood"—is bandied around in our day among most people when they talk about the subject of priesthood—is a really tiny sliver of a very big subject, about which the world knows very little. Latter-day Saints, because of their arrogance, know even less because they wrongly assume that an incorrect model constitutes what God is all about. The restoration of all things literally means "the restoration of all things" including the Holy Order, and it doesn't stop with a New Testament church. It's got to go back to the days of Adam.

Of that I bear testimony, with ample reason to be able to discuss these things. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Denver: We've gone over the time I thought we would be. Come claim your phone.

Question: Are you open to answering any questions about the content?

Denver: On my way to the car, yes. Questions just create problems but if it's a good one then yes.

Question: In St. George you rather emphatically declared that anyone who declares the Gospel of Abraham is inferior or less than the Gospel that was given to Adam; that person, if they don't repent, they're going to regret it. I'm paraphrasing. I see here what that means based on what you put on the board, this Gospel, it's the same thing that Adam had. Who is teaching that it's not, that was so emphatically called to repentance? It's just bewildering.

Denver: There are some folks who have studied this out, who believe that the Gospel of Abraham is inferior to the Gospel of Noah, and the Gospel of Adam.

Comment: Someone was teaching that.

Denver: Yes, they've written about it. There's an enormous volume of pompous screeds available on the Internet to expound endlessly the stupidity of some people who are carefully studying and feel a burning apparently, either in the bosom or in their fingertips, and have vomited nonsense onto the Internet. I'm not here to argue with people. I'm not here to correct all of the lies, all of the misstatements. I'm not here even to defend. There we are; the answer to your question.

Comment: Better run for it.

2017.11.16 Christian Talk 3

November 16, 2017

Atlanta-Fullerton Central Library, Atlanta, Georgia

Thank you, and thank everyone who has assisted in making the venue available, in organizing, recording, and ultimately broadcasting the talks. Everything that is done is done voluntarily. No one is passing the hat or soliciting donations. Part of what we do, we do as a sacrifice to demonstrate our commitment. And everyone who has and does participate in this sacrifices and provides their services as a matter of faith and commitment to what we believe in. And I can't thank those who have helped enough.

Religion should not divide us as it does. It's tragic that anyone's search to find truth and to connect with God should divide them from their fellow man. Christ said the greatest commandment was to love God, but immediately added that the second greatest commandment was like unto it, and that commandment was to love our neighbor as ourself.

Christ never taught us, love only those who love us in return. He taught:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:43-48).

Let us make our search for truth one that brings us closer together rather than something to divide us apart. We share more than we disagree. [I] want you to consider the meaning for us all in the account of Adam and Eve. We all have one set of original parents in common. All of the genetic potential for the entire human race comes from these two original parents. No man or woman possesses any genetic feature that did not first come from them. They set the limits on their descendant's height, they set the limit on how high their descendants could jump, how fast we could run, how intelligent we could become, how strong we could become. Every facet of us, their diverse descendants in the world at this moment, were determined by the genetic makeup of Adam and Eve. When we despise the differences we see in one another we despise our first parents. Christ taught: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye [should] also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*" (John 13:34-35).

Menno Simons, who was one of the Reformation fathers after whom the Mennonites are named said, "True evangelical faith, cannot lie dormant, it clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all creatures."

Everything Christ taught is intended to change our inner self. He did not want me judging and condemning you. If you decide to abuse me, Christ teaches I should forgive you. If you offend me seventy times seven, Christ taught me to forgive. If we believed in Christ enough to live as He taught, our families would heal, our communities would heal, our nations would heal, and the world would heal. Christ was an idealist, but He showed by His life that it is possible to live the ideal. As a Christian I should commit to that ideal and at every missed step resolve to do better. Each of us control only our own life, but your example is enough to change the lives of many others.

I hope to strengthen your belief in Jesus Christ by what is said here this evening and to encourage you to develop faith in Him. Belief does not require action. Faith, on the other hand, requires you to take action to live your belief. Far more people have belief in Christ than have faith in him. Christ really is the Savior who offered Himself a sacrifice for sin.

Tonight we will examine what Jesus Christ did to save you and I from death and hell. To begin tonight, because this is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, we look back on Christian history.

The Protestant Reformation was two things. First, it was a protest against the corruption of Roman Catholicism, hence the term, "Protestant", because the protestors rejected the corrupt Roman hierarchy then in charge of western European Christianity. Second, it was an attempt to reform corrupted Christianity into something better, hence the term, "Reformation", because the protestors hoped to recover and establish something marginally better than the institution headquartered in Rome. They hoped to reform Christianity into something better representing the actual commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ. None of the Protestant fathers hoped to reestablish the original Christian church, or what is referred to as the primitive church, which once existed when Peter, James, John, Matthew, Luke, and other New Testament figures lived. When Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire it did not improve Christianity, it compromised it. Christianity is best understood and practiced by the meek and the humble.

Christ came as a lowly servant, kneeling to wash the feet of others. He held no office, no rank, commanded no fortune, submitted to Jewish and Roman authorities. He was abused and rejected. His only tool was the truth. He was born in a stable and continually regarded by the leaders as unimportant. There was nothing about His position that commanded respect. When those who claim to follow Him acquired the rank of official Roman Empire state religion, Christianity could not have become more alienated from how Christ lived. Silk robes and gold headpieces worn by church leaders replaced the rough clothing and crown of thorns worn by Christ. This was a tragedy, not a triumph. Christianity was utterly broken. It has not been fixed, even by the Reformation.

Protestant reformer John Wesley candidly admitted the fallen condition of Christianity. He concluded that Christianity did not have the gifts of the Spirit because they were no longer really Christian at all. In Wesley's sermon, "The More Excellent Way," he explained:

The cause of this [decline of spiritual gifts following Constantine] was not (as has been vulgarly supposed,) "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christian. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon [the] earth." This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church -- because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.

A New World Protestant leader, Roger Williams, admitted the same fallen state existed for Christianity but also envisioned the possibility for recovery of original Christianity. He conceived it would be possible for God to once again endow mankind with authority and knowledge that would allow us to have what had been lost. He wrote, "Christianity fell asleep in the bosom of Constantine, and the laps and bosoms of those Emperors who professed the name of Christ." This sober reflection led to his conviction that freedom of conscience was necessary to allow every soul to search for and accept all truth they could find. He declared, "There is no regularly constituted church of Christ on earth, nor any person qualified to administer any church ordinances; nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the Great Head of the Church for whose coming I am seeking."

I believe Christ has spent the last 500 years inspiring mankind to restore a more correct form of Christianity. He declared he would return again in glory to judge the world but before his return, many prophecies remain to be fulfilled. Almost the entire burden of prophecy focuses on two events: the First Coming of Christ and the Second Coming of Christ. And a great deal about the Second Coming of Christ will require that there be things that occur prior to his return in glory, that will involve the Restoration and the presence of those who speak in his name with authority, testimonies to be born. The world cannot be judged without an adequate prior warning being given. Even if the world is ignoring the message, it doesn't matter. God assumes the obligation to making clear His plans. He assumes the obligation of having the warning voice sound, and whether the world gives any heed or not, it doesn't matter. They've been warned and they will be judged.

One of the prophecies came through Peter. He declared:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must

receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21).

The time of refreshing, or restoring, promised to come from the presence of the Lord has, in fact, begun. Jesus Christ has been sent again to prepare for His return. I believe that Joseph Smith was an authentic messenger called by Christ to help us become more Christian. One message sent by Christ in 1829 explains more of what He, Christ, accomplished as the sacrificial Lamb who atoned for our sins. We know from Isaiah that by his stripes we are healed. God laid on him the iniquity of us all. He bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, and the chastisement we earned was put upon Him. Traditionally, Christians have understood that to have been accomplished in the Roman beating, scourging, and crucifixion of Christ. However, many men suffered similarly at the hands of Rome. Christ suffered to remove our sins and repair the fall of mankind. Isaiah's description suggests that this was cosmic and that Christ took the entire burden of mankind's sins upon Himself. Only Luke gives a glimpse into Christ's suffering in Gethsemane. Luke describes it in these words: *"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44).

In an 1829 revelation, Christ explained the price he paid for our salvation. His reflection on that suffering mentions only what happened to Him in Gethsemane, the place where Luke recorded He sweat great drops of blood. Let me read you what Jesus Christ explained of that event in 1829.

Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken (D&C 19:15-20).

Christ pleads with us in this revelation to repent of our sins so we do not experience anything like the dreadful price He paid for us. We should let that message penetrate our hearts: God does not want us punished. God wants to relieve us from the bitterness of our sins. In His kindness and mercy, Christ revealed yet more of His suffering in His atoning sacrifice in February of 2005 and December of 2007. Again, He provided us with a description of what happened in Gethsemane. This is the account:

I knew a man in Christ about four years ago who, being overshadowed by the Spirit on the 26th of February, 2005, had the Lord appear to him again. And the

Lord spoke to him face to face in plain humility, as one man speaks to another, calling him by name. As they spoke the Lord put forth His hand and touched the eyes of the man and said, Look! The man had opened before him a view of the Lord kneeling in prayer. It was in a dark place. The air was heavy and overcast with sorrow. The man beheld the Lord praying in Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal and before the [His]crucifixion.

All the Lord had previously done in His mortal ministry by healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, curing the leper and ministering relief to others as He taught was but a prelude to what the Lord was now to do on this dark, oppressive night.

As the Lord knelt in prayer, His vicarious suffering began. He was overcome by pain and anguish. He felt within Him, not just the pains of sin, but also the illnesses men suffer as a result of the Fall and their foolish and evil choices. The suffering was long and the challenge difficult. The Lord suffered the afflictions. He was healed from the sickness. He overcame the pains, and patiently bore the infirmities until, finally, He returned to peace of mind and strength of body. It took an act of will and hope for Him to overcome the affliction which had been poured upon Him. He overcame the separation caused by these afflictions and reconciled with His Father. He was at peace with all mankind.

He thought His sufferings were over, but to His astonishment another wave overcame Him. This one was much greater than the first. The Lord, who had been kneeling, fell forward onto His hands at the impact of the pain that was part of a greater, second wave.

This second wave was so much greater than the first that it seemed to entirely overcome the Lord. The Lord was now stricken with physical injuries as well as spiritual affliction. As He suffered anew, His flesh was torn which He healed using the power of the charity within Him. The Lord had such life within Him, such power and virtue within Him, that although He suffered in His flesh, these injuries healed and His flesh restored. His suffering was both body and spirit, and there was anguish of thought, feeling and soul.

The Lord overcame this second wave of suffering, and again found peace of mind and strength of body; and His heart filled with love despite what He had suffered. Indeed, it was charity or love that allowed Him to overcome. He was at peace with His Father, and with all mankind, but it required another, still greater act of will and charity than the first for Him to do so.

Again, the Lord thought His suffering was over. He stayed on His hands and knees for a moment to collect Himself when another wave of torment burst upon Him. This wave struck Him with such force He fell forward upon His face. He was afflicted by this greater wave. He was then healed only to then be afflicted again as the waves of torment overflowed. Wave after wave poured out upon

Him, with only moments between them. The Lord's suffering progressed from a lesser to a greater portion of affliction; for as one would be overcome by Him, the next, greater affliction would then be poured out. Each wave of suffering was only preparation for the next, greater wave. The pains of mortality, disease, injury and infirmity, together with the sufferings of sin, transgressions, guilt of mind, and unease of soul, the horrors of recognition of the evils men had inflicted upon others, were all poured out upon Him, with confusion and perplexity multiplied upon Him.

He longed for it to be over, and thought it would end long before it finally ended. With each wave He thought it would be the last but then another came upon Him, and then yet another. The one beholding this scene was pained by what he saw, and begged for the vision of the Lord's suffering to end. He could not bear to see his Lord suffering in this manner. The petition was denied and the vision did not end, for the Lord required him to witness it.

The man saw that the Lord pleaded again with the Father that "this cup may pass" from Him. But the Lord was determined to suffer the Father's will and not His own. Therefore, a final wave came upon Him with such violence as to cut Him at every pore. It seemed for a moment that He was torn apart, and that blood came out of every pore. The Lord writhed in pain upon the ground as this [great] final torment was poured upon Him.

All virtue was taken from Him. All the great life force in Him was stricken and afflicted. All the light turned to darkness. He was humbled, drained and left with nothing. It is not possible for a man to bear such pains and live, but with nothing more than will, hope in His Father, and charity toward all men, He emerged from the final wave of torment, knowing He had suffered all this for His Father and His brethren. By His hope and great charity, trusting in the Father, the Lord returned from this dark abyss and found grace again, His heart being filled with love toward the Father and all men.

These great burdens were born by the Lord not only on behalf of mankind, but also as a necessary prelude to His death upon a Roman cross. Had He not been so physically weakened by these sufferings and drained of power from within, the scourging and crucifixion He suffered at the hands of men could not have taken His life.

It was many hours after this vision closed before the one who witnessed this suffering could compose himself again. He wept because of the vision shown him, and he wondered at the Lord's great suffering for mankind.

The witness reflected for many days upon this scene of the Lord's great suffering. He read many times the account of the Lord's agony given to Joseph Smith, which reads, "*Therefore I command you to repent - repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your*

sufferings be sore - how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit - and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink - Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men." [D&C 19:15-19].

He pondered and asked: Why were there waves of torment? Why did they increase in difficulty? How were they organized as they seemed to fit a pattern? After long inquiring into the things which he had seen, the Lord, who is patient and merciful and willing to instruct those who call [up]on Him, again appeared to the man on the 20th of December, 2007. He made known [un]to him that the waves of torment suffered by the Lord came in pairs which mirrored each other. The first of each wave poured upon the Lord those feelings, regrets, recriminations and pains felt by those who injured their fellow man. Then followed a second wave, which mirrored the first, but imposed the pains suffered by the victims of the acts committed by those in the first wave. Instead of the pains of those who inflict hurt or harm, it was now the anger, bitterness and resentments felt by those who suffered these wrongs.

From each wave of suffering, whether as the one afflicting or as the victim of those wrongs, the Lord would overcome the evil feelings associated with these wrongs, and find His heart again filled with peace. This was why, in the vision of the suffering of the Lord, it was in the second waves that there appeared oftentimes to be injuries to His body.

The greater difficulty in these paired waves of torment was always overcoming the suffering of the victim. With these waves the Lord learned to overcome the victims' resentments, to forgive, and to heal both body and spirit. This was more difficult than overcoming the struggles arising from the one who committed the evil. This is because the one doing evil knows he has done wrong and feels a natural regret when he sees himself aright. The victim, however, always feels it is their right to hold resentment, to judge their persecutor, and to withhold peace and love for their fellow man [men]. The Lord was required to overcome both so that He could succor both.

In the pairing of the waves, the first torment was of the mind and spirit, and the second was torment of mind, spirit and body.

The Lord experienced all the horror and regret wicked men feel for their crimes when they finally see the truth. He experienced the suffering of their victims whose righteous anger and natural resentment and disappointment must also be shed, and forgiveness given, in order for them to find peace. He overcame them all. He descended below them all. He comprehends it all.

And He knows how to bring peace to them all. He knows how to love others whether they are the one who has given offense or the one who is a victim of the offense.

In the final wave, the most brutal, most evil, most heinous sins men inflict upon one another were felt by Him as a victim of the worst men can do. He knew how it felt to wrongly suffer death. He knew what it was like to be a mother holding a child in her arms as they are both killed by those who delighted in their suffering. He knew how it was for ambitious men to rid themselves of a rival by conspiracy and murder. He knew what it was to have virtue robbed from the innocent. He knew betrayal, treachery, and abuse in all its worst degrading horror. There was no cruelty, no offense, no evil that mankind has suffered or will suffer that was not put upon Him.

He knew what it is like for men to satisfy their ambition by clothing their hypocrisy in religious garb. He also felt what it was like to be the victim of religious oppression by those who pretend to practice virtue while oppressing others. He knew the hearts of those who would kill Him. Before confronting their condemnation of Him in the flesh, He suffered their torment of mind when they recognized He was the Lord, and then found peace for what they would do by rejecting Him. In this extremity there was madness itself as He mirrored the evil which would destroy Him, and learned how to come to peace with the Father after killing the Son of God, and to love all those involved without restraint and without pretense even before they did these terrible deeds. His suffering, therefore, encompassed all that has happened, all that did happen, and all that would happen in the future.

As a result of what the Lord suffered, there is no condition physical, spiritual or mental that He does not fully understand. He knows how to teach, comfort, succor and direct any who [will] come to Him seeking forgiveness and peace. This is why the prophet wrote, "*by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*" [Isaiah 53:11] And again, "*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*" [Isaiah 53:4-5] He obtained this knowledge by the things he suffered. He suffered that we might avoid sin by being obedient to His commandments. None of us need harm another, if we will follow Him. He knows fully the consequences of sin. He teaches His followers [how] to avoid sin.

The prophet Alma taught and understood our Lord's sufferings as he wrote, "*And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death,*

that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." [Alma 7:11-12].

He can bring peace to any soul. He can help those who will come to Him love their fellow man. He alone is the Perfect Teacher because He alone has the knowledge each of us lack to return to being whole and at peace with [the] God and Father of us all after our transgression of His will. Christ He is wise to what is required for each man's salvation.

As the Lord made these terrible things known to the man he cried out, Hosanna to the Lamb of God! He has trodden the winepress alone! Glory, honor and mercy be upon the Chosen One forever and ever! I will submit unto anything you see fit to require of me! I will bend my knee in obedience to you! Let thy will, not mine be done! For worthy is the Lamb!" Then, thinking upon how trifling his difficulties and disappointments had been in comparison with the suffering he saw imposed upon his Lord, the man added, Surely goodness and mercy have been mine all the days of my life!

And the Lord responded, And you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Then the man wept.

From the forgoing accounts, Christ has finally made it clear to us that His death on the cross was not where He paid the price for our sins. Many have died in that same way and suffered that same dreadful agony. But Christ alone paid for mankind's sins because He alone was able to take on the terrible burden of our terrible failures. He conquered sin. And so what of the cross? He certainly needed to die, because without dying He could not rise from the dead and conquer death.

In Matthew we have an account of something Christ declared as He hung on the cross: *"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over [all] the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour [Christ] cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:45-46). This is misunderstood. Christ was not forsaken by God. He predicted in John before His death that the Father would never leave His side. Christ was reciting the opening lines of a hymn about Himself. The psalms were hymns. If I were to, for example, say, "Silent night, holy night," in your mind you could go to that hymn. If I were to say, "A mighty fortress is our God," your mind would go to that hymn. On the cross Christ was taking the minds of those who were present to a hymn about Himself. Let me read some of that hymn.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou

that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and [they] were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be [thou] not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me... They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me... I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation... All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations... All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this (Psalms 22:1-31).

That was the hymn to which Christ pointed while on the cross. He started "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:45-46). This was not a lamentation; this was a declaration that for this purpose He came into the world, and for this purpose He would die. Christ suffered for our sins in Gethsemane. Christ died on the cross while testifying He was the promised Messiah. Christ rose from the dead to break the bonds of death. Since He was entitled to live forever His death was an infinite price to pay. Therefore, the demands of justice have all been met, and that, infinitely. We can benefit from that by accepting the ransom He has paid, repenting and being baptized. Here is His doctrine:

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso

believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; [for] they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them (3 Nephi 11:31-40).

If you've not been baptized, or if you would like to be re-baptized, there are people who have authority to do so who will do so without charge, without requesting or expecting a donation; indeed, they would refuse it if you offered it. There is a baptism that has been arranged for anyone who is interested tomorrow, and details of that you can find out from people here after this ends.

Well, I got a number of questions sent in through the website that I'm going to take a few minutes to answer, and then we're gonna invite anyone who is here that has a question to use the microphone. This is being recorded and the microphone can only pick it up if you use that in the recording, and we'll answer questions.

[Question:] One that was sent in was, "What drove Luther to create his own version of the Bible?"

[Answer:] Well, at the time that Luther did a translation of the Bible the only version that was available was written in a language that most people did not commonly speak. He translated the Bible into the common tongue. The first time the Bible got translated into English, for example, was only about 470 years ago. Before, it was translated into the common tongue so that people could read the Bible in a language that they spoke and understood, began with the effort that Martin Luther did in translating the Bible into German. We take for granted that people can get access to a Bible that you can read and you can understand in your own language, but one of the most important things that Martin Luther did, and one of the things that made the Reformation itself assume a durable form that would last past the generation of the Reform fathers, was translating the Bible into the common tongue so that people could read it in their own language, in language they would understand. That let the genie out of the bottle, so to speak, because then you were no longer dependent upon someone that could read a foreign

tongue, to read a text that was written in a language you didn't understand, to tell you that they were speaking for God. Now you could get access to the text yourself, and you could compare what you were seeing in the clergy with what was written in the biblical text. And the gap between what you saw in the biblical text and what you were seeing in the clergy was so enormous that immediately you began to have the same reaction—once you had access to the Bible—that the Reformation fathers had to Catholicism. But as the Bible has been made available in more and more of the vernacular tongue, what's happened is that Christianity has divided and redivided and redivided again, because now anyone has access to the text.

As we stand here today there is no official registry that we can go to, to say how many different kinds of Christian churches there are but it is estimated that there are at least 40,000 different Christian churches in existence today. You know, the apostle Paul wrote in one of his letters about the hope he had for seeing us all come into the unity of faith. It seems like the more access that we have gained to biblical understanding the more disagreements we've managed to have with one another, which is one of the reasons for the things I said at the very beginning of this talk. We should not let our individual search for truth become a breeding ground for resentments, disagreements and conflict between one another. If you have found some great truth that you can articulate and persuade me also to accept, then I should welcome you in doing that. And if I have some truth that I can present and persuade you to accept, then we're both benefited. But if you and I read these things and study these things, and have our own religious experience, and we accept Christ as a Redeemer, as a Savior, as the Son of God, as what He said He was, why can't we rejoice together in that fact? Because it is greater than any of the petty disagreements that divide us. Christianity needs to take a very sober assessment of itself and decide there is no room for venom in the Christian heart. There is no room for conflict. Celebrate what unites us. And as for the petty disagreements, well, if you're from Jersey you just "fuget 'bout it."

[Question:] Did the Catholic Church ask Luther to retract all 95 Theses?

[Answer:] No. Well, the purpose of the 95 Theses was to demonstrate that the sale of indulgences, which was going on in order to finance St. Peter's Basilica in Rome with a financial deal that the papal signature on the indulgences were given to franchise holders. And then the franchise holders could go around and fill in the name on the indulgence with the papal seal on it and sell that to someone for money, and the guy who was selling it—the franchise holder who was selling that—he got to keep part of the money, and then part of the money went back to Rome. It's like owning a McDonald's franchise. You get to keep part of the money but you've still got to pay some for the franchise holder. They were financing the construction of St. Peter's Basilica by this process of selling.

There were a couple of the 95 Theses (if I can find those real quick), there were a couple of them that I really like a lot. Number 45 and number 87. I could summarize them, but I'd rather read 'em. Well, number 87, for example, Martin Luther was saying that anyone with common sense can think of reasons to doubt the practice of selling indulgences. For example, if the pope really can get people out of purgatory and end

their suffering by a papal decree, why would he not do that just because it's a nice thing to do? Why do you have to pay him to do something that's good?

The entire burden of the 95 Theses does not question the primacy of the pope, the position of the pope, but it says that that primacy and that position needs to be exercised under the constraint of what the scriptures say. And if the pope violates the scriptures then the pope is wrong. He does not possess independent authority to do stuff. You don't get to be God. You have to submit to God, even if you're the pope. So, they didn't condemn them all but the burden of it was offensive.

In that first talk that I gave in Los Angeles, someone listening to that was concerned because I referred..., Jesus Christ's most extensive prophecy is in the 24th chapter of Matthew, where His disciples were asking Him about the future and, among other things, they wanna know about the signs of the times when He's going come. And Christ answers them, and it's..., well, you can read the 24th chapter. There's a lot of really tragic, ugly things that will go on before His coming but it has a happy ending. He's coming, and when He comes He's going to fix everything that's wrong with the world, primarily by destroying the wicked by the brightness of His glory, but if you're not wicked that's still good news.

[Question:] So, this question comes in, and it says: "You addressed this in your lectures. Let's say for argument's sake I believed you. What can or should a university student do? I can't drop out because I would immediately have to pay back student loans. Do I just keep attending school and trust that everything works out? Or let's say I'm in high school. Would you recommend young people even go to college? Should young people who want to be lawyers just quash their dreams because everything is going to hell? That's my general problem with gloom and doom prophecy, it stagnates individual growth and development. People isolate themselves from the rest of the world, spend a bunch of money on guns and emergency supplies, and generally waste their lives living in fear. Is there a balanced approach to watching out for that dastardly thief in the night?"

[Answer:] I would say, finish high school. I would say, go to law school. And, I mean, one of the first things on the agenda that Christ will destroy -- it's not the lawyers, it's the bankers and the insurance companies. They're all evil. [Audience laughter.] But, your student loans won't need to be repaid because there will be nothing left of the institutions who hope to collect on them. You don't live your life in contemplation of the fearful return of the Lord. You live your life in a grateful celebration for everything God has done and given to us.

As I was flying here, we were taking off just as the first rays of the sun were creeping up in the east, and there was this brilliant scarlet ribbon on the horizon. And my wife pointed it out to me (I was sitting in an aisle; the only thing I get to see is the cart they bring you treats), as I looked across at the sunrise, it was spectacular.

Where I live in Utah we have this Wasatch Front. These are jagged granite cliffs that go upward. The top of one of the ski resorts is 11,000 feet. We live at about 4,000 feet. When the sun sets as you are in the valley, you see the sun go down in the west but in the east, on the mountains, you see the sunlight creep up, and creep up the mountain until finally just the very top peaks remain with light. What happens is that the light, as it goes up the mountain in its nightly retreat, because of the refraction of the atmosphere it tends to shift to the blue and to the purple. And every night those mountains..., and it's particularly spectacular when there's snow up there because the hues of the sunlight refraction become very colorful up there.

Now, I happen to like impressionist art, and my favorite impressionist is Monet. We have a couple of Monet -- I mean, they're forgeries -- they were given to me as a fee, we didn't pay for 'em, but they're actual Monet paintings right down to the brush strokes being reproduced, and they're beautiful.

Every night as the sun sets, God does something on the mountains that is never the same, always beautiful, and greater in beauty and splendor than anything Monet ever put on canvas.

We ought to love life, and we oughta love one another, and we oughta pursue our education. And we shouldn't bunker down with guns and ammo, fearfully waiting for a direful end to things. Of all people, Christians should have the most hope, the most optimism, the most vitality, and greatest amount of joy in life. We oughta celebrate every day.

[Question:] Oh, here's a good one: "Having studied evolutionary biology in college, I came to appreciate the vast amounts of evidence for this scientific theory." [I'll pause there. Read *Darwin's Black Box*.] Recent anthropological data (Gobekli Tepe) is pushing the origins of civilization far beyond 4,000 B.C. It is an increasingly tenuous position to accept a strictly literal interpretation of Genesis in regards to creation and chronology, especially among the younger millennial generation I am a part of. Having also had a few mystical experiences that lead me to accept Jesus as Lord, I feel somewhat torn. Whatever I do, seems like I am rejecting truth. Whether I consider ignoring physical scientific evidence or effectively dismissing parts of the Bible, both are not satisfying solutions to me. Is there a way to make secular data fit into the Christians metaphysics?"

[Answer:] Yes, there is. I'm gonna go ahead and answer this fellow, for what it's worth. The problem with biblical literalism is not necessarily that what is in the Bible is untrue but it may be that what is in the Bible is speaking using a vernacular that mankind is unacquainted with. For example, the work of the creation is referred to generally as "a day". There is no reason to believe that calling it a day in the language that gets employed in scripture has reference to anything other than a discrete event. It would be more accurate to say that there were labors that were performed during the incremental progression of the creation which took however long, and when the labor was completed then that labor was called "a day." There is nothing to suggest that the labor

of the first day was exactly the same amount of time as the labor of the second day, nor is there anything to suggest that the labor of the third day was equal in time to either the first or the second, and so on.

How many eons of time were required in order for God, through the process that we see in nature, to form the earth, was the first day. However long it took, through seismic, and volcanic, and other activities to cause the dry land to appear was labor that took however long it took.

In the vernacular of scripture -- the earth is moving in two ways. It is circling the sun on a tilt. Twice a year that tilt aligns so that we have an equinox, which means that there's exactly twelve hours of sunlight and twelve hours of darkness on that one day, twice a year. And then there are solstices, when in the north the days are the longest because it's leaning towards the sun, and when it gets to the other side it's leaning away, and at that moment the nights are very long because in the north you're leaning away from the sun. As it makes this movement in one direction it's also wobbling at the poles.

The earth is not perfectly stable in how its axis fits. It wobbles. It takes 25,900 years roughly for it to complete one circle at the pole. In the ancient vernacular, because of that wobble, we have a pole star. It happens at this moment to be Polaris, but if you go back several thousand years we have a different pole star. That pole star changes.

We also have, around the circumference, a group of constellations that everyone on earth can see. It doesn't matter if you're in the south, it doesn't matter if you're in the north (south being below the equator, not Atlanta; or the north, not meaning Canada, it means everything, the northern hemisphere and the south...). There are a group of constellations everyone can see. There are twelve of them. All twelve of them had a story behind them in the beginning. All twelve of them have symbols that represent Christ. That's for another day.

When the pole star changes, which happens about seven times every 25,900 years. When the pole star changes, anciently that change was called "A New Heaven". Likewise there is a different constellation that appears at sunrise on the vernal equinox, and that constellation tells you what age you're in. Star fields overlap and sometimes there are gaps. Right now we are in an overlap between -- Christ said, "*I will make you fishers of men,*" and the constellation that that age was identified with is Pisces: two fish. One fish caught in the net is endlessly circling the equator, but another fish, and it's much smaller, this other fish is headed to the north, where you will find God.

That constellation is going to be replaced by the One who is coming. We call him Aquarius. We also call him The Waterman. He is pouring out; a new age will come. If you go back far enough, what he is pouring out is two streams. One stream is water, which gives life, and one stream is fire. He who is coming in the great day of the Lord is coming for "*the great (the water) and dreadful (the fire) day of the Lord*", to pour something out. Well, it just so happens that the star fields of these two overlap. If you date the return of the Lord by the star field of Aquarius at its earliest star, then the first

sign of the times of refreshing would have been about in the 1840s, when Joseph Smith was saying that Christ appeared to him and gave him a message to preach. We have not yet fully exited the star field of Pisces.

Now, all of that is to make this comment: When there's a new pole star that's called "a New Heaven." When there's a new constellation on the horizon at the vernal equinox, that's called "a New Earth." There will be "a New Heaven" and there will be "a New Earth" when Christ returns. And all of these are given, as Christ said in Genesis 1:14, for signs and for seasons, and everything testifies of Him.

So, there's a lot of scientific proof, but there's a lot of material in the Bible that is simply misunderstood. This earth is pretty old, and how long it existed before it was considered sufficiently complete for man to occupy it is not to be measured in days, it's to be measured in epochs of time referred to generically as a day, meaning a period, meaning an agenda.

[Question:] "If Christ never had buildings then what is His church and how do you know if you're a part of it?"

[Answer:] Christ and the apostles and the earliest Christians met in homes. They talked on hillsides. They met in places that were convenient but they didn't build buildings. The prophecies predict that in the last days there are going to be only two buildings that matter to God. One of them will be a temple rebuilt in Jerusalem, and the other will be a temple built in the tops of the mountains in a place called Zion. And these two places will be the center of activity.

Now this is an answer to a question but I'm not going to read the question because I didn't print it out. The Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Church split at approximately 1,000 A.D., it's about 1,054 A.D. Martin Luther was generally positive towards the Eastern Orthodox Church. He and they both rejected celibate clergy. Both rejected the pope's supremacy, both rejected purgatory, both rejected indulgences. Martin Luther claimed the Orthodox or Greek Church was proof of Catholic deviation. Luther did not personally attempt to build a bridge to orthodoxy but some of his followers did do so.

Now, I wanted to finish my comments by reading you a few quotes from some of the Protestant leaders. A husband and wife team, William and Catherine Booth, founded the Salvation Army, and I wanna read you a comment of William Booth's. William Booth cautioned us about the trends he saw in both society and religion. Here's his quote: "I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost; Christianity without Christ; forgiveness without repentance; salvation without regeneration; politics without God; and Heaven without Hell."

C.S. Lewis may be one of the most influential Christian apologists that have appeared on the scene. Let me read you a few things from C.S. Lewis. "Each day we are becoming a creature of splendid glory or one of unthinkable horror." "There are only two

kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your (own) way.'

C.S. Lewis was the one that said, "No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good." I really like this comment: "Of all the bad men, religious bad men are the worst." He also made this proposition: "Christianity, if false, is of no importance and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

Dwight Moody (after whom the Moody Bible Institute was named), when he founded it, it had a different name. He said, "Christians should live in the world, but not be filled with it. A ship lives in the water; but if the water gets into the ship, she goes (down) to the bottom. So Christians may live in the world; but if the world gets into them, they sink." He made this observation: "Moses spent forty years thinking he was somebody; forty years learning he was nobody; and forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody."

He said, "Out of 100 men, one will read the Bible, the other 99 will read the Christian," hence your obligation. "The world does not understand theology or dogma, but it understands love and sympathy."

And then this, and I'll end with this. And then if any of you have something you'd like me to comment on I'd be glad to.

There's a great difference between recognizing the signs of the times and knowing the detail of how prophecy will be fulfilled. An example of the difference is found in Matthew. Matthew 2:1-18 tells of wise men who studied the scriptures, watched the signs in the heavens, recognized a star that testified of the birth of the Messiah or newborn King of the Jews, traveled a great distance, perhaps as long as two years to worship him, facilitating fulfilling prophecy by their presence in Jerusalem, and were visited by God in a dream. You know the story. They came, and when they got to Jerusalem they asked Herod, "*Where is he that is born the King of the Jews?*" which caused Herod to say, "Get in here and tell me about this," and his advisors said, "Bethlehem." Not the least out of these should come a Governor. So he sends the wise men then to Bethlehem and says, "Hey, when you find him you return to me and you tell me so that I can go (wink wink, nod nod) worship him too." And of course, they were warned by God not to go back and tell Herod. And when Herod found out that he was not going to be advised to make this job easy, he sent soldiers to kill all the kids two years old and younger. In the meantime, Joseph and Mary were departed into Egypt.

Despite all the wise men were able to know, they did not know where to find the newborn King. They mistakenly went to Herod's people to inquire about Christ's birth. They did not know, and God did not reveal to them, that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. It's unlikely they would have willingly acted to fulfil the Jeremiah 31:15 prophecy of the slaughter of the children, yet Matthew credits their involvement with fulfilling this prophecy.

So ask yourself, can men unwittingly fulfil prophecy? Can anyone, even wise men who are well studied in scripture and prophecy, and acquainted with the heavens and the stars and the signs up there, ever fully understand prophecy?

One of the lessons from the scriptural account is that all wise men whose diligence and faithfulness lead them to understand God's hand is at work, may still not understand how or where God will act. There remain mysteries which God will accomplish but men cannot understand beforehand. If the wise men knew He had been born but could not identify where Christ's birth happened, despite all else they were able to do, then how can anyone know how God will accomplish his strange act in the last days? This is what the Lord has said:

What I have said unto you must needs be, that all men may be left without excuse; That wise men and rulers may hear and know that which they have never considered; That I may proceed to bring to pass my act, my strange act, and perform my work, my strange work, that men may discern between the righteous and the wicked, saith your God (D&C 101:93-95).

Prophecies are not given to know **details** beforehand; they're given so that they, **once fulfilled, prove** that God knew the end from the beginning. I'm here as a witness to tell you: God is working. There are signs in the heavens above, there are signs on the earth below, that testify that He intends to come again. Don't interrupt your life because you want to buy guns and ammo and go live underground somewhere. There's a YouTube song, "You've been living underground, eating from a can, Talking about things you can't understand." Don't be like Reba McEntire and her husband in [the movie] "Tremors" when they slayed the beast with the elephant gun and said, "You broke into the wrong damn rec room." Be like Christ, hopeful and helpful, and positive. He went about doing good. That's who we're supposed to follow, and that's what we're supposed to do. That's how we're supposed to live. Be hopeful, be helpful.

The story of Adam and Eve that I mentioned at the beginning makes every single one of us descendants of a common set of parents. I keep thinking, you know, these "23andMe," these genetic ads that say, figure out who you are and where you reckon from, well, they gathered genetic databases in order to try and segregate us into regions and into groups. But at the end of the day they just don't go back far enough, because if they went back far enough everyone's genetic makeup would be half Adam and half Eve, and you wouldn't spend \$49 to learn that. But if you want to spend \$49 to learn that truth then donate some money to the poor and homeless instead of sending it in elsewhere.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that I didn't come here because I thought it was a good idea, I came here because the Lord asked me to. I've been in now, this is the third location, to accomplish what He's asked me to do, after telling me the things that I ought to say and the subjects that ought to be covered.

I hope you realize that God is real, and that He is as concerned about you and your day, and in your life, as He was concerned about Peter, or Paul, or John, or Mary, or

Elizabeth, or Abraham, or Sarah. Every one of you matter to Him. And if He were to speak to you out of heaven today He would call you by name, just as He has done with everyone to whom He's ever spoken. And if the Lord calls you by name, it's not gonna be by your full legal name, it's not gonna be by what's on your birth certificate. He will call you by that name your best friend knows you, because God is intimate with every one of us. He knows everything, including the desires of your heart. And even though we are all rough customers, the fact is the only reason you're here is because your heart is inclined to follow Him. You're aspirations, your desires and your hopes can be perfect and your conduct can be reprehensible. God takes into account the perfection of your hope and He evaluates you based upon your most noble aspirations. And He's cheering you on to try and get you to move a little closer throughout your life to that ideal, that perfection that you would like to have. We get hungry, we get tired, we get ill, we get weak, and so we excuse ourselves. But through it all we can maintain the aspiration, the hope, the love of Christ. If you do that He will take that into account as He deals with you.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Question and Answer section]

Denver: There's a microphone? Does anyone wanna...? Because we do have to be out of here, and they've got to wrap up. We have one hour before they close and they've got some work to do. If there are questions I'd be happy to respond. If not, then we have people that have work to do. Anyone want the microphone? Okay then. I came a long distance, and I'm hungry. You got ... What? There is a question.

Question #1: The scriptures talk about a day where we're all filled with the spirit. Some call it a Day of Pentecost. Is there another day like that to come?

Denver: Yeah. Yes! That was an easy question. You're talking about the generality of mankind. The gifts of the spirit are intended to flourish in the hearts of those who seek the Lord. There are ways of having that develop in individual lives. But to have a community in which that happens, consider for a moment all of the ills and illnesses, pathologies and defects of any community that you live in.

Within Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost there were a group of believers who had so fully dedicated themselves to the Lord that they had, at that point, all things in common. They were living as a society in a way in which they had consecrated themselves, not only to God but to one another, so that they were all equal with one another. There were two people, a husband and wife, who in that community had lied about what they had done. They had sold property and they had kept back part. In essence, they were trying to live a law that one would live with Christ dwelling among them but this married couple conspired, lied, and then broke any number of the ten commandments, bore false witness, they coveted, they stole, and when confronted they were judged and the wages of what they did resulted in both of them dying. In essence, they committed to live on a level in which sin of that sort, that base of misconduct, is not permitted.

The general outpouring into a community is going to happen with a community of people who are willing to abide by those kinds of terms. You can accomplish it in an individual life but we don't have a society that is sufficiently healed. We have the last days society identified generically by the name Babylon the Great Whore, which is the society in which you live. The Great Whore does not abide the conditions for that outpouring but you as a Christian soul can and should, and therefore, if you do that, you're entitled to that outpouring in your life. But make no mistake about it: If you sign up genuinely and sincerely to follow the Lord, what you're going to encounter is the hostility, the anger, even the rage of this world, 'cause this world is not interested in surrendering to Christ's control. That's why when He comes He's going to judge the world. In the meantime, Christians, sincere Christians, devout ones who will obey Him, are going to encounter a necessary opposition. The challenge is to not let it overwhelm you. And I'd encourage every one of you in your faith to press on and to stay committed. Christ is real and He paid a terrible price, and He did that so that you would not have to pay a price. He suffered for you but He expects that we have not merely belief in Him, but faith in Him, and that we act consistent with our belief. Thank you.

Question #2: I also have a question for a friend. Do you believe Joseph Smith came reincarnated?

Denver: No, I don't believe that anyone comes back here to live a second mortal experience in this creation. I do think that when the scriptures use the phrase, "*worlds without end,*" that the work of God is infinite in scope and reach, and that God's redemptive work is, in each individual case, adapted to the development of the individual until they grow and are fashioned and are developed to the appropriate godly stature that we become like our Lord.

Christ went and He preached to the spirits in prison, meaning that when He died and He went into the place where the dead are, He continued His ministry. Peter writes about that. Well the continuation of a ministry among the dead suggests that when you die there's still work to be done, at least preaching to be done. And if you read real carefully some of the content about the things that occurred before the world, and the things that will occur at the end of the thousand years of peace when Lucifer—Satan—is released, at the end of the thousand years of peace, the very, very beginning of what went on before the world was created, and the very, very end when, after a thousand years of peace Satan is loosed from the pit again, look an awful lot alike. But that's a subject beyond the challenges and the problems of this mortal life and what we today confront and are faced.

There's a lot of stuff in the far distance that aren't relevant for the challenges we face now. In fact, we were just looking at that phrase, "*worlds without end,*" which is how it's rendered. The original language, if you take it literally, What it means is as you look out at the horizon it's something past your ability to see. It's beyond the end of the world as you see it, meaning that what comes after we finish our sojourn here will be trouble for

another day, because sufficient is the evil of this day for the purposes God has in mind for us, and our challenges here.

And I know there are people who believe, look, that you do come back, and I know there are people who think that they're, ya know, Peter, or David, or Solomon, or Isaiah, but I've met too many Peter's to believe all of them, and there's a whole lot of Mary Magdalene's, Martha's, so I don't put any stock in that.

Question #3: What advice would you give to other intellectuals, or even an analytical person, that would struggle with seeking for those answers or those truths that they desire to know, and they're struggling with finding those truths and not allowing those things to drive a wedge in the faith that they put in Christ?

Denver: Yeah, I believe that there is tension, if not outright hostility, between charity as a priority on one hand and knowledge as priority on the other hand, and that as between the two it is more important to acquire the capacity for charity or love of your fellow man than it is to gain understanding. It's like what Paul said, "*If I have all gifts and know all mysteries but have not charity I'm nothing.*" Charity, or the love of your fellow man is the greater challenge and the more relevant one, and when you've acquired that you can add to it knowledge. But knowledge has the ability to render the possessor arrogant and haughty, whereas charity renders the possessor humble. If you want the greatest challenge in life, try loving your fellow man unconditionally, and viewing them as God would view them, and then behaving according to that view. And out of that you will learn a great deal more about Christ than you can simply by studying. Walking in His path is a greater revelation of who He is than anything else that's provided.

Joseph Smith once remarked that, "If you could gaze into heaven for five minutes you would know more about it than if you read every book that has ever been written on the subject." Likewise, if you live charitably for five minutes in the presence of what you would normally condemn, what you would normally find repugnant; if you can deal with that charitably you will understand Christ better than if you spend a lifetime reading books written about Him.

Well, we need to let these fellows wrap up and close their stuff out. Thank you for coming. Thank you for the attention you've paid. And thank all of you who have helped, participated, and sacrificed in order to make this event and the others before this possible. Thank you all.

2018.01.07 Cursed: Denied Priesthood

January 07, 2018

Sandy, Utah

We are going to divide this into two parts. I am going to give a talk, don't know how long it will be, but following the talk there will be questions and answers. The talk I've already written, and if you're interested in seeing it in writing it will go up on my website tonight. The Q&A will be some time after it gets transcribed but a recording will be put somewhere by Reed.

For Joseph Smith, 1838 was a terrible year. Rumors of immorality, begun that year by Oliver Cowdery, were given credibility because Oliver was the scribe who recorded most of the Book of Mormon, and he was a member of the presidency of the Church. Those rumors are still believed by most Mormon sects, including the LDS church. Cowdery's insinuations resulted in him being brought before a Church court on April 12, 1838 by the Far West High Council. A total of nine charges were brought against Cowdery.

At that time, Cowdery was the Assistant President to the Church and respected as the "second elder." Cowdery had been one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon and was responsible for selecting and ordaining the first Twelve Apostles. Cowdery's Church trial was perhaps the most significant to be held in the history of the Church.

The nine charges against Cowdery included this one: "For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith Junior by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery etc." After taking evidence, the High Council ultimately ex-communicated Oliver Cowdery and cleared Joseph of the charge. The minutes of the High Council said they dealt with "the girl business," meaning Oliver's allegations against Joseph. Joseph was exonerated. (See Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 162-163.)

The un-substantiated charge that Joseph was an adulterer has remained with Mormonism, moving from rumor, to widespread accusation, and finally into accepted LDS history. Today, essentially every Mormon sect either reluctantly admits, or vigorously advocates that carnal relations with plural wives originated with Joseph Smith, and therefore Oliver Cowdery was justified in accusing Joseph Smith of adultery. The closer the historical record is examined, however, the less evidence there appears to support Joseph as the instigator of sexual relations with multiple women. That same historical record has more evidence to implicate Brigham Young and consider that he changed what Joseph Smith believed. Joseph denounced adultery, and fathered children with Emma Smith alone. Brigham Young vigorously advocated carnal sexuality in the here-and-now with multiple women as a religious sacrament.

Unlike Joseph Smith, Brigham Young not only publicly advocated the practice but also fathered children with many women. Joseph denounced it publicly and excommunicated those he found engaged in it, and fathered children only with Emma Smith, his lawful

wife. Despite this clear difference, the LDS Church claims that Brigham Young only practiced publicly what Joseph Smith did privately.

Even if you believe the LDS account of history (which I do not), the differences between the public statements and open conduct of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young could not be more dissimilar. The way the LDS institution has reconciled the great disparity between them is to assert Joseph was a liar, and Brigham Young was not! They cannot be reconciled, and one of them will be damned, (if you believe D&C 76:103-106).

Oliver Cowdery was not alone in forsaking Mormonism and Joseph Smith in 1838. Many of the most prominent members and leaders of the Church likewise abandoned Joseph that year. David Whitmer, another of the Three Witnesses, resigned his membership in 1838, but he was not formally excommunicated. His brother John Whitmer, the Church historian, was excommunicated and took the history with him, refusing to return it to Joseph. Prominent and respected Mormons, Hiram Page (one of the Eight Witnesses) and W.W. Phelps (a member of the high council), also left the church in 1838. So did three members of the twelve, and other Church leaders and members.

On July 4, 1838 Sidney Rigdon delivered the infamous "Salt Sermon," warning that dissenters were worthy of being "trodden, like salt that lost its savor" under the feet of the saints. Because of the talk, former close friends and Church leaders Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, W.W. Phelps and Lyman E. Johnson were warned to leave Far West or face "a fatal calamity." They became enemies of Joseph. Mormons were in turmoil. In response to the threats against these men, all but Phelps fled Far West.

Rigdon's Salt Sermon did not just threaten disaffected Mormons. He also threatened (and these are his words:) a "war of extermination" against the non-Mormons of Missouri if they did not stop annoying the Mormons. The threats ignited anti-Mormon opposition. Many of the disaffected Mormons changed sides and joined the Missouri mobs attacking Mormon settlements. These former leaders used their credibility as insiders to incite greater anger and hostility toward the Church. The animosities soon turned into armed conflict and arson.

Missourians believed Mormons threatened them. Mormons thought they were acting in defense, and justified their own violence as "defending" themselves. Civil order broke down completely. Historians have named the resulting conflict "The Mormon War." Angry Mormons fought against angry Missourians. Both sides blamed the other for causing the violence.

In October 1838, responding to the outbreak of hostility between Mormons and Missourians, Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs issued an "Exterminating Order" directing that Mormons be slain or driven from the State of Missouri. The Order gave violence against Mormons legitimacy and made Mormon responses an act of war against the state.

Many of these former Mormon leaders signed affidavits accusing Joseph Smith and his Church organization of criminal and moral wrongdoing. Thomas Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, signed an affidavit on October 24, 1838 condemning and blaming Joseph for causing all of the violence. The Marsh allegations were endorsed by a second affidavit from fellow apostle Orson Hyde. The Marsh affidavit was signed the same day open warfare commenced and stated in part that, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet, had preached [at Far West]...that all the Mormons who refused to take up arms, if necessary, in difficulties with the citizens, should be shot, or otherwise put to death[.]" The affidavits identified Joseph Smith as the one responsible for Mormon violence directed at Missouri citizens. After recounting circumstantial evidence of thefts by Mormons that he claimed were supervised by Joseph, the Marsh affidavit stated:

"They have among them a company consisting of all that are considered true Mormons, called the Danites, who have taken an oath to support the heads of the church in all things that they say or do, whether right or wrong. ... On Saturday last, I am informed by the Mormons, that they had a meeting at Far West at which they appointed a company of twelve, by the name of the destruction company, for the purpose of burning and destroying; ... they passed a decree that no Mormon dissenter should leave Caldwell County alive; & that such as attempted to do it should be shot down & sent to tell their tale in eternity. In a conversation between Doct. Avard & other Mormons, said Avard proposed to start a pestilence among the gentiles, as he called them, by poisoning their corn, fruit &c and saying it was the work of the Lord. And said Avard advocated lying for the support of their religion, and said it was no harm to lie for the Lord.

[Now, I'm interrupting this affidavit for a moment because the concept of "lying for the Lord" got exported into Utah Mormonism as an acknowledged and legitimate part of what was expected of a good Mormon. You lie for the Lord, the originator being Sampson Avard.]

"The plan of said Smith, the Prophet, is to take this State; and he professes to his people to intend taking the United States, and ultimately the whole world. This is the belief of the Church, and my own opinion of the Prophet's plans and intentions. It is my opinion that neither said Joseph Smith, the Prophet, nor any one of the principal men who is firm in the faith could be indicted for any offense in the county of Caldwell. (Caldwell is where the Mormons settled and they ran all of the judicial proceedings there.) The Prophet inculcates the notion, & it is believed by every true Mormon, that Smith's prophecies are superior to the law of the land. I have heard the prophet say that he should yet tread down his enemies & walk over their dead bodies; that if he was not let alone he would be a second Mahamet [Mohammad] to the generations, & that he would make it one gore of blood from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic ocean. That like Mahamet, whose motto in treating for peace was Alcoran [Al Koran] or the sword, so should it be eventually with us - Jo Smith or the sword.

"These last statements were made during the last summer. ..."

In calmer days, both Marsh and Hyde would recant their sworn affidavits. But in 1838 their statements were thought to be entirely truthful, and provided justification for the Missouri political leaders, militia and general population to see Joseph Smith and Mormons as a clear and present danger to them and to their property.

The first skirmishes between Mormons and Missourians began in August 1838 at a polling station when Mormons tried to vote. A band of Mormons led by Sampson Avard confronted election judge Adam Black about the failure to protect Mormon voting rights. Joseph Smith was among these Mormons. Judge Black attributed threats of violence to Avard, and said Joseph did not approve and instead possessed no such heart for violence.

In the aftermath of the fight at the polling station, Avard's authority to direct the Mormon militia was removed by Joseph Smith and Avard was reassigned as a surgeon. The re-assignment was because Joseph did not want violence to be used to resolve conflicts and Avard thought otherwise. Avard testified in November [1838], "I once had a command as an officer, but Joseph Smith, jr., removed me from it, and I asked him the reason, and he assigned that he had another office for me. Afterwards Mr. Rigdon told me I was to fill the office of surgeon, to attend to the sick and wounded." (Testimony before Judge Austin A. King, 5th District Court of Missouri, November 12, 1838.)

Avard continued to support violence against perceived enemies, and formed a group that came to be known as the "Danites." Joseph denied that he approved or supported Avard's group or violent actions. Historians have debated the question of Joseph's involvement with the Danite organization and activities. Joseph's denials have been questioned largely because of the testimony against Joseph given by Avard in late 1838 before Judge King.

While Avard was acting in the role of a surgeon, the battle of Crooked River was fought on October 24, 1838. The Extermination Order was issued immediately after, on October 27, 1838. Three days later, October 30, 1838 at Haun's Mill, the Missouri Militia, led by Colonel William Jennings, Sheriff of Livingston County, massacred a group of Mormons, some even after they surrendered. None of the Missouri Militia were killed. The Mormon dead totaled at least 17, including a 78-year-old Revolutionary War veteran, whose body was decapitated.

Joseph Smith was tricked by George Hinkle into surrendering at the city of Far West while it was under siege. He thought he was going to meet with Missouri Militia leaders to negotiate peace. Hinkle lied to Joseph and brought him and other leaders to the militia, to be immediately arrested for treason.

On November 1st Joseph was sentenced to death "at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning in a public square at Far West." Militia leader Doniphan refused to carry out the order, and Joseph's life was spared. In the lead up to his arrest, and then during imprisonment, disaffected Mormons were far more dangerous and threatening to Joseph than the non-Mormons. It was Mormon lies about him that caused the peril.

Joseph's original arrest at Far West was arranged by an agreement George Hinkle made with the commander of the Missouri Militia. The church leaders were inside Far West, which at the time was fortified and would be difficult for the militia to take without serious loss of life. Hinkle was sent to negotiate with the militia poised outside Far West as the representative for the community.

Hinkle agreed with militia commander Colonel Lucas to surrender church leaders to the militia, but lied to Joseph and the others. He did not disclose they would be arrested, but led them to believe they were going to meet with Colonel Lucas to negotiate an end to the conflict. Joseph was surprised when Hinkle led him into the camp as a prisoner. George Hinkle was a traitor.

Joseph Smith wrote several documents while imprisoned in Missouri. Specific dissidents are named and their treachery explained in those documents. The individuals and their wrongdoing are set out in what I am about to read:

From jail Joseph Smith petitioned for habeas corpus. In the petition he mentioned George Hinkle. This is an excerpt from that habeas corpus petition:

"Joseph Smith Jr is now unlawfully confined and restrained of his liberty in Liberty jail Clay County (Mo) that he has been restrained of his liberty near five months your petitioners clame that the whole transaction which has been the cause of his confinement was (is) unlawfull from the first to the Last he was taken from his home by a fraude being practised upon him by a man by the name of George M Hinkle..." (JSP, Documents Vol. 6, p. 344; as in original.)

Hinkle is mentioned in another letter, along with John Corrill, Reed Peck, David Whitmer and W.W. Phelps. This is Joseph's letter:

"Look at Mr [George M.] Hinkle. A wolf in sheep's clothing. Look at his brother John Corrill Look at the beloved brother Reed Peck who aided him in leading us, as the savior was led, into the camp as a lamb prepared for the slaughter and a sheep dumb before his shearer so we opened not our mouth But these men like Balaam being greedy for a reward sold us into the hands of those who loved them, for the world loves his own. I would remember W[illiam] W. Phelps who comes up before us as one of Job's comforters. God suffered such kind of beings to afflict Job, but it never entered into their hearts that Job would get out of it all. This poor man who professes to be much of a prophet has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel, and this ass not being of the same kind of Balaams therefore the angel notwithstanding appeared unto him yet he could not penetrate his understanding sufficiently so but what he brays out cursings instead of blessings." (JSP, Documents Vol. 6, p. 300-301; as in original.) [That is an allusion to an incident in the Old Testament.]

Sampson Avard led the Danites, a secret Mormon, quasi-military organization that terrorized Missourians and exacted a revenge against them. They burned houses and engaged in assaults to retaliate against the local non-Mormons. Avard was responsible for Joseph, Hyrum and others being held on the charge of treason. Without Avard's testimony it was unlikely for enough evidence to be shown for probable cause to hold them on the charge of treason. Joseph wrote from jail about Avard the following:

"We have learned also since we have been in prison that many false and pernicious things, which were calculated to lead the saints far astray and to do great harm (have been taught by Dr. [Sampson] Avard) as coming from the Presidency and we have reason to fear (that) many (other) designing and corrupt characters like unto himself (have been teaching many things) which the Presidency never knew of being taught in the Church by anybody until after they were made prisoners, which if they had known of, they would have spurned them and their authors from them as they would the gates of hell. Thus we find that there has been frauds and secret abominations and evil works of darkness going on leading the minds of the weak and unwary into confusion and distraction, and palming it all off all the time upon the presidency while mean time the Presidency were ignorant as well as innocent of these things, which were practicing in the Church in their name[.]" (JSP, Documents Vol. 6, p. 306)

Joseph wrote about the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon (David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris) along with William McLellin, John Whitmer, Thomas Marsh and Orson Hyde. All these were identified in the following condemnation written by Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail:

"Such characters as [William E.] McLellin, John Whitmer, O[liver] Cowdery, Martin Harris, who are too mean to mention and we had liked to have forgotten them. [Thomas B.] Marsh & [Orson] Hyde whose hearts are full of corruption, whose cloak of hypocrisy was not sufficient to shield them or to hold them up in the hour of trouble, who after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of God and become again entangled and overcome the latter end is worse than the first. But it has happened unto them according to the words of the savior, the dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Again if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking (for) of judgement and fiery indignation to come which shall devour these adversaries. For he who despiseth Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses of how much more severe punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath sold his brother and denied the new and everlasting covenant[.]" (JSP Documents Vol. 6, pp. 307-308.)

W.W. Phelps was another Mormon dissenter who was removed from leadership and then excommunicated in June 1838. He was one of the witnesses who testified against Joseph Smith in the Missouri treason hearings and accused him of being responsible for violence and treason. Phelps may have been motivated to testify against Joseph Smith to protect himself from criminal charges. He had been seen by Patrick Lynch, the

clerk in Stolling's grocery store, as one of the Mormon mob that robbed the store and then burned it. (JSP Documents Vol. 6, pp. 417-419.)

Joseph was not fooled by these men. He recognized they were traitors and liars. But he revealed to his wife his own spirit of forgiveness about them. Writing from jail to his wife, after 5 months and 5 days of imprisonment, Joseph counseled Emma "neither harbor [sic] a spirit of revenge." (JSP, Documents Vol. 6, p. 405.) Joseph's advice to his wife contrasts sharply with the revealed word from the Lord to Joseph.

Early in 1839, after nearly a half-year of imprisonment, Joseph Smith wrote a letter from Liberty Jail to the saints. The letter included several revelations. One revelation declared these words:

"[C]ursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed saith the Lord and cry they have sin[n]ed when they have not sined before me saith the Lord but have done that which was meat in mine eyes and which I commanded them but those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin and are the children of disobedience themselves and those who swear false against my servants that they might bring them unto bondage and death. Wo unto them because they have offended my little ones they shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house their basket shall not be full their houses and their barnes shall famish and they themselves shall be dispised by those that flattered them they shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation it had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks and they having drownd in the depth of the see..." (JSP, Documents Vol. 6, p. 366; all as in original.)

It was the Lord who said those men who bore false witness against Joseph "shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation[.]" Even as late as the 1830s it was possible for men to so offend God that He will curse both them and their posterity from any right to the priesthood.

Such a heavy cursing raises two questions: First, upon whom was this curse imposed? Second, what did they do to merit such a heavy burden?

The probable candidates who earned this cursing are those Joseph identified in his letters describing the lies and false testimony against him. They were: George Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, Orson Hyde and W. W. Phelps. Each of these men and their wrongdoings are mentioned by Joseph Smith in his correspondence from jail in Missouri.

The three witnesses to the Book of Mormon are in almost every priesthood line of authority throughout Mormonism. Think of the irony of that for a moment. They were cursed and "shall not have right to the priesthood nor their posterity after them from generation to generation" yet Mormons point to them as the source through which the priesthood authority has descended until today.

This loss was because God sent a messenger, Joseph Smith, to say what God gave him to speak as God's message to that generation. But these men rejected the messenger and fought against him. They accused Joseph of wrongdoing and sin when there was none.

What are the implications today for those historians and institutions who, like Oliver Cowdery, say Joseph Smith was an adulterer and a liar? Are they any different from those who testified against him in 1838 and 1839? It calls to mind another revelation God declared while Joseph remained in Liberty Jail:

"Fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee; While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand. And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors." (D&C 122:1-3.)

Are fools who hold Joseph Smith in derision today any less accountable?

I DO NOT believe Joseph Smith was an adulterer. He was not a liar, nor a hypocrite. But almost every Mormon institution, and certainly the largest ones, either proclaim or admit Joseph was all these things. I do not. I think he was pure in heart, noble, and virtuous. Must a person themselves be pure in heart, wise, noble, and virtuous before they qualify to seek worthy counsel, authority and blessings through Joseph Smith's legacy?

One of the most ghastly legacies still happening as a result of Brigham Young's openly adulterous version of Mormonism is best understood in a recent article in a December 28th Salt Lake Tribune edition. This is the title of the article: *After polygamist leaders used underage girls for sex, lawsuit says, one teen was forced to be a scribe for the rituals*. The article describes the allegations in a newly filed lawsuit against FLDS leaders. Among other things it relates the following:

"Starting when she was 8 years old, the woman [victim] says, she would be taken from her home, wearing a bag over her head, to an unknown location — typically an FLDS temple in the Colorado City, Ariz., area or other church- or trust-owned properties — where she would be assigned a number for a religious ritual, according to the lawsuit.

There, she was reportedly sexually assaulted by the Jeffses, Nielsen or other church members and leaders. When the men weren't assaulting her, she says, they watched."

While these are unproven allegations at present, the lawsuit will be based on these and other horrific allegations. These contemptible deviant sexual practices are an outgrowth of the legacy bequeathed to the LDS by Brigham Young. Carol Lynn Pearson's recent book, *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy*, recounts how plural wivery continues to invade and haunt the thinking of LDS Mormon women. Though the LDS church finally abandoned the practice in 1904, this cancer originated with it. I do not believe the

deviant sexual legacy is Joseph's, who denounced adultery, but is Brigham's, who celebrated sexual access to multiple women as a religious sacrament.

How many descendants of George Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, Orson Hyde and W. W. Phelps today think they hold priesthood, when God said they were cursed as part of these men's posterity? It would be interesting to know how many men today are cursed and have forfeited any right to priesthood because they, like those who were responsible for Joseph's imprisonment, foolishly hold Joseph in derision.

As for myself, I believe Joseph when a sermon of his on May 26, 1844 is quoted in DHC 6:411: "What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can find only one." He made this comment in response to the false accusations contained in the Nauvoo Expositor.

I believe Joseph when he, referring to the 1835 D&C Section 101, affirmed it was his belief that: "Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again." I believe Joseph Smith was truthful when he, as editor of the Times and Seasons, disavowed polygamy and stated the foregoing verse was "the only rule allowed by the church." (Times and Seasons, vol. 3, p. 909 (1842).) He repeated that same position again at Times and Seasons, vol. 3, p. 939 (1842).

In 1844 Joseph and Hyrum Smith announced the excommunication of Hiram Brown for (and this was the charge): "preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan." (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, p. 423 (1844).)

Hyrum Smith, with Joseph's approval, published a statement denying plural wives or polygamy, explaining all such teaching is false doctrine: "... some of your elders say, that a man having a certain priesthood, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrine, [for] there is no such doctrine taught here; neither is there any such thing practiced here." (Times and Seasons, vol. 5, p. 474 (That was in March of 1844).)

God identified those who deride Joseph and Hyrum Smith as "fools." Writing histories and teaching as doctrine that Joseph and Hyrum were liars is, to any reasonable mind, "derision" of them. Like those condemned in 1839, should all who deride Joseph as a liar today question their claim to hold priesthood authority? Has God continued to curse both them and their posterity from any right to the priesthood?

As explained in the talk on Priesthood given in Orem, Utah on November 2, 2013, priesthood is a fellowship. Joseph Smith was clearly in fellowship with God and angels, and therefore one whose priesthood included the ministering of angels, the Son of God, and God the Father. He held the priesthood. Why would anyone want to have fellowship

with someone they regard as a liar, and an adulterer, and a hypocrite? Why would they want that fellowship?

That is the prepared comments. I did a quick check and none of those guys are in my line of authority and none of them are in my genealogy. Now you are all going to go check to see if you're descended from any of the names. Does anyone have any questions?

Cursed: Denied Priesthood Q&A

Denver Snuffer

January 07, 2018

[0:36:47] That is the prepared comments. I did a quick check and none of those guys are in my line of authority and none of them are in my genealogy. Now you are all going to go check to see if you're descended from any of the names. Does anyone have any questions?

Question #1: On that line, whether you're a direct descendant or trace your line of authority, you mentioned in Talk 10 at least, maybe other talks or places, that we ought to keep track of our line of authority from the LDS Church. When you couple that with Heber J. Grant's double decade of not conferring priesthood, why is it important for us to continue to trace it there when we seem to have had, in my belief, a renewal of that authority and sort of a restart. In other words, has the line of authority begun again anew today in our day, and why do we have to keep tracing it, if so?

Denver: There are actually two reasons for accomplishing it in that fashion. It's probable that because he put down, he suppressed the righteous priests who were older, more experienced people in his kingdom when wicked King Noah reconstituted the priesthood and called younger, more ambitious people that were more amenable to the corrupt ambitions of King Noah, that Alma's participation in the court of King Noah was reckoned from an ordination that came from the wicked King. When Alma heard the message of Abinidi he went out and he sought to repent. Then, when he performed the first baptism of Helam, before doing so, he did what you did before blessing the sacrament, and that was to ask God for authority to proceed, and then he proceeded to baptize both Helam and himself and started it anew. The Book of Mormon mentions that people ordain according to the gifts and power that is in them, given by God.

In order for us to accomplish what presently needs to be done we need to have the ability to spontaneously move this work forward globally. A young man who is a returned LDS missionary who had been ordained an Elder in the LDS Church became disaffected, kept his testimony of Joseph, the Book of Mormon, the Restoration, but what he saw in the Church convinced him that the Church itself had little if anything to offer him any longer. As a result of his prayerful searching and studying he became convinced that there was something afoot that God was doing right now among us. He contacted people through Request Baptism and the fellowship locator and began a

series of correspondence. Because of a whole lot of complications no one was able to go to Africa where this fellow is located in order to minister there. But he had a line of authority from the Church, and so he was walked through the process of going to God and praying that God ratify what he'd been given so that he could perform baptisms. On December 29th, I don't know how many days ago that was, a week or so ago, 22 people were baptized in Uganda using authority from heaven; that once God said to him, "You may proceed," is exactly the same as Alma being told to go forward with Helam and thereafter with others. We do not need to send people all over the world. We have the ability, because of what has been put in place, to spontaneously have this arise globally and we just had an example of that occurring.

I've mentioned this before. Largely the purpose of Aaronic priesthood is to curse people, and the purpose of the Melchizedek priesthood is to bless people. Aaronic priesthood is a fairly durable kind of priesthood. It was what was involved in all kinds of rites and performances under the Law of Moses which were pretty easy to run afoul of and wind up in a state of uncleanness or ceremonial condemnation, and you had to renew – heavens, the High Priest had to renew. He was the top of the pyramid. You had to go through the Day of Atonement ceremonies, you had to purge from top to bottom, and then everyone was expected to purge with some regularity. Even a woman's regular monthly cycle resulted in ceremonial uncleanness requiring renewal. Childbirth was considered something that required a sacrifice and a ceremonial cleansing. Every time you turned around under the Law of Moses you became unclean, and every time you turned around under the Law of Moses you had to fetch another animal, run up to the temple, offer sacrifice, and undo the ceremonial uncleanness. The purpose of the Aaronic priesthood ministry was to bring you under condemnation regularly. Well, it's pretty durable precisely because of its functionality.

When the Aaronic priesthood was restored a promise was given or a timeframe for its persistence was described, depending on whether you listen to the Oliver Cowdery account or the Joseph Smith account. It's supposed to endure that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering in righteousness unto the Lord, or until the sons of Levi do offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness. Well, that event has not occurred. It's persistent.

Joseph Smith said all priesthood is Melchizedek but there are different portions or degrees of it. When you carve it all the way down to the least of these, the Aaronic priesthood, it holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Angels were the source from which priesthood was restored. Angels in turn can lead people to the Son of God. The Son of God can take a person to the throne of the Father. Every bit of what is to be accomplished through priesthood is possible to achieve so long as you get Aaronic priesthood into the hands of someone. Looking at the lay of the land today there are not many who can say that they have been in fellowship with angels or realized the blessings of Aaronic priesthood. There are fewer still who can say that they have been in fellowship with Christ, and there are only a small handful who have been in fellowship with the Father. That doesn't matter because everything that is necessary in order to

start down the pathway comes as a consequence of receiving some portion of priesthood.

In my own case I reckon four lines of priesthood. I reckon one from Aaronic ordination. I reckon another from Melchizedek and ordination as an Elder, and I reckon another, as happenstance with habit, priesthood was conferred again when I became a high priest, and then the fourth is something that involved God himself. But I don't think I would have gotten the fourth without accepting all of the work that had been left behind by the prophet Joseph Smith and respecting the patterns that had been put here. True enough, they've been corrupted. True enough, they've been compromised, but God's plan for His children is capable of being accomplished and the work that God begins is resilient enough to overcome a lot of failure.

You look at Caiaphas prophesying that it is better that one man should perish than that the people should be destroyed, which he spoke not of himself but because the Spirit moved upon him to speak those words. That's confirmed in the gospels in Acts. That's confirmed. What that is saying, is that God is capable of using the guy who in his corruption intended to say, we have to kill Jesus because he's going to disrupt our culture, when others hearing that statement said, of course, Christ is going to die to redeem his people from their sins because he is the offering that all of those rites under the Law of Moses pointed forward to, and so he will be the offering of sin, so that the people are not lost. It doesn't have anything to do with preserving the Jewish hierarchy, the Sanhedrin, and the high priest in Jerusalem, it had to do with redeeming mankind.

Question #2: I have a question to add to that. I've been excommunicated. Twelve years from now I'll have a boy, a son, I don't know if age matters. How would that child get priesthood? Would it go through my line of authority? Would it be exactly the same?

Denver: It's your obligation and your right as a father to ordain him. I would give to him every line of authority that had been handed to you, and it doesn't matter. Hand it to him. Say, these are the lines of authority through which priesthood comes down to you. I find it really ironic that the three witnesses are included in the bunch of folks that this disbaring from priesthood includes because they're almost universally in everyone's line of authority. Which means that you can be in the role and then you can get kicked out of the role, but while you're in the role and you set something in motion, people that receive what was set in motion go on and you do not. You lose out. Your right got removed from you.

Question #3: We're removing Section 20. What is the role of offices? Is there even a role?

Denver: Orson Hyde got excluded. If you read the writings of Joseph Smith from Liberty Jail and the revelation, the affidavit that he signed seconding the Marsh affidavit condemning Joseph and making him responsible, which at that moment was designed to get Joseph killed, it was designed to have him executed by the State of Missouri. If he's included in the group, his position in the Quorum of the Twelve was suspended and

then he came back after it was safe and they were relocated in Commerce, later Nauvoo, Illinois, defended his position and made some apologies, and he was reinstated into the Quorum of the Twelve, and he continued to function as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve from then until his death. He held the office of apostle, likely with no priesthood authority, but held the office.

If you want to create offices people can create offices. Offices in the Church are a matter of vote by the members putting them into a position. Technically, every time we have a conference someone ought to be a recorder for the conference. Someone ought to be chairman for the conference. We don't do that because all of these things get organized informally and the people who are working on them sort that out among themselves spontaneously, voluntarily, and cooperatively. And then it's over with. But you could if you wanted to, for every conference elect a chairman for the conference and elect a recorder. Because it is simply an office there is no reason why you couldn't elect a woman to be the chairman of a general conference or a regional conference. There is no reason why you couldn't elect a woman to be a recorder. We have associated in the LDS tradition in contrast to the Community of Christ tradition. In the LDS tradition we have associated some of the offices in the Church with men to the point that it is exclusively the right of a man to hold that office and some with women, in which it's not exclusive but it is often the case. For example, a Relief Society president could be a man, if he were elected to the office. The LDS Church has a practice of not doing that. A Primary president could be a man or a woman. A Sunday School president could be a man or a woman, but as soon as you get over into a deacon's quorum then they say no, hands off on women.

Making offices of the Church coincident with priesthood authority... Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, for example, were elected to be the first elders of the Church in 1830. The Melchizedek priesthood would not be restored until 1831 but they held the office of elder by the people accepting them by their vote from 1830 – they could have elected them to be high priests. They could have elected them to be the presiding moose. They could elect them to be the grand – whatever! Choose a title, have everyone vote, hey, you hold the office. That's what Brigham Young said qualified him to be the Church President. He held an election and he won the election. Admittedly it was at Winter Quarters and it didn't involve anything more than a conference that got gathered at that point to sustain him, but when he got back to the Salt Lake Valley and said, I now hold the office of Church President because I got elected at a General Conference, the only choice was to blow the Church apart into conflict or accept the claim.

Offices and positions in an organization are not necessarily proof of possession of priestly authority. Someone raised the problem of Heber J. Grant's practice of ordaining people to an office but not conferring upon them priesthood, a practice that persisted for about 20 years. John Taylor predicted that there would come a time when members put people in the Church claiming to hold priestly authority would not know whether or not they actually did. I guess the proof is in the pudding in whether or not angels minister and other things happen, which if they do is probably pretty good evidence, and if it doesn't it maybe raises a question about, well maybe I ought to be re-ordained. I would

use and rely on the LDS lines of authority until they get displaced at some point in the future. But right now for this incipient work we really need as broad a base from which to begin to change the direction of the decay and renew the direction in the hopes of restoration so that we get far enough along that God approves of some of the things that we're doing and gets behind it. I think the last conference up in Boise is evidence that God's somewhat approving, even if He is somewhat scolding, yeah, I get it.

Question #4: So you said it is not necessarily evidence of priestly authority. Is there ever a case where it actually supplies priestly authority?

Denver: The focus of attention on priesthood really skews what may be most important. It really does distort the whole picture. All of the miraculous things that Melchizedek accomplished – quenching the violence of fire, closing the mouths of lions, causing rivers to run out of their course – all of those things were accomplished by Melchizedek *without* the priesthood. When Paul goes through the list of things that got accomplished by faith he's talking about the power of faith; he's not talking about priesthood, or ordination, or office, or authority. The fact is that most of what we think belongs to the franchise called "priesthood" really should be viewed as the evidence or the absence of faith. Priesthood has a really limited bundle of rights and responsibilities that, at its most basic level, involves baptism and blessing the sacrament. At its most basic level.

Question #5: Would it be fair to say then that the overemphasis on priesthood may be something that has caused us to have an overabundance of damning traditions?

Denver: Yes, because what people regard the priesthood as, is as a right of government and as a right of control. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood. Well, I'm your president, therefore I'm in control here, and my presidency reckons from priesthood, which is only men can hold it. Therefore I have the right to control not only you but your wife too, because she's subordinate to you, so you're subordinate to me too, both of you. Now I'm in charge. Here's what we're gonna do. It's ridiculous!

Comment: I have a comment.

Denver: No, I didn't allow you because I'm in control. [Audience laughter.]

Comment: Good luck with that.

Question #6A: This will change the topic a little bit. As a warning in a way – I don't know if it's because my head is in the end of Alma and the beginning of Helaman and I'm seeing Gadianton robbers starting to come in, and all the lying, and the scandals that go on that leads to murder, and this is exactly what I'm seeing. I see this as a warning to us as a people. At the end you said the fellowship is communing with the Father and Christ, and there be no lying or contention between that person and the Father, and if us as a group want to have that communion as a Zion with the Father there can't be any lying or mistrust or scandal among us.

Comment: Lying for power.

Question #6B: That is what I'm seeing. Maybe my brain is too focused on the Book of Mormon.

Denver: Priesthood, ambition, and pride, they almost inevitably go together. There are many called but few are chosen, and the fact of being chosen is impaired or altogether prevented because hearts are too much set on the things of this world. We really misplace the focus. What matters most, the weightier matters, mercy, justice, love, the things that Christ called attention to, the weightier matters are what matter far more than whether or not someone is a mission president, or a stake president, or a deacon's quorum president, or a relief society president, or asked to talk in KSL TV's live broadcast of a General Conference. None of that matters. What matters is whether or not you take Christ at His word and then you try to do what He tells us to do in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is a blueprint for Zion, it's not a blueprint for just having a low crime society with people in vastly different economic strata, in which some are given extraordinary advantages because of their education and the wealth of their family and some are deprived.

There's a short story by Mark Twain I like a lot. It's called *Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*. This is an American humorist's telling about the afterlife that is largely based doctrinally on D&C Section 76, covers the same sort of differentiated afterlife, but there people are recognized and respected for who they really are, not necessarily for what they achieved in this life.

Captain Stormfield wants to go meet the greatest general that ever lived, and of course, since he's in heaven, your wishes are all granted, so they're taking Captain Stormfield to go see the greatest general that ever lived. On his way he's wondering and guessing. He's guessing about Alexander the Great, he's guessing about Napoleon, he's throwing out some of these names. I forget which one, it may have been Napoleon. He said, "Oh yeah, Napoleon is with him, he polishes his boots, he helps take care of his stuff." Then he wants to know, "Well who is it then, who is the greatest general that ever lived?" and he's given a name. I don't remember the name, it was Fred something, just some name that means nothing to any of us, and Captain Stormfield says, "I've never heard of him. What battles did he win?" And the answer is, "Oh, he was never in a battle, he was a shoe cobbler in New England. But if he'd ever commanded he would have been the greatest general that ever lived, and here we recognize people for what they really are, not for what they accomplished there." What was in his heart was the greatest general that ever lived. That's who you want to be, the greatest Christian that ever lived.

Question #7A: You had that list of people who, their priesthood was terminated and would not persist from generation to generation, there's no limit to the number of generations that was given but let's just assume for a minute to the third and fourth generation, because that seems to be a common...

Denver: That seems to be a common sort of thing.

Question #7B: What about those people? What about people who are direct or other descendents of them who are alive now or who were alive, who might be in priesthood line and have transmitted.... I'm going to go back and look through my lines as well and just see where we are, but what if....

Denver: I was really hoping to find at least one in one of the lines but I couldn't find any of them in mine.

Question #7C: What about their descendants? Are they eligible now? Should we be careful about to whom we ordain priesthood?

Denver: I would say that whoever thinks that they fall within the category probably ought to make it a matter of not just personal prayer but some sincere.... What provoked the curse was derision, rejection, and conspiracy of Joseph Smith. Almost every problem that we encounter in this life requires repentance in order to fix the problem that we've uncovered in this life. How do you fix the problem in which rejection, derision, conspiracy to destroy Joseph provoked God's ire? One of the ways to do that would be to say, let me see what I can do to combat the lies, the derision, the misrepresentations, and the rejection of someone God sent to try and save a fallen world.

If anything, Joseph Smith understated the significance of him, his role, and what God was trying to accomplish through him. Some of the statements that get construed as evidence that Joseph had delusions of grandeur, if you try to understand what the man was saying, instead tell you a whole lot that's extraordinarily positive about the man. For example, he said, "I have more to boast of than any man. I have more to boast of than Peter, and the apostles and even Jesus couldn't keep the church together, but I've managed to keep the church together." If you're acquainted with Christian history, Joseph is absolutely right. The organization of the New Testament church in Christ's day did not survive the lives of those apostles. In fact, by the time they were dead you had Pauline Christianity, and –you had Petrine Christianity, you had Mathayan Christianity. You had different brands of Christianity and they were dissimilar enough that some of them looked at others of them and said, we don't have much in common because it was never integrated into a whole. Paul writes about "how I went up to Jerusalem and withstood Peter to his face." Why is that? Because Paul considered himself possessor of his own dispensation and therefore not accountable to Peter or any of the others at Jerusalem.

The New Testament church didn't survive the New Testament in a unified whole. Joseph did, in fact, manage to accomplish that. He had an integrated whole, and under his benign leadership he regarded the First Presidency, the Twelve, the high councils of the Church, the Seventy, all as coequal, which given the ambitions of men means that it was doomed but he kept it together. It was doomed either to result in an impasse. For example, Thomas Monson died a couple of days ago. Under the organizational pattern that Joseph set up, the death of Thomas Monson should result in a long period of time

in which there are different people contending and there are conflicts and uncertainties in which the Quorum of the Twelve continues to function, the Seventy continue to function, the stakes continue to function, and there is no First Presidency president. And at some point, based upon the virtue of the individual and based upon the consensus of the people, and it might take 20 years, someone gets acknowledged by people as being sufficiently trustworthy and evidencing the kinds of gifts that would justify it, and we get a replacement president, and then he gets to choose his counselors. Joseph Smith never took a single apostle and put them in the First Presidency. Those were two different quorums and they didn't overlap. The mechanism that has been chosen is not necessarily anything like what was established by Joseph.

Question #7D: So the descendents of those people then, through repentance, can re-qualify, or can qualify...

Denver: I would say that the sentence of those people need to repent of their father's sins. Almost every one that I know who's a Mormon thinks Joseph Smith was a liar and an adulterer, a dishonest man. I don't. I think Joseph Smith sealed women to him, and that was one of the qualifications I put into the words that I used: "carnal sexual relations." I think that from the time that the first realization of what sealing power could be used for rolled out until the earliest reference I can find it, is in October 1843, which was eight months before his death, there appears to have been one and only one ordinance associated with sealing, and that one and only one ordinance was the marriage covenant. Using that one and only ordinance, marriage, didn't mean that what you were trying to achieve was sexual access to other women, it meant you were trying to bring....

One of the things that I liked about Bushman's book, with all the flaws that it has, *Rough Stone Rolling*, was his acknowledgement that Joseph Smith seemed to be very sexually modest and very respectful of women, and anything but a "lethario", and he uses that word, anything but a lustful man. And that what Joseph Smith seemed to want, according to Bushman, and I agree with him on this, was plentitude of family, meaning he wanted to bring everyone into a family together. And so the sealing mechanism was the means by which you bring family together, not to commit adultery but to bind people together through an ordinance that was authoritative, that allowed them to pass out of this life into the next life as part and member of a family of God.

Question #8: Is that to covenant and be committed to one another?

Comment: Well, he said, "I will carry you on my back."

Denver: Yes. And then you have all of those statements about how Joseph would manipulate people, promising them and their family salvation in the afterlife if this marriage covenant were entered into. Sounds a whole lot like what you are trying to achieve is sealing people together into a family that will endure into eternity so that they can lay claim on one another.

Question #9: Didn't those later come to be known as adoption?

Denver: No, that's what he set up until eight months before his death. Beginning in October of 1843 there's a mention made of a new ordinance that never gets mentioned by Joseph until then. Beginning in October, he, for the first time, mentions a different ordinance that might be used. That different ordinance is adoption.

Question #10: Different than sealing, you are saying?

Denver: He's saying that adoption would accomplish the same thing. This is a passing mention. If you're picking up on the fact that Joseph Smith was trying to put together the family of God, and you saw that chart that comes out in, was it the Millennial Star, where you have God, and then you have the Tree of the Family....

[Inaudible comment]

Denver: Yes, Orson Hyde prepared it but he did it based upon something that Joseph had been teaching. This is 1839, mind you. There's still only one ordinance associated with sealing at this point. It's going to be four more years before the word "adoption" ever appears in anything that Joseph writes. Listen to this. Thinking in terms of the role Joseph Smith may have occupied, although it was not generally understood at that time, and of what was happening with adoption later on, think about this in terms of covenantal relationships and of what is being assembled as a family of God in order to endure into eternity:

Time and experience, however, is the only safe remedy against such evils. (Let me back up.) It opens such a dreadful field for the avaricious and indolent and corrupt-hearted to pray upon the innocent and virtuous and honest. We have reason to believe that many things were introduced among the saints before God had signified the times, and not withstanding the principles and plans may have been good; yet aspiring men, in other words, men who had not the substance of godliness about them, perhaps undertook to handle edged tools. Children, you know, are fond of tools while they are not yet able to use them. Time and experience, however, is the only safe remedy against such evils. *There are many teachers but perhaps not many fathers.* There are times coming when God will signify many things which are expedient for the wellbeing of the saints, but the times have not yet come but will come as fast as there can be found place and receptions for them.

I hesitated on "receptions" because it's spelled R-E-S-E-P-T-I-O-N-S. Mark Twain said he didn't have any respect for a man that could only spell a word one way.

Question #11: Can you tell us where you are reading from?

Denver: Page 396 and 397 of the Documents Volume Six of the Joseph Smith Papers. So there are many teachers but there aren't many fathers. The challenge is to put

people into position in which you have this family of God reconstituted on earth. Joseph was aimed in that direction, and it was 1839. But you have one tool, and only one tool.

Comment: Teachers have no skin in the game. If you teach your child poorly it's going to come back and bite you, but if you have some student that you decide that you're just going to write them off, in a few years you won't even remember their name or face, maybe sooner than that. I think there are plenty of people who are out there who are willing to just divulge.

Question #12A: There's acres of land on the Mount of Olives over in Israel that Orson Hyde has been over there to dedicate.

Denver: It got rededicated.

Question #12B: It got rededicated. Want to expound on that or talk about it?

Denver: Some doubts were raised about whether Orson accomplished it or whether he came back and told a great story about accomplishing it, and another group went over later and redid the work. But we are loathe to admit some of the.... warts and wrinkles in the history of the Church and so not much attention is paid to the rededication.

Question #12C: Dedicated for the return of Israel?

Denver: Yes.

Comment: It's a beautiful park. [cross talk]

Denver: The Church has does great things. Anything money can buy. [cross talk]

Comment: It's right by the Garden of Gethsemane. [cross talk]

Question: That's has nothing to do because he was cursed or anything like that so the rededication was not necessary because he's on this list.

Denver: He is, but the rededication didn't have to do with that. People do not take seriously the revelations and voice of God through Joseph. If they did a whole lot of what you see going on would not even be considered as something appropriate to have go on. I may be pointing this out but no one takes it seriously. To Mormons it's just another "Oh, yeah sure... right..."

Question #13: What volume of the Ensign is that in?

Denver: What, the rededication? [cross talk] Don't expect it.

Question #14: There's two parts to this question. First, what's the role of the other ordinances and sacraments like child's blessing, marriage, and sealings, now that many

of us are not in any church? How does that work? We are so used to a level of priesthood that accomplishes those things.

Denver: Fathers' blessings scripturally had legitimacy because they were spoken through the gift of the Holy Ghost. Three years previous to the death of Adam he called together his posterity in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman and there he bestowed his final blessing on them. And notwithstanding he was bowed down with great age. He rose up and he prophesied what should befall his descendents to the end of time. That was the first patriarchal blessing. It was given by the power of the Spirit and it was prophecy. It would be appropriate to read out of that event "priesthood" and to read into that event "Holy Ghost, power of the Spirit, word of prophecy". Because a patriarchal blessing delivered with no benefit of the Spirit is just more ink on paper, but a blessing delivered by the power of the Spirit as a prophecy is the word of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation which cannot be broken.

When Jacob called his kids before him to bestow his final blessing, when father Lehi called his kids before him to bestow his final blessing, it was a reenactment of the event that the first father, Adam, had enacted in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman in which someone – bowed down with great age, knowing that they are going to soon depart this world, having no personal investment in the outcome, intending only to say what is for the blessing and benefit through the Spirit of what will befall their children after them, things that they will not be around to witness – confirm by the spoken voice what it is that God has put into their hearts. It's given generally by someone like Lehi, like Jacob in Genesis chapters 49 and 50 in the KJV. (If I had the new set of scriptures I'd tell you where it is in Genesis the new volume but I don't have one yet.) They are calling upon all of the experience that they've had with the kids throughout their lifetime and then they are projecting forward by the power of the Spirit.

Some of what, in giving blessings by the power of the Spirit, is prophesied to befall a child may be surprising to the one filled with the Spirit but generally that lifetime of experience with the child helps prepare the mind, the heart, and the connection of the father to heaven in order to speak by the power of the Spirit concerning the child and what will befall the child. All of which, every bit of that, can occur with or without priesthood, every bit of that, which is another reason why we tend to associate and therefore to limit the power of the Spirit to influence any person without regard to rank, position, or office.

[inaudible audience comment]

Denver: Deborah was a prophetess.

[inaudible audience comment]

Denver: If she was filled with the Spirit and she uttered a prophecy then that was God speaking through her. That doesn't mean that she now gets to preside in the High Priests group. If she's smart she'll stay the hell away from the High Priests group.

Question #15A: With the fathers, like Abraham and Isaac for example; Isaac was the father of many nations also. When we have sealings to the fathers, are these sealings that are done to the individual fathers? Or is there going to be a major time where there's going to be sealings to all of the fathers or is there going to be, and has there been, sealings already done to fathers in their time? Or am I mixing this up.

Denver: No, there were sealings to fathers...

Question #15B: So those who were sealed to Isaac – Isaac is the father, so maybe they are under his wing, and then maybe, Abraham is like "grandpa feeling" or are they all just fathers to their....

Denver: Yes. Yes. The government of God is the family. The government of God is not stakes and wards and districts and missions and areas and all that. It's family; the government of God is family. Therefore the sealing is to put together a family.

One of the requests that the mother of John and his brother came and made of Christ was that when Christ got into his kingdom, the mother was asking if her boys could sit on his left and on his right. Christ said that "when I get my kingdom they can be there with me but I don't have the right to assign who's going to sit on my right and who's going to sit on my left. That's left up to the Father." The purpose of organizing the family on earth through the sealing process is to make sure that you get into the kingdom, but it's kind of foolish to say I have ambition to be way up high in the organization of the family of God, because Christ told parables about people that are capable of ruling over a city will be put in that position. People that aren't – his parable of the talents, his parable of the laborer in the vineyard – but what you really want is to get into the kingdom. Once you get into the kingdom then how the kingdom gets organized is going to be entirely up to the Father. How that will unfold will be the permanent resolution of all issues involving salvation pertaining to this planet at the very end, and all those who have lived or come through here. And that organization at the end is more relevant for what will come thereafter.

Comment: So it's permanent for [inaudible].

Denver: It's permanent until there is some further development that requires people to go out and develop.

Question #16: The goal isn't to assign yourself a position, but just hopefully get into the kingdom because the Father knows your capabilities.

Denver: Right. Get into the kingdom. Because, like the talk down in Ephraim, the prototype of the saved man is Jesus Christ. If any man will be saved he must be precisely what Christ is and nothing else, because Christ attained to the resurrection. We're going to be resurrected. Christ attained to the resurrection. On the other side of that you won't hold the keys of death and hell, He will. He'll use them for your benefit but

ultimately you're going to have to hold the keys of death and hell if you're going to be precisely what the prototype of the saved man is, or else not be saved.

Question #17A: Does this kingdom have a [inaudible].

Denver: This kingdom?

Question #17B: The kingdom you're talking about.

Denver: When it is established in its – I hate the word fullness but I can't think of another word. When it is completely organized according to God's will, that will be necessary but I don't anticipate that happening separate from the command to build a temple, and then God filling that temple with what is necessary in order for it to come to pass.

Question #18: In D&C 124 it talks about an even higher priesthood, and in that priesthood it communicates, like you talked about, genealogical curses, it communicates genealogical blessings, one being which Joseph Smith has received. Like Lehi received covenants for his seed and Abraham received covenants for his seed, does [D&C] 124 communicate covenants to Joseph's seed, and is it the same conditional as it will come to pass for the remnant of Lehi's seed?

Denver: Joseph would certainly have the right to lay claim upon not just himself and his wife, but certainly his children. It begins to become a little less certain and a little more tenuous when you get to his grandchildren, and even more so when you get to his great-grandchildren because it's one thing... The reason why father Abraham had to go to Melchizedek in order to then rejoice and say, "I have gotten me a priesthood," was because although the line may have had fatherly connections from father Shem down to Abraham, the immediate ancestors of father Abraham were idolaters. True enough, his father repented for a short period of time but he didn't persist in that. Therefore, despite the fact that Melchizedek certainly held authority, there were members of the posterity of Melchizedek between him and father Abraham who were lost and then Abraham was required to come and reconnect because of the apostasy.

When you're talking about the greatest blessings that God offers for the salvation of his children, when you're talking about the family of God, if it could simply be put in one time forever then putting it into father Adam would have solved the problem all the way down to us today. It can and it has been broken. It can and it has been restored. It can and it has been reconnected after a period of apostasy. In fact, once you reconnect Abraham with Melchizedek, you actually have then a family of God beginning with Adam that runs in one continuous line right down to Ephraim. Then you have Joseph's comment about the prophets of the Old Testament. I'm not sure that he means all of them but he certainly means a number that are identifiable. All prophets held Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself, Joseph said that. I don't think what Joseph is talking about is, "I confer upon you something." I think he's talking about this very connection where you have an isolated faithful individual who honors the

fathers and is doing everything that he can in his day but for whom there is no existing possibility for having it occur. God fixes that problem for that individual, not in order to establish a new dispensation in which salvation precedes with the gathering of a people, and a making of a people. But it's a dispensation to that individual for purposes of trying to call others to repentance, and if others were to repent then God could do something with that.

The reason He lead away Lehi and the family of Lehi was to try and establish a righteous branch and a vineyard unto the Lord, and the only way to do that was to get them away from the people who were corrupt in Jerusalem, and maybe give them the potential for holding onto and becoming a people of promise. They were on again, off again, and faithful. A number of troubling moments in their history, but in general, they were sufficiently intact by the time that the Lord came, that He visited with them and He renewed that with them, and that connection was certainly fulsome at that point.

The only purpose behind the last days work, both what was happening at the time of Joseph and what the Lord is offering to us today, is to accomplish that fulsome restoration of the family of God. Joseph talked about temples and they were built incrementally, and they never reached the finish line even on the second one before he was killed, but he laid a fabulous foundation and pointed in a direction that the restoration necessarily must go to and complete. If we don't have the tabernacle of God where he comes to dwell with his people, which he does when he has a family on earth, then the prophecies are not going to be fulfilled. Then the promises that were made to Enoch will not be realized. Then the statements of what will happen in the last days through Moses will not be vindicated. Then Adam's prophecy concerning his descendants to the end of time will not be realized. All of these things point, so we know it is going to happen. The question is not, is it going to happen, the question is, will we rise up or will we not. Because what he's offering is, in fact, a legitimate opportunity for that to indeed happen.

We seem to get so easily distracted that we have a hard time staying on task. It's one of the gentile afflictions. We're very ambitious people and we're very ego-centric. A lot of what is going to be required will require sacrifice and selflessness.

Question #19: On that track, what it is we're supposed to be doing. In Boise you mentioned a vision where some few followers went into the cavity of the rock. Margaret Barker seems to hint that the cavity is feminine, similar to the virgin, the womb, a hidden cave or place, the Holy of Holies, if you will. For us, what it is? What's the cavity of the rock, and is it accessible? Can we get to it? Is this what Alma 5:62 is referring to when Alma commands the members and invites the members to get baptized, sort of in a cavity, so that they can reach up and partake of the Tree of Life? Could you explain that a little and help us out with what we may be doing better?

Denver: I could explain a great deal about that but I'm going to be talking specifically about things bearing on that topic in March. It probably would be best if I get... It's going to take a little bit of work to lay the whole thing out, but that's a topic that is fraught with

the potential for... making a lot of mistakes. Hopefully some balance will be achieved in the talk. There is a lot to that topic. That would take longer than the time we've spent already.

Comment: You make it sound like that's a bad thing. [audience laughter and crosstalk]

Question #20: With the patriarchal priesthood and it falling on the descendants of one another with the earlier fathers, is biological lineage important? Do you think someone could arise to that position who is outside of that lineage or do you think that there will be someone who will?

Denver: We don't have time for that, and I don't mean at this moment, this discussion. I'm talking about this point in history. If you cannot reconstruct the family through an adoption ordinance process the work cannot be accomplished. There just isn't time. We're in the process of walking back to how it was in the beginning. A lot of people think that by getting a New Testament church put on the ground that Joseph Smith accomplished the fulsome restoration. It was never intended to stop there, it's supposed to go all the way back to the beginning. It's a giant chiasm and it's a giant mirror, and today we do not live 900 years. The way in which it will be rebuilt at the end is going to be by ordinance in the house of the Lord and a place that He has accepted. The only kinds of places that are legitimately the house of God are houses that God has come to, to dwell in, in order for those who seek His face to find Him. That happened at Kirtland. It never happened at Nauvoo or Salt Lake.

I know that... well... the fact is that a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day is an allusion, an attempt to refer to things we are familiar with to describe things that we are not familiar with. A conduit that reaches up into heaven as the temporary appearance of the Lord to Joseph in the First Vision is intended to be a permanent connection at some place. It will be one of the reasons why people say, let's not go up against the people of Zion because Zion is too terrible. The presence of God is dreadful to the wicked, it's frightening to them. They get near it and it convicts them of their unworthiness. They dare not go up. But the pure and the humble and the noble are drawn to it. They will want to be there. And so that conduit, that fiery pillar, that stairway to heaven, Jacob's ladder, the chariot of fire, all of those things are an attempt to describe that heavenly connection, that heavenly presence. To the unworthy and the ungodly looking at it, they may or may not be able to see anything about it but they will sense extraordinary dread. It will frighten them. To the worthy there will be something enlightened about the very presence of the place. It will not seem to them to just be another place. It will seem as though the God of heaven has some base established there. That's when you know that an ensign has been established in the tops of the mountains to which nations will flow saying, come, let us go up and learn from the god of Jacob, because that ensign is actually something godly, holy, edifying, instructive, revelatory, filled with light, and redemptive, and the god who dwells there is going to be the Lord. So we don't have time... If you think about it, Enoch taught for 365 years before his people were prepared enough to go up, and we have to be prepared enough for them to come down and not destroy us by the brightness of their presence.

Comment: Is anyone else feeling screwed right now?

Denver: We don't live 365 years. We're going to have to do it with bigger steps instead of our little...

Comment: Shuffle...

Question #21: What about the children of divorce that are tattered? I keep going back to talk to, from divorce, marriage divorce, where the world takes us out to do whatever is necessary to not even survive, and can take you away? What about the children of divorce, because those outside looking in, there's a lot of [inaudible]. What about them?

Denver: One of the promises that was made by the Lord to John for those in the last days who are going to connect up with him is that Christ intends to wipe away every tear. It's going to be difficult to be in the presence of the Lord and not feel like He's given enough to take care of everything that has gone wrong in every one of our individual lives. I don't know how we can feel the wounds in His hands and wrists and feel the wound in His side, and kneel and behold the wounds in His feet, and then tell Him He didn't do enough, or what He offers to us is insufficient.

Families are intended to be a place of joy, not a place of combat, and many families have degenerated into places of abuse and combat. That article in the Salt Lake Tribune that I referred to is harrowing. I read that. This was an eight-year-old child! I read that and I can't witness child abuse depicted in a movie and not get upset. I get up and go to the bathroom. I turn the volume down and stop watching the TV. Everyone who has gone through anything like that is going to be made whole. The Savior's wipe away every tear means exactly that. He has that ability. Probably every one of us sitting here have legitimate complaints about someone else, and you may have legitimate complaints about someone else who is here. Christ has a bigger reason to complain about every one of us, and His mission is unfulfilled when we don't allow those things to be washed away in what He did. The abuses, the indignities, the things that were heaped upon the Lord are almost beyond description. Mel Gibson didn't quite get it, although it was very Catholic.

I assume we're now getting phone calls from home asking where we are. It's been longer than I thought. Thanks for coming. You'll want to tune in online in March and we'll address some of that. It's going to be broadcast live.

[Inaudible audience comments]

The topic is dangerous but when Christ talks about that gathering, which is Zion, the gathering which He refers to is the feminine, it's the hen gathereth chicks under her wings. That subject has led repeatedly to hostility, abuse, apostasy, degradation, and so it's got to be handled with care. Right at the outset it's got to be put into balance, into a framework that says, be careful.

Comment: Good luck.

2018.01.14 That We Might Become One

January 14, 2018

Clinton, Utah

The right pathway is always filled with peril. King Benjamin said, and this is from the traditional account: *(Mosiah 4:29-30 "I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them. But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not."*

That list is pretty all inclusive. We have to watch ourselves, we have to watch our thoughts, we have to watch our words, and we have to watch our deeds, and beyond that observe the commandments. King Benjamin could not tell us all of the ways we could fail to do those things. There really is no list that can be compiled that says, don't do this and don't do that, and don't do this and don't do that, and have an exhaustive list of all the don'ts. It can't be done. In fact, about the only way to avoid all the don'ts is to have a handful of the do's, the things that you ought to do in order to honor God. Christ summarized those basically in two brief statements: "Love God with all your heart", and "love your fellowman as yourself". It's practically impossible for us to avoid errors by putting together a list of what to avoid, so I wouldn't attempt it.

Then there is the weakness of mind and spirit of mankind. Moroni discussed the ministering of angels and he described in these words: *"neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of **strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness**. And the office of their ministry is to **call men unto repentance**, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him" (Moroni 7:29-31)*. If you go through those verses and you look at what he's saying it requires a firm mind in every form of godliness.

A firm mind can be descriptive of a variety of things including someone that's just stubborn. But it's not stubbornness, it's a firm grasp on the things that lead to godliness, not excesses, not foolishness, and we'll get more into that in a bit. Their purpose in ministering is to equip the person who has an audience and those who hear the message to be called to repentance; not a lot of flowery, fancy things but repentance, because essentially without repentance, that is turning to face God in all you do, none of us are going to make it. He goes on to say that the purpose of calling people to repentance is to *"fulfil and do the works of the covenants" (Moroni 7:31)*.

There is sort of a pattern here in what is happening. Angelic ministerence comes to people of a firm mind and every form of godliness, calls repentance in order to fulfil and in order to do the work of the covenants. "To fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of

the Father", that requires that people bear testimony of Him. These are the essential things that are needed. It doesn't require a fanciful or a flowery imagination. It does not require that we bear testimony of ourselves. It doesn't require us to do something other than to fulfil and do the work of the covenants. Therefore, I would suggest this is a pretty good guide to consider when you're evaluating all of the competing claims that are now being made by people, to having inspiration or revelation or the word of God to them.

We are vulnerable to being misled even as we claim to be inspired. I'm going to read from a recent study from the National Academy of Science. I read from it because it's a really interesting study result:

"Religion appears to serve as a moral compass for the vast majority of people around the world. It informs whether same-sex marriage is love or sin, whether war is an act of security or of terror, [and] whether abortion rights represent personal liberty or permission to murder. Many religions are centered on a god (or gods) that has beliefs and intentions, with adherents encouraged to follow "God's will" on everything from martyrdom to career planning to voting. Within these religious systems, how do people know what their god wills?"

"When people try to infer other people's attitudes and beliefs, they often do so egocentrically by using their own beliefs as an inductive guide. This research examines the extent to which people might also reason egocentrically about God's beliefs. We predicted that people would be consistently more egocentric when reasoning about God's beliefs than when reasoning about other people's beliefs. Intuiting God's beliefs on important issues may not produce an independent guide, but may instead serve as an echo chamber that reverberates one's own beliefs.

"The Jewish and Christian traditions state explicitly that God created man in his own image, but believers and nonbelievers alike have long argued that people seem to create God in their own image as well."

That's a problem that you find everywhere. God wills this to be so – well, because God agrees with me that it ought to be so, and therefore I'm comfortably in tune with God.

The greatest help given to us to solve the contradiction between praying to God and the answer being **exactly** what we wanted, exactly what we expected, and exactly what makes us right and everyone else wrong; the greatest guide is the scriptures. They provide us a lifeline for measuring any inspiration we think we obtain from God. But that's not enough if it's not coupled together with prayerful, ponderous thought, and time and experience. I want to compare these statements from Joseph Smith about this topic:

"A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come

to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus." (DHC 3:381, June 1839).

That seems to suggest that answers can come suddenly, quickly, perhaps even easily. But Joseph also said this:

"A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of; because the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God." (TPJS, p. 137, March 1839).

That second quote is taken from a letter that Joseph Smith composed while he was in Liberty Jail in which he had plenty of time to fashion the language. The first quote, sadly, is taken from a source which may not be reliable or accurate. The source for that first quote is Willard Richards's Pocket Companion in which he quoted something which, if Joseph Smith said it, Joseph said it while Willard Richards was in England on a mission and he could not possibly have heard it. He doesn't even attribute it to Joseph Smith. But when the documentary history was being compiled they used the Willard Richards Companion to take that language and attribute it to a talk given by Joseph in 1839 because most of the stuff in the Pocket Companion can be tracked to Joseph, and therefore they conclude this one likewise fit that same category. The second one is clearly, unambiguously from Joseph Smith and describes the process. Now, while Joseph was in the Liberty Jail on occasion he would have a friendly face show up, or he would have a letter arrive. On one of the occasions he got letters from other people and his wife, Emma. Joseph, who had been brooding at the time and longing for the companionship of some friends, describes what his mind was going through at the time of the letter and his response to it. He says his mind was frenzied, and any man's mind can be when contemplating the many difficult issues we are called upon to confront.

Just like Joseph, we have perpetual conundrums and contradictions. We all face them. Some are of our own making but others are just inherent in living in this existence. When we thoughtfully consider the challenges, just like Joseph it seizes the mind, and like Joseph in Liberty Jail, makes us reflect upon so many things with the "avidity of lightning". That was Joseph's word. The mind is in this frenzied state, and with the avidity of lightning he's jumping from subject to subject, a fence to a fence, from things that console to things that outrage you. From things you know to be true to things that offend you. Back and forth, and back and forth until, as Joseph puts it, "...finally all enmity, malice and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings and mismanagements are slain victorious at the feet of hope; and when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers[.]" It's almost poetry, the way Joseph describes what he went through there. But it is poetry describing the actual bona fides of Joseph receiving answers from God.

God's most important inspiration for the most challenging subjects is often not hasty, quick and without effort at our end. Consider the advice to Oliver Cowdery that he must "study it out in his own mind first" before asking God to tell him the answer. Many people want a quick, perfunctory response from God with no forethought. What they receive in turn is a quick, perfunctory answer.

God is almost always, for the most difficult challenges, not a "short order cook" although there are certainly false spirits who are willing to be just that.

I asked God in October what the term "mutual agreement" as used in the Answer meant. Before I asked I hesitated and pondered the issue for two months. I discussed it with my wife and several others, and then discussed again the views of others with my wife. I read emails from people involved in an active discussion about the meaning of the term.

It requires humility to approach God and ask Him for His answer and yet more humility to know it is from Him and not my own ego, presumptions, hopes, desires, wants and conceit. It is for me, as it was for Joseph, only "when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers" the truth. That comes from a purer source, higher than myself and more filled with light than any man. Certainly, greater light than I have.

When the definition was given, it was accompanied by the realization the Lord could have disputed every day of His life with someone. He deliberately chose to not contend. He was not an argumentative personality.

The more we contend with others the more we are taken captive by the spirit of contention. We become subject to the spirit we submit to follow. Those who are prone to contention become more contentious as they listen to that spirit. Eventually they are overcome by that spirit and it is a great work involving great effort to subdue and dismiss that spirit from the heart and mind of the victim.

Let me give you a description of the Prayer for the Covenant: It took months of pondering, testing, questioning beforehand, before I even dared to ask. The idea that presented itself to my mind was that Joseph's prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple was a pattern to be followed when some great event involving God was to take place. The House of the Lord was one such event in Kirtland but having a new volume of scripture was at least equally important to that. Therefore a prayer to God asking for His acceptance was an idea that continued to press upon my mind.

But it concerned me that the idea of my offering that prayer may be based on my own will, and not heaven's. Before proceeding I questioned my motive, my desire, and why I would even ask. I was haunted by the continuing impression that it needed to be done and was required of me. Finally, when the idea could not be shaken from my mind I determined it was not my own thought but God's beckoning voice telling me this was an obligation I needed to act upon and not suppress. I want you to think of Joseph's

description that says: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of [my] heart. I reflected on it again and again[.]"

Joseph did not act hastily when the impression came to him. He couldn't shake it. It persisted. He reflected upon it again and again. I don't know whether that's days, weeks, or months, but I can tell you before the Prayer for the Covenant was offered, for me it was months because if it isn't of God I have no right to step forward and do something. I ought not be volunteering for things of that nature. At length I determined that I should act on the impulse and therefore I ought to offer a prayer for the acceptance of the scripture. When I began to compose the prayer the content was provided by inspiration from Heaven and not my own words. It took me nearly 200,000 words to write a history of the Restoration from the time of Joseph to the present, in a book that's fairly lengthy. The Prayer for the Covenant, coming by inspiration, only took a few pages and stated in more concise terms, more correctly the history of the Restoration from the beginning until now. The Prayer for the Covenant, the Prayer for the Scriptures, is not me being clever and insightful and succinct. The words were given, and the words are God's view of what has happened.

There are those who have claimed inspiration on very important matters who make decisions quickly. Almost as soon as they finish a prayer asking for something they assume the first thing that pops into their mind is God's infallible answer. I do not doubt that may happen. It has happened to me, but for the most important things I have found that careful, ponderous, and solemn thought and meditation over time produces God's will and word with clarity that does not happen in haste.

Plural marriage history is a very convoluted and difficult topic. It's easy to reach a decision without the labor of careful, solemn, ponderous, and searching thought to determine the truth. When the policy was announced publicly in 1852 the focus of the announcement that was made by Orson Pratt was on the Constitution of the United States. In fact, when he got up to deliver the announcement, one of the things that's stressed in the talk – and you can read it, it's in the Journal of Discourses; the talk is preserved. One of the things he stressed was that the Constitution protected religious practices and that if it is a bona fide part of your religion then it is protected. In fact, there is more emphasis in that talk placed on the Constitutionality of the practice than there is on scriptural support or divine pattern of the practice. This is the first public announcement.

So one of the questions that presents to my mind, and should present to your mind is why, if this is an eternal principle, why when the first public explanation of it is given, was the focus upon the Constitutionality of the practice. It seems incongruent. The Constitution of the United States at that time was less than 75 years old, but this is a practice that often goes back depending upon whether you accept what Brigham Young says or not, all the way to the Creation, but certainly by those who advocated it, back to the early patriarchal fathers. So why the focus on the Constitutionality of the practice? It was one of the dilemmas and one of the questions that occurred to me when I first

encountered the subject. If it begins with Adam bringing "one of his wives" why isn't that much more important to relate? The practice, if it is of Divine origin, should have a great body of scripture and truth to back it, why focus on something as comparatively trivial as the then 75-year-old U.S. Constitution? It took me several decades of searching before I felt qualified to reach a conclusion on the topic. 27 years of preparation and pursuit was involved before I found God, which then brings this point:

If a group of prayerful people spend months focused on a challenge, and then many hours together and individually discussing, searching, praying and looking to heaven for guidance, and then reach a conclusion they can all individually and collectively testify came from heaven, how can I adequately test their outcome without giving it careful, solemn, ponderous thought and take the time to test and retest the answer we get? People who can make truly inspired snap decisions are far better at obtaining God's voice than am I. For gravely important matters it takes me a great deal of wrestling with heaven before I can trust that I am humble enough before God to accept what He has to offer and to exclude all of what I want, all of what I hope, and all of what I expect. Those who have a "short order cook" for their God can do what I cannot.

There are many who dispute the inspiration others have received. I have two concerns with the decision a good person makes to dispute with others: First, the Lord's example is to refrain from disputing, as He did. When confronted He would respond, but He did not go about picking a fight with others. He responded. The only exception was when He went up to Jerusalem to be slain. Then He went into the seat of Jewish power and authority to throw it down and provoke their decision to finally judge, reject and crucify Him. He, and not they, controlled that timing. His provocation at that time was a deliberate act on His part because His "time had come" and His sacrifice needed to be made.

Second, there are the Lord's teachings. We have time and time again focused on the Doctrine of Christ. We have the doctrine of Christ on numerous websites, enshrined in numerous talks, and as a theme that has been adopted for conferences. Just before the doctrine of Christ He tells you what His doctrine is NOT. This is what Christ says immediately preceding His doctrine: *"neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."* (3 Ne. 11: 28-30). And then He proceeds to declare His doctrine of Christ.

The more we contend and dispute with one another the better we become at contention. We polish the rhetorical skills to oppose others. That spirit of contention can take possession of us and when it does, we are hard-pressed to be a peacemaker with others. Christ said: *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."* (Matt. 5:7-9).

But peace should not be made at the cost of truth. Truth must be the only goal. Truth, however, belongs to God. Our desires, appetites and passions are prone to make us stray well beyond the bounds set by God.

- Therefore, when our pride is gratified, we should question if what we are advancing is truth.
- When our ambition is served, we should question if we are in the Lord's employ or our own.
- When we insist upon control, we should question if we are like our Lord or instead like His adversary.
- When we use any means for compelling others, we should wonder if we are mocking the God who makes the sun to shine and rain to fall on all His fallen children without compulsion.
- When we display unrighteous dominion, we should question whether we are worthy of any dominion at all.

Our tools must be limited to persuasion, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, pure knowledge, all of them mustered "without compulsory means" to persuade others to accept the truth. And if we fail to make the persuasive case then the problem is not others, the problem is that we've yet to figure out how to be sufficiently knowledgeable so as to bring them aboard.

I believe every person we encounter down here, no matter who they are, wants to follow Christ. That's why we're here. The only reason they got here was because they want to follow Christ. Therefore, since they are predisposed to following Christ the reason they are not doing so at present is because no one has taken the time, no one has taken the trouble of giving sufficient cause to them to change, to turn, to repent, and to follow Christ. And by the way, at this point, none of us know enough in order to be able to truly follow Christ, because we are all riddled with half truths, part understanding, and the need for constant repentance, all of us. But if you're further along and you accept Christ, and you understand His will better than your brother or sister, then you have the obligation to present persuasively to them the same reasons that touched their heart before they ever entered this world when they elected to follow Christ into this dark abyss in the first place. They're here trying to find Him. If you can point to it and give them reason to believe, my view is that every single individual on earth has a native free disposition to turn and face Christ. We just have to figure out how to present that sufficiently persuasively so that it touches their heart and it resonates with that truth, that light that they came down here in the first instance possessing.

The light of Christ illuminates every single being that is in this world. Therefore, Christ is in them already. You just have to animate that so that they realize the truth that you express, the testimony that you bear, the one whom you worship is God indeed, and worthy of their worship, worthy of their acceptance as well.

There is so much left to be done. I know that we can't jump hastily from point to point along the way and that we have to carefully proceed with every step. But it's astonishing to me the steps that people decide to get hung up on and to spend a great deal of time, when time could better be spent moving further along on the path. I don't know what it will take to get people to enthusiastically welcome and to move along with alacrity on the pathway that the prophecies foretell someone is going to achieve in the last days. Because it seems like all that murmuring that we read about in the Book of Exodus going on in the camp of Israel, when we scratch our heads and say, why are they complaining about missing the fleshpots of Egypt when God is leading them with a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night? One would think that you'd be happy eating manna in the wilderness if you knew God was with you.

I also think that in our current state of technological development it's possible for the discontent to magnify the voice electronically over the Internet and to make any level of discontent seem to be much greater than it really is. But if one person is discontent and 500 people are arguing with the one who is discontent it appears that the argument includes at least half a thousand, maybe more. As between one another, that is every one of us, because every one of us is involved in a relationship with one another; you choose. Mind you, Christ could have disputed, he could have corrected, he could have challenged every one of the ongoing religious and social conventions of his day. *You are doing that wrong. Oh, you should stop doing that. Would you quit it! And by the way, you're so dark in your mind that I don't know where it begins, except for him, he's worse, and then her. Oh!* [cross talk and audience laughter]

How much of the gospel of Christ would not have been possible for Him to preach if He'd gone about contending? He chose not to. In that respect, perhaps His most godly example was the patience with which He dealt with those around him; kindly, patiently, correcting them when they largely came to Him with questions trying to trap Him, but affirmatively stating in the Sermon on the Mount how you could take any group of people and turn them into Zion itself, if we would live the Sermon on the Mount.

I figure that I'm not that good a teacher because it appears to me that there are a lot of mistakes being made that are perfectly avoidable. I don't take King Benjamin's statement that the number of errors that people can make, the number of sins that people can commit are endless, there is no way to possibly number them, as I don't take that as consoling words. I take that as a challenge to say, *Okay, but your people did find peace among one another.* And even Enoch's people found peace among one another. Melchizedek was called the Prince of Peace because he preached but what he preached was repentance. The office of the ministering of angels is to spread the message of repentance. So then all of us have an obligation there, to join in the same thing, repenting, turning to face God. The more we face Him, the more light we take in, the more differently we behave, individually and in connection with each other.

I am certain we will see Zion because it's been promised and it's been prophesied from the beginning of time. When father Adam prophesied, being overcome by the Spirit in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and foretold what would happen to his posterity down

to the latest generations, Zion was pointed to. Therefore, from the days of Adam on, all the holy prophets have looked forward to that as the essential moment in the history of the world, because Christ will come and will redeem the world. It will be the end of the wicked; it will be the beginning of something far better. That's been the hope, that's been the promise, that's been what they've looked forward to. I wonder how many of us share that same longing, that same hope, that same desire that originated in the beginning, because if we don't subdue our desires, appetites, and passions enough to try and deal peaceably one with another, choosing deliberately to not contend, even when we know people are wrong. When Christ was confronted and he corrected the error he corrected only that error, he didn't go on with a list of other weaknesses, failings and challenges, He only addressed the one that was put to him.

We have an opportunity. We have a bona fide, actual offer from God to allow us to be that generation in which the promises get fulfilled. But we have the freedom of choice that allows us to elect to be severed, to be contentious, to be agents of disruption, and to discourage and break the hearts of those who would willingly accept the challenge to repent and follow God.

Now it's also possible, in fact it's probable, that at some point what the Lord will do is gather out a remnant of the remnant, gather out a few, and how many are essential in order for the promises to be fulfilled? I'm certain there is a minimum and I'm fairly confident that the minimum can be counted on your two hands, but there is no maximum. We're not going to just have eight people on the ark; there can be more, there can be many more. The upper number is practically limitless. There is a minimum but heavens, why would anyone want that?

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2018.03.25 Our Divine Parents

General Conference Address

March 25, 2018

Gilbert, Arizona

I was up at four o'clock this morning praying about this talk and praying about you. And I think some topics are of such immense importance that no single person ought to be given the responsibility of trying to say something true and valid and holy, given the inadequacy of all of us and, in particular, the inadequacy of myself. I really don't feel that I can do the topic justice or that this is something about which I feel perfectly comfortable talking. So, pardon my inadequacy and hang with this.

I prepared this in advance, and there's about 170 footnotes that go along with this text; and I won't read any of the footnotes. But I'll get this up as a paper, probably tomorrow when I get back home. And it may help you if you look at the paper, including the footnotes, because some of this is going to go by quite quickly, and without elaboration the footnotes will help elaborate.

I want to thank those who have organized the conference, for those that have participated, for all of the work that has gone on. We don't have any fund to draw from. People that do these things volunteer; and all of the labor that's been done, all of the work in getting this out—broadcast over the internet, all of the recording—all of that is done by volunteers who are not compensated, although if someone wants to help in the process, it's always appreciated.

We are not like those who organize into hierarchical structures. Every one of us is considered equal. I'm an invited guest here. The people that organized this asked me to come, and I did the work to prepare to come at their invitation. I don't have any right other than the same right as all of you—to preach and teach and expound; and, if what I say persuades or brings light, then you're welcome, as a gift, to receive it. But no one holds authority over me, or over you, or over any of us. We associate freely because we like focusing upon the restoration of the gospel that came through the prophet Joseph Smith and recognize that work was never completed. We also recognize the ease with which having a hierarchy can be compromised. You see, as soon as you create a seat of power and authority, all that's required to overthrow the entirety of the organization is to gain control of that seat of authority. But among a group of equals, so long as anyone remains true and steadfast to the gospel, no one can tell them that they must do something other than retain that steadfast conviction and belief and practice of the gospel in its fullness.

Zion won't be composed of people who are presided over by anyone other than Christ Himself. As between one another, they're brothers, and they're sisters, and they're equals, having one heart, having one mind, and having all things in common because there is no one who can exert control or authority over one another. That's what we seek; that's what we're working for. However clumsy, however awkward, however difficult it may be for siblings to get along as they grow up through their childhood and

adolescence, that's exactly how the people that will form Zion are going to begin. You can't stand back and say, "Oh, I prize the orderly thing I see in the uniformity of lessons, uniformity of dress, uniformity of conduct that I can see in structured and organized congregations; and what I see among these people is clamoring disorder." That's because we're alive. That's because we're equal. That's because we respect one another, and we want to *hear* the differences; we want to *see* the differences. We want to consider an idea that isn't correlated out into the darkness and excluded from our attention. We want to know what others have to say because we might miss something if we don't allow them the equality of standing and saying to us something about which we may disagree. That's what we call healthy. That's what we call normal. That's how humans relate to one another. In a hierarchy, it's possible to suppress all of that, but we're not interested in forming a Kremlin; we're interested in forming Zion.

This discussion today of our Divine Parents fits very comfortably inside the Father's Great Plan of Happiness. Unfortunately, we have so little understanding of that Plan that the subject is left to assumptions and innuendos rather than forthright declarations. Today I will make forthright declarations.

If discussing this subject confuses you, set it aside for now and spend some time studying the scriptures. Increase your understanding of the Father's Great Plan of Happiness, including the Lectures on Faith. Those who welcome more truth eventually understand God's plan more fully and, in turn, comprehend more of the Gods' vast work. Please do not offend God by rejecting any truth coming from Him.

I want to declare that the only reason I have the audacity to address this topic candidly is because Those of whom I speak in this talk have permitted me to do so. Without Their approval, I would not presume to address this topic publicly.

This topic may seem foreign to Christians. Despite that, some true things God has shown to witnesses are called *unspeakable* by the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 1:41 RE). They are true but remain *mysteries* for those who are not shown them by God. One servant of God may know but be forbidden from revealing a matter while another is commanded to reveal it. Therefore, because you have a Bible, you should not assume it contains all of God's words or that He has not revealed more or will not reveal more. An infinite and eternal God has spoken many things and will yet reveal more things.

Some truths are already in scripture but hidden from view by God's decree. Christian scriptures declare, *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter* (Proverbs 25:2; see also Proverbs 4:1 RE). So we search out matters God has concealed to see more of His glory.

Our scriptures speak carefully about the existence and importance of a Heavenly Mother, a Divine Female whose greatest attribute is to bestow wisdom upon the whole of this creation. It is possible to miss Her presence. That cultural and theological blindness is not because of Her absence from the scriptures. It's not hard to detect Her if you look. *We just don't look.*

The Old Testament (now retitled The Old Covenants) was preserved and transmitted in the Hebrew language for generations. Some characteristics of that language are important to understand as part of this discussion. First, Hebrew has no neuter, only masculine and feminine. Furthermore, when there are multiple persons involved, even if only one member of the group is male, Hebrew uses *only* the masculine to refer to that group. Women and men collectively are referred to using a masculine noun or pronoun.

When a masculine noun or pronoun from the Hebrew language is translated into English, English language readers assume it means *man* or *men* and excludes *women*. In English we can use neuter pronouns like *they* or *them* to refer to a group of both men and women. Hebrew would use *men* or *he* if the group included even a single male in the group.

We all know that the Hebrew word *Elohim* is used to refer to God and that it is plural. In English it should be translated as *Gods*; but because we allow theology to control translating the text, the word *Elohim* in Hebrew is, therefore, rendered in English as a singular *God*. It should be plural and, if plural, rendered masculine in English. But that is Hebrew to English and does not mean, as we shall see, there is no female among the *Elohim*.

The story of creation starts by identifying Heavenly Parents, a *couple* clearly described as the true and living God. In the King James Version, the creation of mankind is told in these words: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them* (Genesis 1:27; see also Genesis 2:8 RE).

The context of the words, *created he* [God] *him* [man], is immediately clarified to refer to both the male and female and not just the male: *created he him; male and female created he them*. The English translation follows the masculine pronoun implied in Hebrew. Therefore, looking at it in the Hebrew language, there were two persons described, and only one of them was male. It could be translated: *created they* [the Gods] *them* [the man and woman], *male and female*.

The words, *So God created man in his own image*, affirms two points:

First, the plurality of God.

Second, that plurality is a couple that includes both a male and a female. Man is created in God's image, and that image is a couple—a man and a woman. This is not figurative language. It is literally describing mankind having two sexes, and that is Godlike, or what God's *image* is.

I was recently listening to a podcast with my wife. Philip McLemore was being interviewed by Dan Wotherspoon. They were discussing attributes of the Divine male and female. In their discussion, the dual nature of God was incorrectly regarded as figurative, not literal. It was suggested that this dual nature was intended to be part of

every individual, with all men and women having both masculine and feminine attributes. Dan Wotherspoon thought we would develop through successive stages of growth. This idea may bring comfort to some, but the scriptural account is not ambiguous. It refers to a literal male and a literal female created by the Elohim. The male is named Adam, and the female is named Eve. They are made in the image of the Elohim, or the Gods of creation whose image is a male and a female.

There is even more meaning added to the scriptures describing the creation of man in the Joseph Smith Translation. The JST renders the account in Genesis this way: *And I, God, created man in [mine] own image, in the image of [mine] Only Begotten created I him. Male and female created I them* (Genesis 2:8 RE). Here, not only is the Father male and female, but so is the image of the Only Begotten, who is also two separate beings, male and female. Joseph's clarification helps us understand who the Son was and is. The Son has a female counterpart or, like His Father, a spouse.

There are instances in which Hebrew uses the feminine directly to describe God. For example, the *spirit of God* (Ruach Elohim) is a feminine noun. Likewise, when referring to the *presence of God*, Hebrew uses the feminine. God's presence includes the feminine.

If you begin with these truths, then throughout the scriptures, you can find both the Father and Mother even when English translations speak only of a male God. Keep this in mind as you read either English or Hebrew language scriptures.

Another Hebrew language characteristic involves verb tenses. Although Elohim is plural when speaking of the God of Israel, it is almost always combined with a singular verb. In English we say *they are* and not *they is*. But when it comes to Hebrew and the plural Gods, the verbs are almost always singular. Even though Israel's God is plural, the singular form of the verb has been used to support theological arguments for *monotheism*, or a single being for God.

Hebrew combines the plural Elohim, or Gods, with a singular verb, as in this example from Genesis: *Thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God [Elohim] gave [singular verb] unto Abraham* (Genesis 28:4; see also Genesis 9:18 RE).

The Old Testament and Christ proclaimed that the God of Israel is *one*. But then Christ explained that *one* is not singular in person but in harmony of heart. Accordingly, using a singular verb was meant to convey that all action undertaken by the Gods is done with a singular, harmonious purpose. They act as one. They are one.

When the Gods speak to Moses on the Mount, English recounts the story in these words: *And God [Elohim, plural] spake [singular] unto Moses and said unto him, I am the Lord [in that instance, YHWH or Jehovah]* (Exodus 6:2; see also Exodus 1:3 RE). In Hebrew this account is very helpful. It reiterates the clarification Joseph Smith made to the Genesis account of the creation of man: The Elohim are plural, and the voice is identified as Jehovah's. Given the plurality of this God, and His name is *Jehovah* [or

YHWH], it means that Jehovah, like His Father, is plural and has a female companion or wife. The Gods are never singular. This is why man was made male and female in the image of the Gods. If the Egyptians' quest to imitate the order that came down from the beginning failed, they nevertheless preserved the idea of a male father and female mother in their pantheon of the gods. Taking the language of this passage literally, Jehovah spoke with Moses as a duo, a dyad, or a couple, necessarily comprised of both a male and a female—for *that* is *God's* image.

Another example is provided by Elijah: *And call ye on the name of your **gods** [Elohim], and I will call on the name of the **Lord** [YHWH or Jehovah]: and the **God** [Elohim, plural] that answereth by fire, let him be [Elohim] **God**. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken* (1Kings 18:24; see also 1 Kings 4:14 RE). Here again, Jehovah is identified as a plural.

To reflect the image of God, there are two sexes, male and female. Man was organized in this way to help us to understand who and what the Gods are. The importance of this is illustrated in a passage from Lectures on Faith:

*Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a **correct** idea of his **character, perfections, and attributes**. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will.* (Lectures on Faith 3:2-5 RE)

Eventually, every man—and I use that word in the Hebrew sense, meaning every male and female—will be brought to stand before the Throne of God. Then all questions about the image of the Gods will be answered by what is apparent to anyone standing in Their presence.

These truths are in the scriptures accepted by every Christian denomination. They are in the scriptures believed by the Jews. Yet, the Heavenly Mother's existence is not acknowledged.

While a great deal more could be said to demonstrate that God the Father necessarily includes God the Mother, we want to know more than, merely, She exists. We want to understand her character, perfections, and attributes also.

The Father and the Son are masculine and, therefore, personified by the word *knowledge*. The Mother as well as the Son's companion are feminine and personified by the word *wisdom*. These personifications reflect an eternal truth about these two parts of the *one true God*.

Knowledge (masculine) initiates; Wisdom (feminine) receives, guides, and tempers. Knowledge can be dangerous unless it is informed by wisdom. Wisdom provides guidance and counsel to channel what comes from knowledge. These are eternal attributes, part of what it means to be a male or a female. Creation begins with the

active initiative of knowledge, but order and harmony for the creation requires wisdom. Balance between them is required for an orderly creation to exist.

A great deal can be learned about Heavenly Mother by searching for the word *wisdom* in scripture. Very often, the reference to wisdom is to Her distinctly and not merely an abstract attribute. If we are blind to Her existence, we cannot see the reference to Her in those passages. Although many scriptures have the Divine Mother's words, Her presence is veiled by our ignorance and refusal to acknowledge Her. There is one extensive passage in scripture in Her voice that we will look at today. It teaches us a great deal about Her.

This was once a temple text and has become somewhat corrupted. I'll not make any corrections or clarifications. This is from Proverbs 8 in the King James Version. The version we have has additional passages about the foolish woman at the beginning and again at the end. I'm gonna discard those words attributed so that the words that are attributed to the Heavenly Mother alone can be isolated and looked at to be considered. She states:

Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. (Proverbs 8:6-8; see also Proverbs 1:35 RE)

She proclaims Herself as the reliable source of truth, righteousness, and plain (meaning *clear*) understanding. She is opposed to wickedness, frowardness (meaning *stubbornness or contrariness*), and perversity.

If we are *froward*, we are stubborn or contrary with one another. We dispute. We find it difficult to agree. How much debate and anger are produced by frowardness!

Jacob (called James in the King James Bible) mentioned *wisdom* in his letter. In contemplating Her, Jacob suggested we should be *easy to be entreated*.

*Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge among you? Let him show out of good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife are, there [is] confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace.** (Epistle of Jacob 1:14 RE, emphasis added)*

Wisdom from above can endow us with the kindly demeanor of brothers and sisters who seek what is good for one another. How often are the words of our mouths froward and

perverse? The Divine Mother refuses to speak wickedness and abominations, and Her influence brings others to depart from such failures.

Continuing:

They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. (Proverbs 8:9-11; see also Proverbs 1:35 RE)

Proclaiming *wisdom is better than rubies*, She asks us to receive Her instruction rather than seek silver and gold. Nothing else is to be compared with Her wisdom. She instructs in virtues that would make any person better. But Her instruction will also make living in peace with others possible. Nothing in this world is more desirable than acquiring wisdom—understanding and putting knowledge to wise use. Zion will require the wisdom to use pure knowledge in meekness, humility, and charity. Zion will require Her influence.

Continuing:

I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. (Proverbs 8:12-13; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE)

Wisdom and prudence go together as companions. *Prudence* means good judgment or common sense. It is the quality of assessing things correctly and making a sound decision in light of the circumstances and persons involved. Prudent judgment is not hasty or unfair. Arrogance is destroyed and pride overtaken by *fear of the Lord*—meaning that we do not want to disappoint our Lord by our low, vulgar, and mean conduct.

She mentions a second time Her opposition to the froward. This time She declares She hates the froward mouth. We repel Her by being argumentative and contrary with one another.

Continuing:

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. (Proverbs 8:14; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE)

The Mother must possess great strength because She hates the froward—the contentious. She does not welcome that spirit in Herself or any of Her offspring. But yet, She loves us.

Christ taught this idea to the Nephites, which seems to be clearly taken from the Mother's wisdom:

And there shall be no disputations among you, as there hath hitherto been, neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there hath hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger [against one] another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. (3 Nephi 5:8 RE)

It requires strength to refrain from contention and disputes with froward and arrogant people. When we feel strongly that we are right or are firmly convinced someone else is wrong, it's difficult to bridle our tongue and meekly persuade without contention. But the Heavenly Mother possesses the strength required to look with compassion on our failings. She deals with Her offspring using good judgment and common sense. She is opposed to arrogance, and when we are arrogant, we offend Her.

How many religious arguments, even religious wars, have been caused because mankind is too weak to patiently reason together? The history of this world is a bold testimony of what weak and deceived men do when they reject wisdom.

Mankind cannot have Zion without wisdom to guide us. Zion must be a community. Developing wisdom requires us to patiently interact with one another. This counsel from the Heavenly Mother is a gift to help us understand what we lack.

Continuing with Her words:

By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. (Proverbs 8:15-16; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE)

Never doubt this claim by the Heavenly Mother. She knows best the strengths and weaknesses of Her sons. She decides who will be made kings. The earliest generations knew this about Her. In the beginning, it was the mothers who decided between sons. Consider a few examples from early history and how the mothers acted on this matriarchal right.

In the case of Mother Eve, it was her and not Adam who weighed and decided that Cain would be Adam's first successor to the Holy Order. She did not do this in haste but after many years of observing how Cain was unlike his many rebellious, older siblings. He hearkened to his parents and had interest in knowing and following God. She decided that this son was indeed from the Lord and would not be yet another one to reject His words:

And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord, wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, also Cain hearkened not, saying, Who is the Lord that I should know him? And she...conceived [again], and bare his brother Abel. And Abel [hearkened] unto the voice of the Lord. (Genesis 3:6 RE)

To the sorrow of both Adam and Eve, Cain changed. After his initial faithfulness, he no longer continued to follow the Lord's words.

When he fell, his right to stand second only to Adam in the Holy Order was threatened; he resorted to murder to keep that position. That right cannot be handled with any degree of unrighteousness. Therefore, his ambition undid his mother's choosing, and he fell from grace. But note in the account that it was Eve who chose Cain. That was her right. That right came down from the Mother in Heaven as one of the roles occupied by all mothers over their offspring.

While Rebekah was pregnant with twins, unborn sons struggled within her. She prayed to know the cause of her difficulties and learned that the younger would rule over the elder. This answer stayed with her, and when the time came, she acted consistent with God's voice to her. Even though it required her to supplant Isaac's intention to set Esau ahead of Jacob, it was Rebekah's right as the mother. Rebekah preferred Jacob because of revelation. Her preference for him is mentioned *before* Esau sold his birthright. We do not know if Esau sold his birthright because Rebekah put that idea in Jacob's mind beforehand or if Jacob wanted the birthright separate from his mother's influence. But Rebekah's decision is mentioned before Jacob obtained it. Her involvement directly resulted in her unwary husband conferring the blessing on Jacob:

And the boys grew. And Esau was a [skilled] hunter, a man of the field, and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob cooked stew, and Esau came from the field and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray you, with that same red stew for I am faint (therefore was his name called Edom). And Jacob said, Sell me this day your birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point of dying and what shall this birthright profit me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day. And he swore unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils. And he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 9:3 RE)

Rebekah's choice was honored by this turn of events. Jacob obtained the legal right to hold the birthright under the Holy Order because Esau abandoned it—conveyed it to Jacob. Sometime later, the time arrived to appoint Isaac's successor and heir.

Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said [to] him, My son. And he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now

therefore take, I pray you, your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go...to the field, and take me some venison. And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison and to bring it. And Rebekah spoke [to] Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard your father speak [to] Esau your brother, saying, Bring me venison and make me savory food, that I may eat and bless you before the Lord before my death. Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch me from there two good kids of [your] goats, and I will make them savory food for your father such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father that he may eat...that he may bless you before his death. (Genesis 9:12-13 RE)

While Isaac intended to bless his older son Esau, Rebekah, as the mother, knew the younger brother Jacob was the chosen one. Rebekah proceeded with the confidence of knowing that decision was *hers* to make. She took appropriate steps, as was her right, to appoint the heir. She managed her ailing husband wisely and subtly. At that time Isaac's *eyes were dim*, a symbolic description of his condition, and he was unable to see the correct choice.

Jacob realized his mother's plan involved risks. He raised his concerns with his mother:

I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be your curse my son, only obey my voice and go fetch me them. ...And his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took handsome raiment of her eldest son, Esau, which was with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob, her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands and upon the smooth of his neck. (Genesis 9:13-14 RE)

When Jacob worried about being cursed for deceiving his father, his mother reassured him and, if there was to be one, offered to take the curse. Jacob did not want to deceive his father, but his mother said it was she, not her son, who would be responsible.

Mother Rebekah then prepared the meal for Isaac. Rebekah also clothed her son with the *handsome raiment of her eldest son*, a description filled with symbolism. Then she used the skins of slain lambs to cover the hands and neck of Jacob, another description filled with symbolism and foreshadowing. Thus outfitted in the eldest son's raiment and a slain lamb covering his skin, Jacob was presented as the heir.

If you interpret this account as a type of Christ, it helps us to appreciate the unacknowledged role of Christ's Mother in preparing Him as an acceptable Son and heir to His Father.

Following his mother's guidance Jacob proceeded:

And she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father and said, My father. And he said, Here am I. Who are you my son? And Jacob said [to] his father, I am Esau your firstborn; I have done according as you [bade] me. Arise, I pray you, sit and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord your God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray you, that I may feel you, my son, whether you be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father. And he felt him and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. (Genesis 9:14-15 RE)

On choosing the lawful heir, Isaac was blind to the correct choice, but Rebekah was not; and, it was her right to choose. To accomplish the foreordained result, Isaac's eyes were dimmed. Rebekah used that to prevent him from making the wrong choice. And so the heir chosen by Rebekah was given the blessing.

And he said, Are you my very son Esau? And he said, I am. (Genesis 9:15 RE)

This answer from Jacob is not wrong, as some have claimed. Jacob purchased the birthright, and, therefore, on the issue Isaac raised (if he was the rightful heir), Jacob had Esau's right and could answer truthfully as to the blessing that he was lawfully standing in Esau's place.

And he said, Bring it near to me and I will eat of my son's venison that my soul may bless you. And he brought it near to him and he did eat. And he brought him wine and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come...now and kiss me my son. And he came near and kissed him. And he smelled the smell of his raiment and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed. Therefore, God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brethren and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone that curses you and blessed be he that blesses you. (Genesis 9:15 RE)

As a result of his mother's guidance, counsel, and labors, Jacob inherited the birthright belonging to the Holy Order. Whatever else this may reflect on the relationship between these family members, it was through appropriate guidance and direction of his mother that Jacob was blessed to become the appointed heir, the prince, and patriarch through whom the promised Messiah would descend. This pattern of the mother choosing the heir is not just an allegory or an event in the family history. It is an eternal right belonging to the mothers. It can also be seen in the New Testament.

The mother of James and John approached Christ to request a princely position for her sons. The incident makes more sense when you realize the mother's request was

consistent with her role. Her sons' position in the future kingdom was within the lawful concerns for her. She had the right to seek that on their behalf:

Then [to him came] the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping Jesus and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What do you [will] that I should do? And she said unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on your right hand,...the other on your left [hand], in your kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, you know not what you ask. Are you able to drink...the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism...I am baptized with? They said unto him, We are able. And he said unto them, You shall drink indeed of my cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit on my right hand, and...my left [hand], is for whom it is prepared of my Father, but not mine to give. (Matthew 10:2 RE)

It was altogether appropriate for this request to come from their mother. It was squarely within the traditional role and right of the righteous matriarch. Christ's answer to the disciples' mother mentions His Father which necessarily included His Mother.

In the *Answer to Prayer for Covenant*, it is explained that establishing any Throne is done through a covenant requiring a mother-companion and female counterpart to elevate a father to a Throne. It's also clear that once elevated, these two sit together upon a Throne. Every Throne and every Kingdom in eternity requires these two separate parties, the man and the woman, to be one.

And again, I say [unto] you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for he could not be there if not for Sarah's covenant with him. Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and Isaac likewise could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him; and Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him; and all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. Therefore the marriage covenant is needed for all those who would likewise seek to obtain from me the right to continue their seed into eternity, for only through marriage can Thrones and Kingdoms be established. (T&C 157:42-43)

Given this, any mention of the Heavenly Father is also mention of both Divine Parents, for there is neither man nor woman alone in the Divine state. When first created, man and woman were joined together by God. This union happened before death entered into the world. Therefore, their companionship was eternal when first established and, when rescued from death, would return. As Christ put it:

*Have you not read that he who made man at the beginning made him male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave [unto] to his wife, and they **two** shall be **one** flesh? Wherefore, they are no more two, but **one** flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 9:19 RE, emphasis added)*

This union of Adam and Eve and this plan of God for all who would thereafter be married was to make the man and the woman *one flesh*. What God has joined together and made into one, no one should *put asunder* by rejecting the eternal nature of marriage. It was always intended to last through the resurrection.

Continuing with the Heavenly Mother's declarations in Proverbs 8:

I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honor are with me—yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. (Proverbs 1:36 RE)

Of all our Mother's *fruit*, the most valuable to fallen man is, without doubt, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The account of how Jesus Christ came into the world begins with a virgin and an angel. There is more to this than Christians have noticed. The prophecy relied on to identify the birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem continues with a description of His Mother. It was prophesied that only when *she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel* (Micah 5:3; see also Micah 1:11 RE). Because of the labor and travail of His Mother, the prophecy of Israel returning to God was fulfilled. She made His entry into this world possible. The redemption of the remnant is as much the consequence of Her as of Her Son.

What was Mary's role? Who was She? Is it possible She was the Mother of God before She came into mortality? These are important questions that ought to be asked. If we can learn the answers, they would indeed be glorious.

The Greek title *Mother of God* (Θεοτοκος) has been used in Eastern Christianity since the third—perhaps as early as the second—century. The title was exclusively associated with Mary. By the fifth century the title became controversial, and a replacement term *Mother of Christ* (Κριστοτοκος) was substituted.

Since the pre-earth existence of man is not universally accepted in Christianity, most Christians have never considered even the possibility of a pre-earth identity for Mary. Despite this, She, like all mankind, existed before this world.

If God the Father obeys the same commandments He imposes upon His children, then for Him to father a child with any woman other than His Wife would violate His decrees about adultery and chastity. Marian theology is largely absent from Mormonism other than to suggest that because the Father impregnated Her, She is destined to be added to His eternal harem as an additional spouse. Traditional Mormon teachings have been crudely fixated on the mechanics of Mary's conception. There is almost no interest in whether She has any pre-earth role with the Father or whether She was the Mother in Heaven, the Divine Spouse of the Father who condescended to come to earth to bear Their Only Begotten in the flesh. If She were to be acknowledged in that role, it would require a complete re-envisioning of Her. It would raise the issues of why or how She,

an immortal and exalted God, could return from that exalted state back to mortality to bring our Redeemer and Savior into this world. It would draw a contrast between the Father's involvement with this creation and the Mother's.

The Father can, and does, acknowledge others as His. But, unlike the Son who has repeatedly visited this earth, walked upon it, been handled by people,... eaten here, the Father does not come into contact with this earth in its fallen state. The only time the Father had contact with this earth was before the Fall, in the Paradisiacal setting of Eden—which was a Temple at the time. Whenever there has been contact with the Father thereafter, He has been at a distance from this earth.

There is a formality with the Father that does not exist with the Son. For example, the Son has eaten with mortal man while He was immortal, both before His ministry in the flesh and after. As our Redeemer, He is directly responsible for us and has contact with us to perform His redemptive service. The Father, on the other hand, is different in status, responsibility, glory and dominion. The Son can appear to mortal man without showing His glory or requiring any alteration of the mortal who beholds Him. To behold the Father, to endure His presence, one must be transfigured. Mortal man cannot behold the Father's works while mortal, for if you comprehend them you cannot afterward remain mortal in the flesh.

That's taken from pages 383-387 in *Removing the Condemnation* (see also pp. 395-396, first edition, 2010), and there are a lot of footnotes to that which will be in the paper I put up. Like this description of the Son, the same description should apply to His Mother.

The Father is the source of glory and likened to the sun. The Mother reflects and shares this glory and is likened to the moon. She reflects God's glory, endures within it, and is empowered by it. She can participate with Him in all that is done wielding that glory. Knowledge is the initiator or force, and wisdom is the regulator, guide, apportioner, and weaver of that power. If not tempered and guided by wisdom, knowledge can be destructive. Wisdom makes the prudent adaptation required for order. The Father and Mother are one. But the Mother bridges the gulf between the Throne of the Father and fallen man. She made it possible for the Son of God to enter this fallen world for the salvation of everything in it.

A great deal of reflection and study is needed to understand all this implies. This is an introduction of some basic information about the Mother of God, or *the Mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh* (1 Nephi 3:8 RE). More will be given in a temple where mankind's understanding of things kept hidden from the world will be greatly increased—*when* God directs one be built to His name.

There was a time when Christians recognized that the stars of heaven bore witness of the significance of Mary, Christ's earthly mother. Few Christians now look at the

constellations as *signs* set in the firmament of God as His *testimony*. The light that was meant to shine on the earth was to illuminate both the eyes and mind of man. Man in the first generations understood this, and *a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets and of the stars, as they were made known unto the Fathers...* (Abraham 2:4 RE) was written by Abraham, who received that same understanding.

At the time of Christ's birth, there were those who understood the testimony written in the lights of the firmament. They reported they *[saw] his star in the east and have come to worship him* (Matthew 1:6 RE). These *wise men* watched and waited for the heavenly alignment to testify of the birth of a promised *king*. The Matthew text makes such casual mention of this that we give it little notice. Today, Christians and Mormons alike have little understanding of the lights in the firmament and so, give little heed to the signs set by God in the heavens above. Our ignorance does not mean these signs are meaningless. It only means we are poorly informed of God's full message.

John's Revelation mentions two of the heavenly signs that testify of Mary. One of these is on the ecliptic and, since earliest times, has been identified as a virgin woman, called by us the constellation Virgo. The circle of heaven is divided into the north and the south at the ecliptic. On the ecliptic from the north to the south poles, there are twelve constellations that can be seen everywhere on earth. Some constellations cannot be seen from one of the hemispheres, but those twelve on the ecliptic are ever-present overhead. These move in the same plane as the sun, moon, and wandering planets. Most of those who discuss these twelve constellations allocate 360 degrees of the heavenly circle into twelve equal, 30-degree segments, allocating for each constellation on the ecliptic the same distance. Today, these twelve constellations are called the Zodiac.

Unlike the equal division between the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, the starfields of these twelve constellations are unequal in size. The two largest starfields belong to Virgo and Aquarius. These two largest of the Zodiac constellations are heavenly witnesses testifying of Christ's mother Mary and the returning Christ. For Christ's First Coming, the heavenly testimony focuses the greatest part of the starfield on His Mother. We should reflect on what that may mean. We ought to contemplate why Christ's First Coming was symbolized on the heavenly ecliptic by the Virgin Mother. Why was She the focus?

Christ's Second Coming is the largest starfield on the ecliptic. He will return to pour out judgment, blessing those who follow Him and destroying those who rebel. The destruction of the wicked is what Christ identified as *the end of the world* (Matthew 11:2 RE). Aquarius has two outflows from the "Waterbearer's urn." One represents water (giving life), and the other represents fire (or purging).

Traditionally, we interpret the constellation Virgo as a woman holding a sheaf of wheat in her left hand. The sheaf represents her seed. The brightest star in the constellation, a magnitude 1 star, is Spica, *the seed of the woman*. That star is placed on the ecliptic. Most other stars in Virgo are located above the ecliptic. The seed of the woman

represents Christ. His star on the ecliptic represents that everything in the firmament is divided in relation to Him. All of heaven is either above or below the ecliptic. The position of His star, like His role as judge, divides the heavens.

Traditionally, Virgo is drawn looking down at the earth, facing us. This view places the seed of the woman in her left hand. The left hand is *usually* a symbol of cursing. The right hand symbolizes blessing. If the seed of the woman is meant to be in her right hand, then she would be drawn looking up, heavenward, and her back would be facing us. Reorienting Virgo to face upward—with the seed of the woman in her right hand—is more fitting.

John described Virgo and the movement of other lights on the ecliptic as follows: *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars...* (Revelation 12:1; see also Revelation 4:1 RE). The sun and the moon move on the ecliptic through the constellation Virgo and at times *clothe* her and at other times appear *under her feet*. This *wonder* John described is overhead in the starry firmament of *heaven* as one of the signs put there to testify of heavenly things.

Christ's Mother Mary is a figure of such preeminence that testimony of Her is emblazoned upon the ecliptic in an enduring, towering figure outlined in the stars. This is not happenstance. It is God's witness to us. We should accept it as meaningful and ponder on the meaning.

Another of the constellations John mentions is a *woman* who brought forth a son, who is then caught up to the throne of God. This is also depicted in another constellation. One of the constellations immediately associated with Virgo, located next to her in the northern sky, is a constellation anciently depicted as a mother seated on a throne holding a son in her hands. This image of a woman seated on a throne with her son is located just to the north above Virgo. It suggests both the mother and her son descended from a throne they once occupied in heaven and is destined to return again there. If you can accept the witness written of them in the stars of the firmament, then She came to earth with Her Son, and She will return again to a Throne in the north. Contemplate what this witness of Mary could mean. Taken at full value, Mary, like Her Son, condescended to come here.

The Book of Mormon gives an extended description of Mary, the Mother of God. In the original translation text, the words *mother of God* were used, but that was changed by Joseph Smith in 1837 to *mother of the Son of God*. Here is how it reads following that change:

And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin,

most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God? And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of...flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for [a] space of...time the angel [said] unto me...Look! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul. (1 Nephi 11:13-23; see also 1 Nephi 3:8-9 RE)

Most who read this passage interpret the *condescension* reference **solely** as Christ's. They view it as Christ alone who descended by being borne of Mary here in mortality. However, when leading up to the angel's question, *Knowest thou the condescension of God?* the text focuses exclusively on Mary. When the angel clarified the condescension, he again focused primarily on Mary and secondarily on Her Son. The angel explained:

*Behold, **the virgin** whom thou seest is **the mother of the Son of God**, after the manner of the flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that **she** was carried away in the Spirit; and after **she** had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and **beheld the virgin** again, bearing a child in **her arms**. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God.(1 Nephi 11:18-21; see also 1 Nephi 3:8-9 RE, emphasis added)*

Who would you reasonably expect to be the woman chosen before the world was organized to become the mortal Mother of the Lord? Who would you expect Heavenly Father would want to bear His child if not His Spouse? Together, God the Father and Mary can be acknowledged as the Parents of Christ. The scriptures shift the focus of the condescension from Christ to His Mother and then back to Her Son, the seed of the woman.

Lectures on Faith describe Christ as *the prototype of the saved man*. Lecture 7 focuses attention on Christ as the Savior and Redeemer. But the lecture extends the requirement met by Jesus Christ to also apply for every saved man. In other words, for any man to be saved, they must attain to the resurrection—like Christ. Shifting attention for a moment from Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Savior to His Mother, we could acknowledge Her as *the prototype of the saved woman*. In other words, we could consider what She did a Divine pattern to be followed by women.

Attaining to the resurrection does not mean merely being resurrected from the grave. We must conquer death:

But even when we rise from the grave, we will still not have "attained [in] the resurrection of the dead" nor hold the keys of the resurrection. No one will until they, like Christ, have gone from exaltation to exaltation, until they can obtain the power to resurrect all that depends upon them. For us "to attain to the resurrection of the dead" requires us to have the power to resurrect not only ourselves, but also those who are dependent on us. This is what the prototype of the saved man did. This is Who we worship. This is who and what we must precisely and exactly become.

Remember Christ said, *The Son can do nothing of himself, but what [he sees] the Father do: for [whatever] things...he [does], these also [does] the Son likewise* (John 5:19; see also John 5:4 RE). The Father went before, and the Son follows after. To be like Him, sit on His throne, and [to] attain to the same status, we must do precisely what the Gods have done.

For us to understand Christ, we must understand the challenging path Joseph Smith explained in his final church conference in April 1844. All must progress, "Until you attain to the resurrection of the dead and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power."

Even that which we envision as the highest heaven requires those who sit enthroned in everlasting burnings to condescend to be there. D&C 130:26 reveals that a white stone is given to heirs of the celestial kingdom to reveal to them things pertaining to 'a higher order of kingdoms.' We must go from "exaltation to exaltation" because there is a great deal not yet revealed to man about the eternities. There are places where, in everlasting glory, the personages are embodied in 'spirit, glory, and power" like The Father. (*40 Years in Mormonism*, Talk 7, "Christ: The Prototype of the Saved Man," pp. 18-19)

Did Mary also attain to the resurrection? Protestants dismiss the Catholic veneration of Mary; but it may just be that the Catholics have preserved something of value about her that ought not be ignored.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of His Body."

Karl Keating of *Catholic Answers* explains:

We know that after the crucifixion Mary was cared for by the apostle John (John 19:26-27). Early Christian writings say John went to live at Ephesus and that Mary accompanied him. There is some dispute about where she ended her life, perhaps there, perhaps back at Jerusalem. Neither of these cities nor any

others claimed her remains, although there are claims about possessing her (temporary) tomb. Why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because there were no bones to claim, and people knew it.

Remember, in the early Christian centuries, relics of saints were jealously guarded and highly prized. The bones of those martyred in the Colosseum, for instance, were quickly gathered up and preserved; there are many accounts of this in the biographies of those who gave up their lives for the Faith [for example, the bones of St. Peter and St. Paul were widely known to be preserved in Rome, and the sepulcher of David and the tomb of St. John the Baptist are both mentioned in Scripture]. Yet here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints...but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

A fifth-century letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem responding to the Byzantine Empress Pulcheria's request for the relics of the Holy Virgin states there was a centuries-old tradition that Mary was taken into heaven when She died, and, therefore, there were no relics. He expressed surprise that the Empress was not acquainted with this well-known tradition. This was, apparently, common knowledge among the early Christians.

According to the tradition, the apostles assembled to bury her, but burial was unnecessary because She had already been assumed into heaven, body and spirit. This teaching was an extension of another Catholic belief regarding Mary called *Immaculate Conception*. The teaching was propounded by Pope Pius the Ninth and declared that Mary was free from all the weaknesses of the Fall of Adam and born without the sinful nature of fallen man. Although an estimated 1.2 billion Catholics accept these teachings about Mary today, Protestants and Mormons have not. The angel's words in First Nephi seem more akin to Catholic veneration of Mary than the crude, incidental, and dismissive way Mormon traditions have discussed the Virgin Mary.

The Heavenly Mother was there in the Garden when man was first introduced. She was with the Father when He said, *Let **us** make man* (Genesis 2:8 RE, emphasis added)—for no man ever fathered a child without a mother to bear his seed. She was with the Father when man fell and was cast out of the Garden and made vulnerable to death. These Heavenly Parents were committed to saving Their offspring from death and hell.

If the condescension of God included the Mother of God as well as Her Son, then She was also a critical participant for providing the sacrificial lamb required for our redemption. Since the Fall of Adam, everyone who enters mortality must die to exit mortality. But unlike Adam and the rest of his posterity, Christ lived so as to be able to defy death. The wages of sin are death, but Christ did not earn those wages. Therefore, Christ could return from death because He attained to the resurrection.

If Christ attained to the resurrection through His progression from one small capacity to a great one, going from grace to grace and from exaltation to exaltation, did His Mother do anything less? Was Her coming into this world any less of a condescension? Reflect on the Mother of God and consider this passage of Lecture 7 which describes Christ:

And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how [is it] that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for Him to change in the least degree, so sure [would he] fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority and glory, which constitutes salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else, and no being can possess it but himself or one like him. (Lectures on Faith 7:9 RE)

It requires as much to save a woman as a man. No person, male or female, can dwell where God dwells without possessing the same attributes as all those who have gone before. The pattern is unchangeable. We cannot claim to be like Them without possessing the same holiness these holy beings possess.

We have more quotes of Mary in the New Covenants book of Luke. When She was visited by the angel Gabriel and told of Her ministry to bear the Messiah, She responded: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word* (Luke 1:6 RE). The term *handmaid* includes the possible meanings: wife, female partner, or consort. Mary was all of these to God the Father.

The account continues with Mary going to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was at that time six months pregnant with John the Baptist. When Mary arrived, Elizabeth addressed her with this inspired utterance: *Elizabeth was filled with the holy ghost, and she spake out with a loud voice, [saying], Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is it that this blessing is upon me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:7 RE). Consider what it may mean to be *blessed among women*. Elizabeth addressed Her as *the mother of my Lord*—which should not be interpreted narrowly or construed merely to mean a biological vessel to accomplish a pregnancy. When read in combination with the Book of Mormon description, it can mean so much more.

Mary responded with a psalm, giving us a glimpse into Her heart. What we find there is wondrous.

And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done to me great things, and I will magnify his holy name for his mercy [is] on [them] [that] fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put

down the mighty from their high seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of mercy, as he spoke to our fathers—to Abraham and...his seed for ever. (Luke 1:8 RE)

These words are worthy of a Mother of God. She clearly magnifies, or increases, Her Lord. Christ did the same thing, glorifying the Father.

When Mary said the words, *he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden*, the condescension of God seems to apply particularly to Her. She laid aside glory to be here, and the Father still held *regard* for His *handmaiden* in this *low estate*. What a great work our Heavenly Parents have undertaken for Their children!

Mary declared, *from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed*. All generations include the living, the unborn, and the dead. Eventually every soul who has come to this world will recognize Her as *Blessed*—not only for what She is, but for what She did to magnify the work of our Father in Heaven.

Her description of the Heavenly Father includes these words of admiration and praise:

[H]is mercy on them that fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their high seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty. (ibid, vs. 8)

Clearly both the Father and Mary despise the *proud* whose overestimation of themselves is informed by *the imagination of their hearts* and not God's regard. Both the Father and Mary want those who are *mighty* to be dispossessed from *their high seats* of power. The Parents of Christ prefer *them of low degree* whose humility and selflessness make them suitable to be exalted. The hungry are fed, and the rich are sent away empty—which may not be fully realized until after this world. But the Parents of Christ will be the final judges of all people and will judge mankind based exactly upon the criteria that They have revealed.

Based on several verses in Matthew, Protestants claim that Joseph fathered other children with Mary. Catholic theology venerates Mary and teaches Her perpetual virginity.

Catholics believe the brothers mentioned in the scriptures are sons of Joseph from a prior marriage and not other children born to Mary. The Catholic view on this point is strengthened by Christ assigning John to be Mary's son as one of His dying acts. If Mary had other sons to care for Her, that assignment of John would not have been necessary. The Catholics are much closer to the truth about Mary, but they still have an incomplete theology.

Returning to the words of the Divine Mother in Proverbs 8:

I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.
(Proverbs 8:20-21; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE)

These treasures are not earthly but *durable* and incapable of depreciation. What the Mother offers cannot be harmed by moth or rust nor lost to thieves. They are in heaven. But obtaining them requires us to walk as She guides *in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment* (ibid, vs. 20; see also vs. 36 RE). The great white throne is not occupied by the Father alone. Nor will that great judgment be made without the Mother's involvement, for She lives in *the paths of judgment* and wisely counsels Her children to obtain durable *riches and honor*.

The Mother explains how She was present from the beginning as part of the God we call Father or, in Hebrew, the Elohim:

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. (Proverbs 8:22-31; see also Proverbs 1:37 RE)

Before this creation, the Mother in Heaven was with the Father. She was beside Him when His work began. She was there when the plan was laid, the boundaries established, and the compass applied to establish order for the creation. All the Father knows, the Mother knows. All the Father established and ordered, the Mother established and ordered. They are one. She is the Father's *delight*, and the potential of Her sons to be like Her Husband brings Her delight.

To be like Their Father, Her sons must become one with Her daughters, for it is not good for man to be alone. The Father and Mother are one, and Her sons and daughters must likewise become one. Only when the man and woman were together was the creation *good*. When men rebel, disobey, act cruelly, or mistreat Her daughters, we are anything but a delight to the Heavenly Mother. When we offend Her, we also offend Her Husband.

Before any of us will plan, measure, set a compass, and apportion the foundations of another earth, we must grow together and become like Them. Their work is glorious. They possess love—the power that creates and organizes. Love is the power behind all that They do. We cannot be like them without a loving relationship that mirrors Theirs.

Her words continue:

Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: [and] all they that hate me love death. (Proverbs 8:32-36; see also Proverbs 1:38 RE)

These interesting words do not mean just discovering the abstract presence of wisdom as a characteristic attributable to the Mother in Heaven. Instead, they require us to discover Her existence and to acknowledge Her—otherwise, we've not found Her. When She declares, *whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord*, it should be taken literally. This does not mean we now pray to Her, for we are commanded to pray to the Father. But it does mean when we use the word *Father* to describe God, we finally regard God to be both male and female—the original image of God.

There are seven stages of development through which God's children must pass. It is not all to be done in this life. Christ is the prototype of the saved man, and He qualified by passing through these stages of development. We should not be surprised that the Heavenly Mother was responsible for planning and creating these developmental opportunities for Her children.

Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. (Proverbs 9:1-2; see also Proverbs 1:39 RE)

When any of us arrive at the end of the journey through the seven rungs of Jacob's ladder, we will discover that the Mother was present throughout that journey. She declared: *I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment* (Proverbs 8:20; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE). She is present all along the way through the seven pillars. This recognition of the Heavenly Mother requires wisdom.

When a female deity has been worshipped in past cultures, more often than not, the result is a gradual degeneration into fertility cults and sexual excesses. Ritual prostitution was often practiced by ancients who believed in a divine mother. Even Israel fell into sexual deviancy as part of their worship of a female god.

At a pivotal time for ancient Israel, Jeremiah condemned worship of the *queen of heaven*. Because some scholars want a divine female to be authentic, Jeremiah's condemnation is considered problematic. His words can be interpreted to denounce

altogether a female god. In part because of this, in current scholarship Jeremiah has become a controversial figure. Even his existence is now questioned. Margaret Barker recently wrote the following:

This assumes that a person of that name existed, since scholars cannot begin to agree if Jeremiah even existed, nor on the process by which the present texts of Jeremiah were formed. Many have resorted to other ways of dealing with the text. A recent volume on the latest trends in Jeremiah studies was introduced thus: "Jeremiah is an intractable riddle." "Taken together, the essays in this volume press for an end to 'innocent' readings of Jeremiah... And the turn to Jeremiah as a social semiotic discourse presses for an end to 'innocent' biblical theology readings that have [championed] historical-critical orthodoxy in one fashion or another." No help there in our quest for reconstructing what happened in the time of Josiah! (Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*, p. 54)

But we know Jeremiah was real and that he was a prophet because Nephi mentions him in his description of what had been preserved in the brass plates of Laban. The description includes the following:

And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah. And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah. (1 Nephi 5:12-13; see also 1 Nephi 1:22 RE)

The Book of Mormon confirms Jeremiah's existence and status as a prophet. We can accept him today even if scholars doubt. Revelation remains more reliable than mere scholarship and opinion.

Jeremiah denounced the form of veneration taken by ancient Israel. He rebuked those in his day, preaching, among other things, this:

Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah...in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle...fire, and the women knead their dough, [and] make cakes to the queen of heaven,...to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? (Jeremiah 7:17-19; see also Jeremiah 4:2 RE)

These words have been incorrectly used to denounce and deny the very existence of a Heavenly Mother. However, Jeremiah was not denying or denouncing Her existence, only the improper form of worshipping Her to the exclusion of Heavenly Father.

It requires wisdom to deal with the Mother. Rejection of Her has resulted in religious and social errors. Ignoring Her has produced celibacy, religious eunuchs, and a collapsing birth rate. On one end, fixation on Her has produced fertility cults, sacred prostitution, and religious orgies. At the other end, the Shakers—Shakers, officially, are United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing—Shakers were celibate, and procreation was prohibited. This resulted in the gradual death of their community and, as of 2017, only two surviving members. Either end of the religious-sexual spectrum that misapprehends the Divine Feminine has been plagued with degrading or calamitous imbalances.

The sun and the moon are symbols of the Father and Mother planted overhead as a testimony from Them to Their children. From the surface of the earth, they occupy equal space in the firmament. Although the circumference of the sun is approximately 400 times larger than the moon, the moon is approximately 400 times closer to the earth. As a result, they are visibly equal in size and occupy the same path on the ecliptic. This is why the moon is able to eclipse the sun.

The Father, represented by the sun, is stable, unchangeable, reliable, and predictable. The sun rises every day on the horizon in the east and sets every evening on the horizon in the west. He is unvarying in His course from day to day and year to year. The Mother, represented by the moon, changes each day. She waxes and wanes. She does not just move from east to west, but the moonrise also constantly moves in the opposite direction from west to east. Every day she reappears further to the east before beginning her movement to the west. She moves approximately 50 minutes eastward each day.

Her complex movements overhead were part of the reason she was known anciently as "The Great Dancer." Her movements display constantly changing motions, contrasting with her companion sun. This contrast between the movements of the sun and the moon reminds me of the quip by cartoonist Bob Thaves about Ginger Rogers, the dancing partner of acclaimed Fred Astaire: "Sure he was great, but don't forget that Ginger Rogers did everything he did...backwards and in high heels."

We are often told that life on earth depends on the sun. But life here is equally dependent on the moon. Without the moon slowing the earth's rotation, we would have only six- to ten-hour days. The shorter days would result in the earth being much colder, as the sun would have less time to warm the earth's surface. This would cause a dramatic decrease in plant and animal life. Tides would be eliminated; weather would be more violent. The stable rotation of the earth would change, and we would no longer rotate on a constant axis. The poles and equator would no longer exist or would be constantly changing. The earth's tectonic plates, continents, and mountain ranges are all formed by the effect of the moon on the earth. Without the moon, there would be less variety in the earth's habitats. Many life forms could not exist. Richard Lathe, a molecular biologist at Pieta Research in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, advanced a theory in 2003 explaining that life on earth could not have happened without the moon. A

number of astronomers believe that life on any planet throughout the universe requires a nearby moon, and without this nighttime companion for the sun, life cannot exist.

While acknowledging a Divine Mother is appropriate, singling Her out for worship is not. The words of the Divine Mother's proverb and Mary's psalm both venerate and praise the Father. The role of God the Father is critical to acknowledge and understand for our salvation. Jesus Christ is the essential Savior and Redeemer whose atoning sacrifice is the means ordained by God to now rescue us from sin and death. Our salvation depends on knowing, confessing, and worshipping Christ. Anything that distracts us from that can become an impediment to salvation.

For us, the Mother's greatest accomplishment has been to take the seed of God the Father and magnify it. She controls and weaves His seed into Their organized spirit offspring. From Their glory, or intelligence, She produces organized intelligences, or spirits. One of the titles for the Heavenly Mother is *The Great Weaver* because She formed unorganized intelligence into organized intelligences or spirits, becoming the Mother of all living. All of us are intimately connected to Her, for we came from Her.

Mortal women have inherited a similar power from Her. This inheritance empowers them to become mothers here. The capacity to fashion matter into another human being belongs only to Her daughters. All human life begins inside the womb of the woman where the work of The Great Weaver is replicated for each one of us who has ever lived in this world.

There is a natural and inevitable affection children hold for their mothers. That affection is close to the hearts of all dying men. There are many battlefield accounts of how dying men call out in their last breath for their mother. Roland Bartetzko, former German Army soldier, when under fire in his first combat experience, uttered, "Mother," when fire first struck others beside him. As he reflected on why he spoke that out loud, he concluded, "Our lives begin with our mothers giving birth to us and on the day when I thought my life was over, my mind circled back to where it all began."

There is something primal, unavoidable, and universal in the connection between children and mothers. Life begins in her arms and at her breast. Approaching death always brings the beginning of life (and therefore, motherhood) back into focus. This primal connection is one reason why acknowledging the Heavenly Mother has proven overwhelming—even a burden—for some societies. As soon as they are aware of Her, they focus veneration and worship on Her alone.

The presence of the female counterpart to God the Father does not include a scriptural command or permission to single Her out and worship Her apart from the Father. Indeed, the psalm of Mary in the book of Luke and the words of the Mother in Proverbs direct our attention to the Father. She may be part of a Divine Couple, but it is clear She wants honor and worship to be on Her Husband and Her Son.

Mary's psalm focuses on God the Father and His Son. Look carefully at Her adoration of God:

*My soul doth **magnify the Lord**, ...my spirit hath rejoiced in **God my Saviour**. ...**holy is his name**. And **his mercy is on them that fear him** from generation to generation. **He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud** in the imagination of their hearts. **He hath put down the mighty** from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. **He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent [away empty]. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to [the] fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.** (Luke 1:46-47, 49-55; see also Luke 1:8 RE, emphasis added)*

She pointed us to the Father. Remember also that the brightest star in Her constellation is in Her hand—the seed of the woman. The stars testify of Her but point to Her seed as the greatest light for us here and now.

The moon reflects the light of her sun just as Mary did in Her psalm. This physical example testifies to the glory of the Father and the faithful reflection of the Mother. It is the sun that provides the light, heat, and gravity governing the planets of this creation under its influence. It is the moon that stabilizes and makes life possible.

As mentioned already, Jeremiah witnessed some of the corrupt practices of ancient Israel when they singled out the queen of heaven for uninvited, uninspired primacy in their worship. God prompted him to condemn what he saw. His condemnation has been wrongly interpreted as an outright rejection of Her existence. But Jeremiah has preserved for us the fact that ancient Israel once burned incense to the queen of heaven. This happened in their temple. Israel incorrectly attributed prosperity to their worship and appeasement of the queen of heaven. They turned the queen of heaven into a magic talisman to be placated by incense, drink offerings, and cakes. It was idolatry, incapable of changing the inner man. Acknowledgment of Her devolved to degrading appeasement of a female sky god who could be manipulated into blessing worshippers by the offering of presents. But to put this into perspective, that condemnation by Jeremiah was comparable to Jesus Christ's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. Christ did not reject God the Father. He vindicated Him. But Christ denounced their foolish, superficial idolatry associated with God the Father. Jeremiah was condemning worship of the queen of heaven that had strayed outside the bounds authorized by God.

History has proven that it is less problematic to ignore Heavenly Mother than to acknowledge Her. Historically speaking, mankind has shown there is less of a downside to ignoring Heavenly Mother than the downside of acknowledging Her. Faith in God is not dependent on fully realizing the things disclosed in this talk.

Lecture Third in Lectures on Faith clarifies what is essential to enable us to have saving faith in God:

Let us here observe that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

- *First, the idea that he...exists.*
- *Secondly, a correct idea of his **character, perfections, and attributes.***
- *Thirdly, an actual knowledge that **the course of life** which he is pursuing is **according to His will.*** (Lectures on Faith 3:2-5, emphasis added)

The idea that a Heavenly Mother exists is implicit in the scriptures. But because it is not explicit, a person can have faith that God exists without understanding the duality of the Heavenly Parents. Likewise, the character, perfections, and attributes do not require anybody to understand what is explained in this talk.

Their character, perfections, and attributes are: mercy, righteousness, love, compassion, and truthfulness. They are without partiality, no respecter of persons, regarding all alike. They make the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. They regard wickedness as an abomination. They prize truth, meekness, and peacemakers. They abhor the froward, prideful, evil, and arrogant. They are full of grace and truth and are more intelligent than us all. They are the Creators and will be the final judges of this cycle of existence, and no one will be permitted to progress further without Their permission. There is nothing vile or perverse about Them. They are repelled by contention and seek for us all to associate with one another equally, as brothers and sisters. They are *perfect* in the sense of having completed the journey to the end of the path and entered into eternal lives and exaltation. They now seek to guide Their children along the same path.

If you understand and accept these things about God, that is enough. You may imagine Them as a male and a female, or a Great Spirit, a bearded old man, or an incorporeal-but-difficult-to-envision being of pure glory. Whatever young Joseph Smith imagined God to be when he asked God for wisdom was unimportant because he believed God to be just, pure, holy, and no respecter of persons. The answer he received cleared up a great many mysteries for Joseph, but those clarifications went beyond God's character, perfection, and attributes.

The keystone of our religion gives examples of how faith in God does not require any comprehension of the corporeal existence or physical dimensions of God. The understanding of the Brother of Jared before he saw God was decidedly limited. Despite this, he was redeemed from the fall by returning to God's presence where he gained greater knowledge of God. Beforehand, he did not understand Christ had a finger, nor did he understand he would one day take upon Himself a mortal body:

And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was...the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood. And the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth, and the Lord said unto him, Arise. Why hast thou fallen? [It's hard to talk to people when

they're laying on their face. It's annoying.] *And he [said to] the Lord, I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me, for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood. [See, if I see someone who is big and powerful, and I get a look at his hand, the usual thing that the Big Man does is slap me with that same damn hand because that's what big chiefs do.] ...I feared lest he should smite me, for I knew not...the Lord had flesh and blood. (Ether 1:12 RE)*

I knew not. I knew not. This is the guy that has faith sufficient to get through the veil to be in the presence of Christ. I knew not *this*. But he understood the character, attributes, and perfections. He could have faith.

And the Lord said unto him, Because of thy faith, thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood (ibid, vs. 12).

When Ammon was teaching King Lamoni, the instruction began by only acknowledging that God was a *Great Spirit*.

Believest thou that there is a God? And he answered unto him, I do not know what that meaneth....then Ammon said, Believest thou...there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea. And Ammon said, This is God. And Ammon said unto him again, Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in Heaven and in...earth? And he said, Yea, I believe...he created all things which are in the earth, but I do not know the Heavens. And Ammon said unto him, The Heavens are a place where God dwells and all his holy angels. (Alma 12:15 RE)

This man would have the veil taken, and he would be caught up into a heavenly vision with that foundation because that was enough of the character, attributes, and perfections of God to allow him to pass through the veil.

When Aaron taught King Lamoni's father, he likewise described God vaguely as that *Great Spirit*:

Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God. And the king said, Is God that great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem? And Aaron said unto him, Yea, he is that great Spirit,...he created all things both in Heaven and in...earth. Believest thou this? And he said, Yea, I believe that... Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words. (Alma 13:8 RE)

That's it.

These examples demonstrate that understanding there is both a Father and a Mother who jointly comprise a single Heavenly Father is not essential for mankind to be able to have saving faith in God. Knowing the character, perfections, and attributes does not extend to these particulars. To be like Them is to be patient, faithful, obedient, loving,

charitable, and pure. These are the important characters, perfections, and attributes of godliness. Their appearance—even that They are two separate beings, male and female, and yet They are one—is not required for faith.

First and foremost, for fallen man in this creation, salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ. We have a revealed account that explains who we worship and how to worship:

And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at...first, but received grace for grace; And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not...the fulness at the first. And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth. (D&C 93:12-17; see also T&C 93:4-6)

The account continues:

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth; And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning. (D&C 93:23-25; see also T&C 93:8)

Like Christ, we are to grow from grace to grace. Those words are in a revelation that begins with this promise: *Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;* (D&C 93:1; see also T&C 93:1). This is how we are to grow from grace to grace. This is how we can receive of His fullness. There is no mention of redirecting our obedience to another. Nor is there any name provided to us to call upon other than Christ's. Nor is there any voice we are to hearken unto other than Christ's.

We are in a fallen state and need to be saved. Like Mary acknowledged to Elizabeth when they met, we need to be rescued by a Savior. That Savior is Jesus Christ. She pointed us to Him, and if we will heed Her wise counsel, we will rely on the merits of Christ, who is mighty to save.

There are other revelations that clarify how our attention and adoration must center in Christ. It is Jesus Christ who we are to acknowledge as the great Creator and Redeemer of creation:

God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—He that [ascendeth] up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth

shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and...the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space— The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:5-13; see also T&C 86:1)

There are Heavenly Parents, to be sure. They are two separate beings: a Father and a Mother. She exists, and Her role is acknowledged in scripture. We are supposed to find Her. And in the last-days temple (should it be finally built by a humble and obedient people), Her open presence will be there.

In the temple ceremonies, women veil their faces. Among other things, this symbolizes the hidden Heavenly Mother. Her presence is veiled because She is sacred and not to be regarded as accessible apart from Heavenly Father. That which is most holy is veiled from the vulgar and profane. Women should be regarded as daughters of the Divine Mother. Like Her, they carry the power to produce new life. Mothers are the physical veil between pre-earth spirits and physical bodies inhabited in mortality. They clothe children in the veil of flesh. This power is honored in the temple veiling of women. This power to give life has been regarded in almost all societies as something sacred and holy. In our coarse and vulgar society, we have rejected, as a matter of law, the idea that women engage in a sacred and holy labor when bearing children.

The Great Weaver organizes intelligence into life itself through motherhood. It is in the womb that disorganized intelligence is organized into spirits resembling the Heavenly Parents in eternity. Mothers in this creation do likewise. That power, endowed by the Divine pattern, is present in this creation to testify of She who wove our spirits before this world. She is ever providing wisdom to guide the energy of Her Divine counterpart so balance and order are maintained.

For the present, it is enough to know She is there and that She urges us to be faithful and obedient to Her Son, our Redeemer and Savior. We need to be rescued from our fallen state, and Jesus Christ is our rescuer.

Finally, there is one last clarification about the Heavenly Mother that needs to be made. Brigham Young taught a confusing doctrine that's been labeled *Adam-God*. Although he gave some illuminating and true sermons during Joseph Smith's lifetime, following Joseph's death, Brigham Young seemed to be doctrinally adrift. He made no claims to revelation. But his guesses about what happened in the Garden of Eden have marred all of the largest branches of Mormonism. To be fair, he said he *guessed* and *reckoned*

about the subject. But he also called it a *revelment* to him, which led others to regard his incorrect ideas as reliable. Brigham Young's false ideas have produced a library of material defending or disputing his teaching. There are today both fervent defenders and convicted detractors. Because of this strong partisan divide, it might be more prudent to leave what happened in Eden unexplained.

... But fools rush in.

Our Heavenly Mother, the companion of Heavenly Father, was in the garden when man was created. But so were others. In addition to the man Adam and the woman Eve, the plural Elohim who were in Eden included two Divine couples who were the Parents of Adam and the Parents of Eve. One Divine couple were the Parents of Adam. The other were the Parents of Eve.

The account of the creation from Moses in Genesis is a parable. The account veils identities of the role players unless the parable is explained. Christ did this when He taught publicly. The parable written by Moses relates:

*And I, God, said unto my Only Begotten, who was with me from the beginning, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And it was so. And I, God, said, Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,...over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the Earth. And I, God, created man in [mine] own image, **in the image of my Only Begotten** created I him. Male and female created I them. And I, God, blessed them.* (Genesis 2:8 RE, emphasis added)

The creation of the man Adam was secondarily in the image of God the Father but was primarily and specifically *in the image of [mine] Only Begotten*—meaning Jesus Christ. The reason Adam was born in the image of God the Father's Only Begotten was because the Only Begotten was the One who begat Adam. God the Father was the Father of Jesus Christ in the spirit, and God the Father was the biological Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh. God the Father was also the Father of the spirit of the man Adam. But the biological Father of Adam in the garden was in the image of the Only Begotten, or Jesus Christ. Christ and His companion were the physical Parents of the man Adam.

Jesus Christ was among the *souls* who were noble and great before this cycle of creation. The word *soul*, as used in the 1842 publication of the Book of Abraham, had been defined in a revelation received in 1832:

*Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. And **the spirit and the body [is] the soul of man**. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him [who] quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.* (D&C 88:14-17; see also T&C 86:2)

Christ is identified in the scripture as a soul before this world was created. Therefore, before this world was created, Christ had both a spirit and a body—having gone through the necessary progression required for all who ascend to be like unto God. Christ had the physical capacity to be the biological father of offspring, and he did this with Adam.

The account continues and describes the creation of the woman. Here the parable distinguishes between the process of creating the man Adam and creating his spouse, the woman Eve:

And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten that it was not good that the man should be alone; wherefore, I will make [an] help meet for him. (Genesis 2:13 RE)

God the Father said to the Only Begotten that He, God the Father, will be the one to make Adam's *help meet*. It was not good for Adam to be alone because he was not complete without a suitable companion to help him progress and develop. The creation parable continues:

And I, the Lord God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept. And I took one of his ribs...closed up the flesh in the stead thereof. And the rib, which I, the Lord God, had taken from man, [I made] a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This I know now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. (Genesis 2:14 RE)

The parable of the creation of the woman, therefore, differs from the creation of the man. She was not formed from the dust of the ground. She was formed from a *rib*, from an already existing part of the man. She was born from something equal to him and able to stand beside him in all things.

But the parable about the woman Eve means a great deal more. She was at Adam's side before the creation of this world. They were united as one in a prior estate when They progressed to become living souls with both bodies and spirits. They were sealed before this world by the Holy Spirit of Promise and proved to be true and faithful. They once sat upon a throne in God the Father's Kingdom. In that state They were equal and eternally joined together. She sat beside him and was a necessary part of his enthronement. Her introduction into this world to join her companion was needed to complete Adam. It was not good for him to be alone. They were one and, therefore, Adam without Eve was not complete—or, in the words of the parable, *not good to be alone*.

Like the man Adam, the woman Eve was the spirit offspring of a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. But unlike the man Adam, who was the physical offspring of Christ, the woman Eve needed to be the physical offspring of God the Father and God the Mother. Eve was Adam's sister in spirit. She was also his biological aunt. She had to be

the direct descendant of the Heavenly Mother in order to endow her with her Mother's creative abilities. That power belongs to the Mother. The fertility of Eve—and thereafter of all the daughters of Eve—came because of the power given from direct descent from the Heavenly Mother.

Men descend from Christ. Christ founded the family of men and is accountable for them. He was placed in that position to enable Him to atone for any failure on their part. Through Adam *sin entered the world* (Romans 1:23 RE), and death was imposed upon all mankind. Jesus Christ, One greater than Adam, made Himself responsible for all mankind's failures and transgressions. Through obedience of Jesus Christ, all mankind were justified and *made righteous* (Romans 1:24 RE). The Father made mankind Christ's posterity. This was necessary to qualify Christ as *the last Adam* (1 Corinthians 1:66 RE). Christ was the rightful *heir of all things* (Hebrews 1:1 RE) because He always stood at the head. *When all things were made by Him* (John 1:1 RE), it included the man Adam. Death came upon all mankind through Adam. Before Adam there was One greater who has made it possible for mankind to inherit life through Him. Christ has the standing to answer for man's disobedience. He could and did take upon Him the sins of His posterity.

Women descend from mother Eve, who was born the biological daughter of Heavenly Mother. Women descend from Heavenly Mother to endow them with Her creative power of fertility to bear the souls of men. Eve was not beneath Adam, nor subject to his rule when first created. Eve was put beside him to complete him and to be his helpmeet.

There was another condition required to enable Christ to lawfully redeem the daughters of Eve as well as the sons of Adam. The parable of the creation includes this step to put Eve under Adam's responsibility. The account explains that Eve (and by extension, her daughters) was put under Adam's rule. Adam was handed responsibility and accountability for Eve. These are the words in the parable:

*[Thy] desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall **rule over thee*** (Genesis 3:16; see also Genesis 2:18 RE, emphasis added).

Adam was made accountable to *rule* in a fallen world. All the mistakes, mismanagements, failings, wars, and difficulties of mortality are the responsibility of the appointed *ruler*. Adam would not have been accountable for Eve unless she was made subject to his rule. Once under Adam's rule, the redemption of Adam also became the redemption of Eve. Therefore, Adam (and the sons of Adam) and Eve (and the daughters of Eve) were all rescued through Christ's atonement for mankind.

The parable continues with another allusion to Heavenly Mother:

*And Adam called his wife's name Eve because **she** was the mother of all living, for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many* (Genesis 2:18 RE, emphasis added).

One of the names of Heavenly Mother is Eve. She was the *mother of all living* because She was the One who mothered the spirits of Adam and Eve and was, therefore, Parent to them both and to all of their subsequent offspring. Out of respect for Her, Adam called his companion by the same name as the Heavenly Mother.

Redemption of all mankind, male and female, required Adam to descend from Jesus Christ. It also required Adam to rule or to be responsible to teach all those in his dominion. That role assigned to Adam was in order to extend the legal effect of Christ's redemption to Adam, Eve, and their posterity.

However, for women to bear the souls of men, Eve had to be a direct descendant of Heavenly Mother. Although veiled for present, women's direct descent from the Heavenly Mother is also required for men to be placed on a throne in the hereafter. The *Answer to Prayer for Covenant* states:

*And again I say [unto] you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for **he could not be there if not for Sarah's covenant with him**; Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and Isaac likewise **could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him**; and Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob **could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him**; and all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. Therefore the marriage covenant is needed for all those who would likewise seek to obtain from me the right to continue their seed into eternity, for only through marriage can Thrones and Kingdoms be established. (T&C 157:42-43, emphasis added)*

The creation of woman was designed to fulfill the work and the covenants of the Father in this world and will be critical in eternity. Families come through the union of the man and woman. Women bear the souls of mankind and bring all of us into this world through childbirth. That power was inherited from the Heavenly Mother. But there are other rights belonging to women that will only be apparent in the afterlife. They have been endowed with an everlasting authority required for any man to occupy a throne in the Father's Kingdom.

A fuller explanation of women's role will require worthy people willing to be taught and to build an acceptable house for the Elohim to return.

Let me briefly mention the Word of Wisdom. This was a revelation inspired by a woman, Emma Smith, and given to her husband. It declares it is a *greeting, [and] not [a] commandment or constraint*, [But it is a] *revelation and the word of Wisdom* [given to show] *forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days* [the revelation is charged with kindly, motherly advice]...*Wine or strong drink...[is] not good...* [apart from the sacrament. For the sacrament it should be] *pure wine of the grape of the vine* [that we make. We are warned that]...*strong drinks are not for the belly* (D&C 89:2, 5-7; see also T&C 89:1-3) because many avoidable, foolish, physical and emotional errors are made when under the influence of strong drink; wine and

strong drink tempt us into errors. The Mother urges us to find wisdom, prudence, counsel, understanding, truth, excellent things, and nothing that is froward or perverse. *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a raging and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise* (Proverbs 2:299 RE).

Any kindly advice from a caring Mother ought to be followed, particularly when we are promised that by following it, we *[will] receive health in [the] navel and marrow to their bones; and shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint* (D&C 89:18-20; see also T&C 89:6).

If this talk offends you or confuses your picture of God's Great Plan of Happiness, then I'd recommend you leave this topic alone for the present. Do not reject truth only because you find it challenging. Just leave it alone.

If you welcome this discussion, then take care that you do not, as ancient Israel did, burn incense, pour out drink offerings, and bake cakes to a Being who has never invited you to do so. She has invited you to worship God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. If you would like to honor Her, then accept Her testimony and look to Jesus Christ alone for redemption and salvation.

Well, let me add one final thing, and that is: Those concluding references to the Word of Wisdom were themselves given as a reminder, by revelation, as something to be repeated here in the context of this talk to honor Her. A great deal of foolishness and distress and a lot of arguments have resulted from ignoring the Word of Wisdom; and wise counsel always tells us to be prudent and to be careful.

You know, I have been forbidden to participate in discussions that have gone on, as I understand it, yesterday. I have studied ignorance about what has gone on because I'm deliberately avoiding any of the details.

What's contained in this talk and, in particular, the focus upon avoiding frowardness... *Frowardness* is a really old English word, so old that Microsoft Word incessantly corrects it to *forwardness* because forwardness, we use. Frowardness is old, and we don't have a good word for it, but it means exactly what's defined in the talk—being contrary, being stubborn, being difficult to get along with. Froward people are continuously nagging other people because they either think the other person is wrong, or they think themselves right; and therefore, they agitate rather than become meek and submissive and humble and patient and kindly.

I suspect that that part of the talk had something to do with the activities that have gone on, although I haven't looked to see. I've heard from a couple of people that there was some head-butting. Head-butting is not a bad thing as long as it's not done in a way so as to break hearts, create divisions, and make people hold ill will toward one another.

People are very different one from another. Not only are men and women different from one another, women are different from each other, and men are different from each other, and personalities are always going to be ill-fitted. Getting people to mesh together—that's not going to result in, somehow, this universal similarity of personality. It's important that people preserve their differences. It's important that people have the gifts that have been given to them by God preserved intact and not suppressed because someone doesn't like the way that their gift gets expressed.

I've mentioned it before—I just find the artwork that Monet does, with his version of impressionism, the highest and greatest use of the paintbrush. But I think Van Gogh's impressionism is crude and elementary; and quite frankly, I mean, his suicide stopped the outpouring of that stuff. And in some ways, you know, maybe the art world is benefited by that. When he was a realist in the early stages, some of what Van Gogh did was rather lovely, but his impressionism— I say that, and when my wife substitutes in fourth grade and she brings presents home from her kids— But there are people who love Van Gogh. "Sunflowers" sold for 44 million last time it sold. There are some who really love Van Gogh! I assume that in the resurrection, they'll figure out that they were duped; but for here and now, in this fallen world with its perverse set of priorities, that's all good and well; and if they've got the money, and they want to use it that way, that's fine.

Zion is going to have people whose artistic outpouring is going to be fabulously different from one another. You look at the totem pole artistry of the Alouettes; and you look at the carved artistry of the Hawaiian Islands; and you look at the sculpture of Michelangelo—and these are radically, radically different one from the other, so much so that you're bridging these enormous cultural divides to look at these different kinds of sculpture. Why would we ever want to have a studied school of artistic discipline that produces nothing more than some uniform product when beauty and artistry can find so many unique forms of expression. Why would we ever want that?

Why would you want to go to a fellowship meeting in Uganda, a fellowship meeting in the Philippines, and a fellowship meeting in Spain and hear the same lesson on the same Sunday everywhere throughout the world? That is managerial overkill designed to destroy the unique spirits of the sons and daughters of God.

Facial recognition technology works because no one wears your face but you. Fingerprints distinguish every one of us from one another, so much so that if you leave a print, and everyone else leaves a print, we can distinguish yours from everyone else. Every single snowflake crystal is unique. Every leaf of every tree is unique. Nature cries out that God treasures the differences that exist from one soul to the next. And when describing the gifts that are given, the gifts are very different, but how the gifts manifest themselves, even if someone possesses exactly the same gift— Read the description of the seership of Enoch and the description of the seer Joseph, and the way in which they manifest themselves were decidedly different. Even the gifts do not come out the same when put through one person and then put through another. Every one of you are unique, and when we deal with one another, the objective is not to compel you to be

me. The objective is not to compel any one of us to be the same as another one of us. The objective is to rejoice and to respect and to hallow the work that God has done in making us so unique from one another. Even twins are dissimilar.

My father was a twin. There's a picture of him and his twin brother in their high school class. I think there were 12 kids in their class. The way in which my father was dressed and the way in which his twin brother was dressed in the picture foreshadowed the course that these two men's lives would take.

My father left that area in rural Appalachia, and he went into the military. He fought in World War II. He landed on Omaha Beach on the morning of D-Day. He settled in the West.

He worked his life to support his children in encouraging my sister and I to go to college to receive an education that he did not receive because by the time he had an opportunity to do that, life and family and work prevented it. (My sister holds two Bachelor's degrees, a Master's degree, and I've got an Associates, Bachelor's, and Juris Doctorate degree.) Because of the priorities that my father had, he was willing to work for the *long* game, the *long* vision—to sacrifice.

His twin brother looks rather dandy. He outdressed his twin. He was somewhat showy. He wanted to get there and get there now and quickly. And so, when he finished school, he immediately went to the best-paying job he could find; and he went to work in the coal mine where the United Mine Workers Union wages paid him a great living. He never left Appalachia, developed black lung as a coal miner—which they often did. But he had gratification early on that my father did not have; but my father had satisfaction that his twin brother never had for himself. Twins are dissimilar. They were identical twins; they were not fraternal.

We're unique, and we're meant to be so. We dishonor God when we disrespect that and when we insist on uniformity. However different we may be from one another, however, we can still be kindly. We can still be patient. We can still try to uplift, to edify, and to honor the differences that exist between us.

I pray that we will take everything that has been said today, many of which, I suspect, were comments designed for a subject about which I have studied ignorance and no responsibility but, instead, a commandment not to participate. But if the words of a kindly and caring God can hold any sway in the hearts of men, then let it do so.

Let me end by bearing testimony again that the only reason I had the audacity to say any of the things that were said here today is because they were authorized, and they were approved; indeed, they were required to be said. And I don't know why some things get said at one point in history that are not said at other points. I just know that as we move along the path towards what is inevitable at this point (that is, the coming of the Lord and the establishment of a place of peace, a city of Zion, and a New Jerusalem) that more information needs to be in the possession of those that will find themselves there.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2018.06.09 Meeting with Joseph Frederick Smith

June 9, 2018

Sandy, UT

In attendance: Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. Stephanie Snuffer, Joseph Frederick Smith (great-grandson of Joseph Smith Jr.), Samuel Gould, Russell Anderson, Paul Durham, Eugene Richardson, Shirley Richardson.

Denver: My name is Denver Snuffer, and that's my wife, Steph. She and I were hiking this morning and we came straight here from hiking so we're not [Joseph F. Smith: It won't bother me.] dressed for meeting folks, but I thought we'd just come.

Shirley Richardson: This ain't a fancy meeting anyway so we're good.

Eugene Richardson: He's not into corporate.

Denver: I'm not going to shut the door because there's no one else here. Russell Anderson's the one who set this up.

Russell Anderson: And the reason why is because Denver had made the comment that he hadn't met any of these witnesses [Eugene: Oh, we've met before.] and couldn't judge them necessarily, and so I said, "would you like to meet them?—Joseph is coming to Utah," so it was set up. And then along comes Sam [Gould].

Joseph F. Smith: Did you bring lunch? [laughter] [inaudible] Some of your friends gave me three of these [pointing to Denver's copies of the new Restoration Edition of the scriptures: *The Old Covenants, The New Covenants, Teachings and Commandments*], [Denver: Oh good.] but I've got a request.

Denver: This is your great-grandfather's work [pointing to the scriptures].

Joseph: Yes, I know, but I've got a request of you. I need one of your books. I'll buy it from you, *A Man Without Doubt*. That's good.

Denver: Oh, yeah. [Addressing Stephanie] Do we have a copy of that? I'm pretty sure I can give you one of those.

Joseph: I've started reading it and am really impressed with it.

Denver: The history of your [great-]grandfather is really marred by corporate interests.

Joseph: Absolutely.

Denver: Everyone wants to tell his story in a way to support their story, and no one is interested in knowing what he had to say about himself. Even today in the publication of the *Joseph Smith Papers*, what you see are alterations that have been made to the

journals that were kept contemporaneous and it's hard to get something accurately reconstructed. It requires patience and study and care and time. So, tell me about what I need to know.

Joseph: Well, basically there is a man in Brazil who years ago began to search for the Lord and he ended up for a period of time with the Jehovah's Witnesses, and while he was involved with them he met an LDS missionary and introduced him to the Book of Mormon, which he liked, and he ended up joining the LDS Church, but then he began to find things that didn't set with him so he had a little confrontation with them and ended up, they kicked him out. I say things kind of simple. [Laughter] I don't know the big word. But he still was searching for the Lord so he went to a mountain close to his home. And he went up on the mountain to talk to the Lord. I don't know, maybe he figured the higher up the closer he got to him and that helped. Anyway, up on the mountain he got a little lost and it ended up dark caught him and he couldn't move, he didn't have a flashlight and had no way of seeing. And he was a little bit scared. He felt like there was a force trying to take over with him because it was so dark. About that time there was a light that appeared in the woods. A personage came through and called him by name and told him not to be afraid, and said his name was Raphael. He created enough light so Mauricio [Berger], the man could get to the top of the mountain, where he met Moroni. That happened at Easter in 2007. After they had a conversation he was told to return to the same place the next year, but this time with three men that would approach him for study. So the next year they went, and I'm not sure whether it was the second visit on the mountain or whether it was the third, about that time Moroni gave him the Book of Mormon plates, and the sealed portion plates, and the sword of Laban, and the Interpreters. They continued to go back each year. Moroni instructed him on what he wanted done, and so forth. And then in 2010 he had tried to contact several different, well, I guess had probably tried contacting others before that), he tried to contact the Strangite group [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangite)] and they didn't want any interest in him. So, he contacted the Church of Christ Temple Lot. And he talked with them for three years and they refused to be interested in it. In 2017, when he visited the mountain in 2017, he was given my name and the angel told him to contact me. Well, my name wasn't on the internet so he sent a message to a Reorganized web site that a brother of mine had, brother Bob Moore.

Russell: Your name is on the internet and is on that site.

Joseph: It is now.

Russell: Oh I thought Bob said it was there before.

Joseph: I don't think so, I don't believe it was. It may have been. I may be wrong on that. In any event, brother Moore forwarded it to me and I read the invitation and what it said was that, he said the Lord had been aware of the work that I was doing and the intent of my heart.

Denver: The work and the intent being *the Waldo talk*.

Joseph: *The Waldo*, that was the beginning of it.

Sam: That was in 1995.

Joseph: That was for ten years we held what was called a unity movement and before we were trying to get the restoration saints to simply come by and begin to worship together and we felt that was the first step they had to take. If they couldn't worship together they couldn't do nothing else together. We worked at that for ten years and didn't accomplish a whole lot. We did some good. We had some good meetings, but the meetings happened and then.

Denver: Right, economic interests interfere with seeing eye-to-eye.

Joseph: Yes. Anyway, after ten years, and more or less, I just carried on with what I was doing and that was preaching. I was preaching for unity and for Zion. Zion has always been my goal post, I'll put it that way. Because the church has seemed to push that subject back to the back burner, and don't work too much with it.

Denver: Yes, it almost looks like the idea of Zion is unappealing because it interferes with ongoing operations.

Joseph: You said a while ago, financial interests. Because this is what brought their problem on in 1832, Section 84. The condemnation came on because they would not obey the original law of consecration. Anyway, we worked up until I got this email. And when I got it I looked at it and said, you know, I'm 82 years old, got no business going to work in a foreign country. I laid it down and walked away, and sometime later I went back and picked it up again. As I read it there was some spiritual movement that said to me you'd better go, and you can make it. We proceeded to make provisions to go. One of the things they wanted was baptism. They wanted the confirmation. I knew that there were at least two that I was to ordain. And they wanted the priesthood from me because I had the lineal priesthood.

So we went. And we got there on Saturday afternoon. Now these people had some time, and maybe it was in 2011 or 2012, along in there, they went up on the mountain and the angel wasn't there and so they started back down the mountain. And there was a great storm that came up. They said the wind was terrible and the rain was really pouring down. There was Mauricio and three others. And they said they came upon three men, and one of them had raised his hand up and they said the storm just divided around them and they said it was pouring down rain on both sides, but not one drop hit them. And they thought it was Peter, James and John. Then they sent me an email telling me about it, and I sent it back and said, no, it's the Three Nephites. Sometime later the group was in Mauricio's apartment which was on the second floor. To get to it you had to go through an electronic controlled gate, you had to set a trigger that called up to the office and they would pick up the phone to the apartment, they'd pick up the phone up and ask who you were and what you wanted and so forth, and if they wanted

them in they would go down and let them in. There was a second electronic door that they had to go through. They were sitting in the study class and all of a sudden there was a knock on the door without any signal from the electronic devices. And when they opened the door and the three men walked in that they had met on the mountain. He greeted the first one as Peter, and he said, "No, my name's not Peter." I didn't get his name.

Sam: Manuel.

Joseph: Who?

Sam: Manuel, I think is what he said.

Joseph: Anyway, they stayed for about two hours and studied with them and taught them many things. Even the little girl said, "Dad," when we were there, she said, she reminded her father, "Dad, tell them, they just knocked on the door, they didn't come through the gate." So, anyway we got there and the first thing Bob suggested, Bob Moore, I do was give a class. And I started teaching a class and they already knew it. I figured they were pretty well prepared for baptism. So we went out Sunday morning and went to a lake and I baptized nine people all at once. Every time I looked up there was somebody else ready for baptism. To me that was a great privilege, a great honor that the Lord would grant me that privilege. We went home and changed clothes and had supper, then we gathered together for the confirmation.

I had always felt from the very beginning that I was not worthy of this work, this bothered me because nobody knows my life better than I do, except the Lord. And I just didn't feel that I was qualified or worthy. This bugged me. Plus there was always, even when I finally decided to go down there, there was still a hesitancy in me, because I know that you can be deceived. But this was beginning to look like it was real and I was going on faith. I believed it was very possible it was good. And I'm satisfied except there was still this lingering question, you know, you know what I mean? You're just, you're not positive. When I gave the Gift of the Holy Ghost to Mauricio, when he stood up he staggered, almost like he was going to fall. He grabbed my arm and I didn't know what it meant until later, and then we confirmed the rest of them. Then I ordained the two men, Mauricio and Joni [Batista] to the Melchizedek Priesthood. And then we held a sacrament service. And after the sacrament service was over I opened it up for a testimonial service. Mauricio was the first to bear his testimony. Now Mauricio was told to learn English, but he refused to do it. He didn't want to do; he didn't do it. But his 14 year-old daughter learned English by watching English movies and reading the little script [subtitles]. She's good, she's a good interpreter. The only problem that she has is Biblical words, she wasn't permitted with, because you never see that on the movies. [laughter]

Paul Durham: Hollywood vocabulary.

Joseph: When Mauricio stood to bear his testimony she interpreted for us. He would speak a little bit of Portuguese and she would tell us what he said. He said that "when Joseph laid his hands on my head I didn't feel anything, particularly." But he said, "when I stood up," he said, "there was a fire burst forth from my chest that almost made me fall." To me, I realized then what he had received was the baptism of fire, and very strong. And I felt it had to be, in order to solidify those people in their faith because every one of the adult members bore the same testimony that they had felt it—tremendous fire in their chest. And to me that kind of clinched the nail as far as I was concerned whether this was the work of God. And I hadn't seen the plates yet. This one lady, she was fairly new to the restoration movement, she said, "I don't know what's going on but," she said, "there's a fire in my chest that's filling my whole body with joy." I was elated, because now I knew that the Lord was working in this.

During the service, whenever I'm up front I never like to stare at anyone, because when people stare at me I get nervous. So I kept looking first one way and then the other. And the Lord kept bringing me back to this one man. And I'd look away and when I'd come back He'd stop me on that one man. This went on for two or three times. In my silent prayer to the Lord, I said "What do you want? Why is this man important? If you want me to ordain him I've got to have evidence." I said I can't ordain him if I don't know for sure that's what you want. So it kept on, every time I'd look away, he'd drive me back there. Then when this meeting broke up and they were leaving brother Bob came into the room where I was at and said there is one more man we have to ordain. And I said, "What's his name?" Valdeci [Machado]. And that was the man that the Lord kept drawing my attention back to. Young people talk about getting a rush out of things. Whenever the Lord uses you, you get a rush, that there's nothing in this world can compare, and I had that feeling.

We studied with Mauricio, he was a car salesman during the day and we'd study at night.

We had a big computer and he would type up something in Portuguese and it would transfer it over to English. And then we'd type up something in English and that's the way we communicated, when his daughter wasn't there. A lot of the stuff she couldn't pronounce anyway. About Friday evening they sent the girls, the women and the children, took them to the shopping center so they could wander around up there, I suppose, maybe to buy something, I don't know. But they'd lock the door. They'd shut the door and put us in a room and put the chair under the door knob, and closed all the windows and took us in a room. We sat down. I suggested before we do anything, I knew what they were going to do. I knew they were going to bring the plates in and I said before we do that I think that each one should have a prayer. We did petition the Lord to open our minds and our hearts to understand what was going on. They brought this board in that was about this big, square, and on it was the plates, but they were covered with a cloth. And I was expecting it, but when they uncovered it, it took my breath. And I couldn't stand up for a minute or two, I was just. Now here I am. I know who I am, I know what I am. And the Lord is taking me down here and right in front of me are the plates my great-grandfather used to translate the Book of Mormon. And

that's an overwhelming feeling. But when I stood I said, "Can I hold them in my hand?" And they picked them up and handed them to me and I almost went all the way to the table because I didn't expect that. They weighed a good, I'd say between 50 and 60 lbs., and there were three rings and there was the sealed portion on the left side as I held it and the leaves of the Book of Mormon were over here and I was able to turn each one. Now when I felt the plates they felt fairly smooth, but because the hieroglyphics were not cut into them like you would think, I don't know how they put them in there, But if you took the plates and the sheets and there were about the thickness of, you know the photograph paper you use in your computer to create photographs, that's about the thickness of them. And they're very flat and very stiff. They're not real stiff, but they're good and stiff, so you can turn them. If you turn and look at the hieroglyphics with a light you could see little pin-like, pinholes there. The hieroglyphics had a color to them. So you could seem them plain, but really there [inaudible]. On the top of the sealed portion that we could see they had used apparently a tool to engrave. On the bottom on where the seal was on the bottom of the [inaudible] it was rough, you could see where it was engraved. This was different than the plates of the Book of Mormon. It was interesting. So I said pretty smooth, but there those little indentations. I was able to turn each page.

I handled the sword of Laban. It was only about that long. It was sharp on both edges, but down the center was about 5/8" ridge that had a little design in it. Right where it went into the handle there was a hairline crack where it had apparently been used many times and probably began to give away a little bit. My feelings [inaudible]. You remember, there was a lady mentioned in Matthew that had an issue, a disease for 18 years. And she touched the hem of His garment and she was healed. I touched the physical part of God's work and that was tremendous to me. And the spirit that I felt, that was totally overwhelming. I couldn't touch the hem of His garment but I could touch that evidence of His work. And I was just, as the young people, mesmerized because it was such a thrilling privilege and honor and realization that the Lord had recognized the desire of my heart and my efforts, as feeble as they were, to push forward the cause of Zion.

We spent the next Saturday and Sunday, the next day was Saturday and Sunday, and Sunday we went out and they, Mauricio and Joni both being ordained, would ask if it was all right if they baptized their children. I said, "Absolutely, you're member of the priesthood." They did and that night we confirmed, I confirmed six more members and they experienced the same burning in their chest that the others had. Monday afternoon we left to come home. Now, brother Bob Moore and I were given two jobs to do. We were to select six witnesses to bring down, to make a total of eight witnesses. Now they have three witnesses there that had not only handled the plates, but had also seen the angel, several times. So we came back to the home to select six witnesses. And since Bob said I was the chief witness, he said, "You select them." And I said, "OK." So I made up quite a long list of people I felt that would be the type of person that could go there, even with question, and could recognize the spirit that was there. And that spirit could change them. A lot of people can't be changed by the spirit. A lot of people are so set in their ways that there's no way even the Lord can change them. So I tried to pick,

when I went through the list, I tried to choose some young people and some older people. I chose one older person that refused to go, and which was OK. All right, so I had to pick one more young person and I'm proud of the men I picked. Gary Metzger had done missionary work already in Central America and in Brazil and could speak Portuguese. And David Gilmore. I knew him and his family and I felt that the Lord had given me evidence that he should go. Kelvin Henson. When we got back I bore my testimony at the church and after it was over he came up to me and he extended his hand and he took my hand and he tried to talk, but he was so caught up in the spirit that he couldn't talk. And I said you know this is what I'm looking for, somebody that can react to the spirit so strong like that would be good. So he was chosen. Then Tyler Crowell, I knew him for a long time. And Sam Gould, I knew him well. And Brad Gault was pastor of the Zarahemla Branch. These are the ones I picked. We brought them down in March. They were shown the plates and gone over them quite carefully, examined them. David Gilmore and Kelvin Henson, are both young men, and they told me before they went, they said we have no assurance of anything. We're just going to go on faith. But they said we've got a lot of questions, a lot of doubts. They came to me later and told me after they were there for one day they said doubts were all gone. They were convinced just by seeing the plates and experiencing the spirit that was there.

Previous to the time we took the witnesses down, Mauricio had emailed me and he said that the heat had caused the plates in the top part of the sealed portion to expand and break the seal. Now in that area in which they live, 80 degrees is a heat wave. And 70 and 75 degrees is not going to swell plates. And I wrote back, I said "It wasn't the heat, it was the Lord." Because we knew that He was going to open that top part of the sealed portion. And so when we were down there, we cleaned the two pins on the outside of the pages, and the two pins like out here that come up from the bottom, and they were bradded on top, but they swelled out so that you couldn't open up the pages. Well, this had pushed up, it pushed its flare up where you could get the pages off. He took pliers and broke those little corners off so that we could open them easily. We opened 42 plates. We lifted them up and were turning them one at a time. They were bright and shiny and we could see the hieroglyphics on them and we got down to that last page and we turned it up and there on the sealed portion, it was just like a spotlight to us, was a gold plate, that bottom part of the sealed portion was still sealed. The portion that was opened, the seal ended right on top of that. So that's why we were able to look. And we looked and in this gold plate was a depiction of Enoch's city returning to a spot on the earth. And there was, I think, Gabriel blowing his trumpet, (was that the one?) there were several figures with it. Even Mauricio had not seen it. And it was such a surprise. We were in a pretty tight room. There was a big room and there were chairs and stuff. I was kinda sitting back. These guys, it was just like throwing a handful of corn out to a flock of chickens. They went for it like that. I couldn't even get in for a little bit. They finally let me in twice to see it. It was quite an experiencing thing. It's because this is what we had taught and believed for many years, that he said he would return to the earth, and with these, and come into Zion. So, it was quite an experience.

During the 23 years that I had worked with the Restoration saints who had withdrawn from their organization, during that time, three different times I was approached either

directly or indirectly, and offered the position of President and Prophet of the church, and I would say no. Because to take on that position without the Lord would be pretty stupid. So I said no three times. Moroni had told Mauricio that I was to be ordained Prophet, President of the church there in Brazil. And when they asked me, I thought a little bit and I said yes because the Lord was there. I could accept that job, I don't really relish the job. It took my great-grandfather's life and he suffered a lot under that job, so I wasn't looking forward to anything except the same thing that he got probably out of it. That's probably what I'll get eventually. But I said yes. I was ordained and they were told we were to go back and present me before the church in Zion, which I believe is the Zarahemla Branch, for a vote of acceptance. And if they received that vote then they would give me an ordination of confirmation, that would be performed. The pastor of the Zarahemla Branch, which is the only church that the people in Brazil had worked with, refused to request a meeting and a vote. He said they couldn't do it according to the Doctrine and Covenants and according to their traditional standards. So that part of it is hanging in limbo right now, but I'm sure that the Lord's going to take care of things and I have no problems. One of the things that Moroni had in some of his teachings was that they were to go forth through the LDS congregations and bring out all that are pure in heart, because the Lord says even though the LDS church is wrong, that's my way of putting it. That's not how He said it; He said it differently, corrupted. I think that's the word He used, as was the Reorganized and the other stuff, under condemnation. There were people in that church that He wants drawn out who apparently are pure in heart and on a good straight honest people, and He intends to draw them out.

That's why when Leon Hall called me several months ago and asked me if I were to come and meet with a group of people down at St. George, and I agreed to him and John Saunders. They got together and brought a group there and I met with them Thursday. I got there Wednesday afternoon. I talked with Kyle Winterton and a couple of others, I forget now their names, until about eleven o'clock at night. And then the next day I met with people, beautiful people, we had a beautiful meeting at night and basically told them what I've told you here. And they asked some questions and I answered them the best I could. We just had a good fellowship. I was just uplifted when I went to bed that night. I said I was so happy that the Lord, like I say, when the Lord uses you, you get a feeling that is out of this world, and that's what I felt. And then I came north to Fillmore and met brother Anderson, who's my cousin. Then we had a meeting last night, and Brady Curtis said to tell you hello. So here I am. I've left out a lot of things, but I hit the high points.

Denver Snuffer: Well, I don't have any doubts that you saw and held plates. I don't have any doubts about your sincerity.

One of the concerns that I have always had about the Saints, and it doesn't matter if you're talking about the saints in Zarahemla, or Salt Lake City, or Lamoni. Every body of saints, everywhere they're located, have been put upon, have been exploited, have been the victims of a variety of people who have victimized. Instead of feeding the sheep they have taken advantage of the sheep. I mean the recent revelation that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a \$32 billion stock investment portfolio,

tells you just how much the approach that has been taken by Brigham Young and those who have followed his model, have enriched themselves.

My concern is always that whenever some great new thing is underway, I worry that the Saints that respect that are being setup for yet another disappointment. I don't question at all hearing you talk, that what you are telling me is the truth and the experience that you've had up to this point. If I'm trying to evaluate the truthfulness, it's your great-grandfather's comment, and your great-grandfather's description of how the Holy Ghost operates—that I keep foremost in my mind. Your great-grandfather said that the effect of the Holy Ghost is to give you light and truth. In other words, it increases your understanding. It gives you greater light and knowledge. One of his revelations defines the glory of God as intelligence or in other words, light and truth. There is a caution in one of the revelations that had been given through your great-grandfather that talks about how the gospel of Christ is to be had.

"And he that seeks signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation. Verily I say unto you, There are those among you who seek signs, and there have been such even from the beginning. But behold, faith comes not by signs, but signs follow those that believe" (RE T&C 50:3; LDS D&C 63:7-9).

I see the testimony of the witnesses in the Book of Mormon, and they do confirm that something happened. But the purpose of the testimony of the three witnesses in the Book of Mormon, and the testimony of the eight witnesses in the Book of Mormon is to get you to take seriously the Book of Mormon and the contents of the Book of Mormon, that gives you a flood of light and truth and understanding about Jesus Christ, his role as the Messiah, the covenants that have been made with the Fathers and how that will control ultimately the destiny of mankind. The fact that the Messiah not only said in Jerusalem that he had other sheep, and they were not of that fold. But that group of other sheep were a body of believers to whom he would go and he would minister. And then the Book of Mormon confirms that, "ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold . . . And they understood [it] not" (RE 3 Nephi 7:3; LDS 3 Nephi 15:21-22).

He preaches a very similar, although a little better account of the Sermon on the Mount at the Sermon at Bountiful. And he reaffirms the way to look at the Mosaic law in a way that says the outward observances were intending to change you internally. I'm here to tell you about the internality of that. I'm here to tell you that it's not merely refraining from the act of adultery. I want you to not allow that to enter into your heart.

Joseph, your great-grandfather, said that it's adulterers who seek after signs. And while Christ said, "It's a wicked and an adulterous generation that seeks after a sign," adulterers always seek after signs. But the sign, the testimony, the truth, the intelligence, and he light that the witnesses pointed to in the Book of Mormon, as witnesses of what went on at the beginning of the restoration—draw our attention to the content of the testimony of the Book of Mormon, and the truth that is to be found there and our understanding of Christ and how his mission spread globally. It wasn't just in Palestine. And by pointing to the events that occur with the Nephites, Christ says in

there that he has other sheep. And then we have the closing chapters of 2nd Nephi, when Nephi says that the ten tribes have been led away and they're going to leave a testimony.

And then we have the allegory that Jacob preserved in the 5th chapter (traditionally) of the Book of Jacob, in which he talks about parts of the vineyard that would be gathered back together again on varying qualities of ground. I don't think it is possible for me, given what I know, to reach any conclusion about the authenticity of anyone's testimony without seeing the words that teach me of Christ. That number one, are consistent with everything else that had gone on in scripture. And number two, provide me with more of the glory of God—intelligence or in other words, light and truth.

I would never base my testimony on an artifact. I wouldn't pick up the staff of Moses that he raised in the battle, or the staff that he raised to have the sea part, or the staff that he cast down to have turn into the serpent that ate the magicians' serpents. The staff to me is not where I would find the glory of God or intelligence. I wouldn't have faith as a consequence of having possession of the Ark of the Covenant. Because it's an object in which certain past historical events were memorialized by the stone tablets, by the jar of manna, by Aaron's rod that sprouted. It's the glory of God that matters, it's what God has to impart that is light and truth. The Book of Mormon is filled with prophecies, with covenants, with an understanding of God working with ancient men.

I don't doubt at all anything that you have said, but I want to hear, read and test the product that gives the light and the truth more than the artifact that purports to be it. Because the Saints have been put upon so much, I think that if this turns out ultimately not to be what we all would hope it would be, I believe they're going to blame you, because of your descendancy. And I believe that they will in turn, criticize your great-grandfather by saying, "If Mauricio proves not to be who he claims to be, and if the product that he produces is lacking, and if all of this was used to generate hope and the hope is dashed"—they're not going to blame him, they're going to blame you because of your ancestry.

Joseph F. Smith: Let me add something. I told you that I hit the highlights. There are 42 pages [plates] of the sealed portion that have been opened. These are going to be translated. These will be brought forth and eventually be published. You and I both know that the whole restoration movement came under condemnation, [**Denver:** Oh yes.] and that the 1830 restoration movement totally failed to accomplish the work of God.

Denver: You and I see eye to eye.

Joseph: The 11th chapter of Isaiah, the 11th verse states that he will set his hand again the second time.

Denver: Correct.

Joseph: And this is what we believe is coming forth. We believe that what he is translating now. He is translating in Portuguese and in English. We believe that when that comes forth, you will receive the light that you seek. What I'm suggesting is this, what Gamaliel suggested in the fifth chapter of Acts. ["For if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought" KJV Acts 5:38.]

Denver: If it's of men it will fall apart.

Joseph: And if it falls apart, and it falls on my shoulders, then fine, I would be responsible for it. However, I suggest . . . people back there have given a lot of opposition to it, and I said the same thing. If this is of man it will come to nothing, but if it is of God, be careful that you don't fight against God.

Denver: I don't intend to fight against anything.

Joseph: The point is that I believe when these things are published, and come forth to us, we will receive more light on the ability to bring into existence the city of New Jerusalem, and Zion that we have all been searching for all of our lives, which has been pushed back out of our hopes.

Denver: I'm going to read to you that quote. "And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do, according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's Kingdom. Otherwise, there remains a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion, for shall the children of the Kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, verily I say unto you, Nay" (RE T&C 82:20; LDS D&C 84:54-59).

Joseph: I could have quoted that pretty near word for word, but there are two words in there that we need to make notice of, "Repent" and "Remember." And the "former commandments." The former commandments were those that were given in the Book of Commandments because the Doctrine and Covenants wasn't in existence at that time.

Denver: Right.

Joseph: And the law of consecration, is what they were objecting to. What came out in the Doctrine and Covenants, was a watered-down version of the law of consecration. Things like this are what has brought us to where we are at. According to Moroni, the message that we received from him, is that he wants to reconstruct the original church. The church that was promised in 1830. Because what developed wasn't the original church. And he wants as he said in one place, the Lord wants to paint a new picture of Mormonism that will retake the features of the first picture that was taken. In other

words He wants to do what he had promised to do and planned to do in 1830. He wants to go back, start over and do again the things that he proposed to do in the beginning. But the requirement is that once the consensus is met and the ordinations are done, that I am to again recreate that original church. This is what's got them scared. [laughter] Because one thing that they have found out is that none of them or anyone else can change me, only God can change me.

Denver: And you don't threaten any church I belong to because I don't have a church and I don't intend to ever have one.

Joseph: That's fine. But this is what worries them, because they cannot control me. God can yes, that's easy. I have no problem. But the will of man, no. Because this was one of the problems with the original church and the Reorganization. They had the members, and they had the priesthood, but the priesthood took control of the people. And when you do that you lose God's favor.

Denver: I have probably put out 4 million words in writing so far, defending, explaining, expounding what is in the Book of Mormon and what your great-grandfather was doing. I have labored to try and bring us out from under condemnation by remembering the Book of Mormon and the former commandments. I have done everything I can to repent and return and take seriously what we were given before. I do expect the Book of Mormon to be restored and for the seals to be opened, and for the content to be given to people who repent and remember the former commandments. There is probably no one alive today that has done more to explain, expound and remember the Book of Mormon and the former commandments and to give honor to your great-grandfather.

When it says that his name will be had for good and evil, and that fools will deride him, but the virtuous will constantly seek blessings from under his hand. I have elected every time the historical record is ambiguous to honor your great-grandfather and to respect him and to trust that he was a man of virtue and nobility. And I believe I have done more to defend him than any living man alive—both in writing and in talks I've given.

Joseph: That may very well be. I have no objections to that or to you. But let's remember one thing, Joseph Smith was a man. A good man, yes. He had good moral characteristics, but what we really cherish is what God has done through him.

Denver: Right, right. But Joseph may be a better man than you can even imagine. [Joseph: Well . . . [inaudible]. By the way, are you Kimberly Jo's [Smith] father?

Joseph: Yes.

Denver: Oh, I met her [Joseph: You did?] and her son. [Joseph: Yes, she's a good girl.] A few years ago at my home, I gave her a blessing. [Joseph: Thank you.] It was in connection with that, that I actually met your great-grandfather and Emma.

Well I appreciate the time that you've taken and I appreciate the opportunity to meet here. And I appreciate you [Russell] setting this up. I do look forward and I will look carefully and I will test and prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

I am not an adulterer. I don't seek after signs, and signs have a very little effect on me. But truth has a profound effect on me. And if I can prove a truth, I want it. And I don't care where it comes from. I want as much truth as I can acquire by my diligence and by my heed. I keep the commandments of God in order to gain light and truth and knowledge. And I wish every person well in their search for God and in their quest to find light and truth and be obedient to God.

I would not remove any person's quest to grow closer to God. I think that is an offense to them and an offense to God and an offense to the world, really. Truth needs to be prized wherever you find it.

Joseph: Yes, I appreciate that.

Joseph: There is one other thing though. When we bore our testimony of the plates, of what we've seen and so forth, we were striving to prove that the work that is coming forth from that is of the Lord. That was the intent of our testimonies.

Denver: And when the work comes forth, I want to see it.

Joseph: OK.

Denver: I don't need to heft the plates, just like I didn't need to heft the plates when I first acquired a testimony. I was a gospel doctrine teacher for about 25 years in the Mormon church. And I taught the Book of Mormon from cover to cover as a gospel doctrine teacher. I went through it the first time and it really didn't affect me. I went through it the second time and I thought, "I'm not going to teach it the same way the second time, I want to push it a little further." And when I pushed it a little further, I found a little more in it and I was surprised. When we got to the third cycle through, because you spend a whole year on it. It was the third time I taught the Book of Mormon for a year, that my study amazed me at what is in that book. And when I taught it the fourth time, literally we had sections of the Book of Mormon to teach, sometimes eight chapters to go through in one Sunday, I would cover generally part of one verse. And then we'd skip to the next part. But I studied and studied that book.

It is the primary text I have quoted in every book I have written, except *A Man Without Doubt*. The Book of Mormon has been the primary text that my faith has been grounded on. It has never failed to edify, enlighten, enliven. It is a superior text to the Bible, by far.

The Book of Mormon is the fullness of the gospel of Christ. It's a text about coming to Christ. It's a text about the Second Comforter. And when I wrote the book, *The Second Comforter*, it's largely an exposition of the Book of Mormon, talking about coming to find Christ.

Joseph: I've noticed for many years, I was upset with my church. Because of controversies and the path they were going down. I couldn't follow them and so I left. I just went off and I took my family and I raised my family. I did it by the sweat of my brow. I worked hard, but I really hadn't studied the scriptures that much until a few years ago. I retired from working. The last job I had was working, doing maintenance for a Baptist church in Springfield. I cut the grass. So I would get up at 6 o'clock.

Denver: I hope the Baptists treated you well.

Joseph: They did.

Denver: Did they know who your great-grandfather was?

Joseph: I went to make application for the job, because they advertised in the paper. First I started to go in and I saw all these young guys filling out applications. And I said to myself, "They are not going to want an old man." I started out and this one man said, "Did you fill out your application?" I said, "No, there are all those young guys in there, you don't want an old man." He said, "You're exactly what we want. Because we have children here. And we have to protect little children. We would prefer an older person that is more set in his ways and not subject to cause problems." So I went back and filled out an application. Went home and I barely got home and the phone rang and they wanted me to come back, so I came back. The guy that interviewed me when I went in and sat down, he had my application in his hands and he said, "I took this application before our pastor and you know what he said?" He said, "Joseph Smith started the Mormon church, didn't you know that?" [laughter] **Denver:** Did you confess? Yes, I did. I said, "Yes, that was my great-grandfather." The next day the pastor said to me, "What do you want to be called, if we call you on the intercom?" I said, "Just call me Joe." I thought that would be embarrassing for him . . . Anyway, they treat me good and every once in a while they have me come over and work on their lawnmowers or something. I still do things for them. They still treat me good, they are very friendly to me. After doing that I was getting up early and even this morning I got up at 5 o'clock. By 6 o'clock I was ready to go.

But I started sitting down at 6 o'clock in the morning. And from 6 to 10 o'clock, I had my nose in those books. And I found out that many things which I had read I had never understood. **Denver:** Yes . . . there are layers of meaning. There's more going on there.] And little, by little the Lord opened my eyes to a lot of things. Three years ago, I began preaching to the congregation where I'm at that the restoration is a total failure.

Denver: Uh huh.

Joseph: And I said, the Lord is going to set his hand again a second time. I didn't know other than what the scriptures are telling me. It says in the 12th chapter of 2nd Nephi [LDS 2 Nephi 21] and it says it also in the 11th chapter of Isaiah. And other places too. He is going to set his hand again the second time. Because the first time has failed.

Denver: Yeah.

Joseph: Little by little he opens things up to me. I still go back and read things that he's opened up to me and I see something that I missed the other times. If a person applies themselves, and really wants to know, the Lord opens. I know things that I can't share. I have seen him in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. I am sure other people know him too, but I can't explain. But I can see a picture. Every one of the old prophets saw the same picture. But they saw it from a different perspective. Jeremiah, he grieved over the fact that we were going to fail.

Denver: He had very harsh words for our leaders.

Joseph: Well, 2nd Lamentations, first chapter, He said why has the Lord cast a shadow on the daughter of Zion? Well, "your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief" [RLDS 83:8a; LDS D&C 84:54]. It is amazing how much we missed over all these years.

Denver: It's disappointing, really, when you think about it. Because if we had harvested from the Book of Mormon what can be harvested, beginning in 1830, by today that book would be monumentally precious to everyone. But it continues to be the source of neglect.

Joseph: I've been around a little bit, around LDS people in the last year or so. And I've heard "Denver Snuffer, Denver Snuffer, Denver Snuffer." I am very pleased to meet you, Sir.

Denver: Well I am sure that most of those "Denver Snuffers" that you heard from the LDS are about as inspiring as what you would heap on a dog.

Joseph: Oh no. One couple gave me all three of those books there [speaking about the Restoration Edition scriptures resting on the conference table in front of Denver]. I was meeting with them in Southern Utah and one of the brethren came in with another book, *Preserving the Restoration*. I haven't read it yet. But I did read a little on, *A Man Without Doubt* and I liked what I read the few pages and I want to read more.

[Denver asks his wife Stephanie how to get a copy. She arranges for a copy to be delivered.]

Joseph: My brother Sam here is one of the witnesses and I am proud that he's here because I can give him part of the time and I can go to sleep. [laughter]

Denver: Oh see, there it is.

Sam Gould: Brother Denver, I would like to take a minute if you have the time.

Denver: Sure.

Sam: I just say that my son Sammy who's been following you for a long time, keeping track and giving me bits and pieces, encouraging me in that way. But, what I would like to say is, is the light and truth, that really strikes a chord with me. I would just say that I did a lot of things to try to establish if those plates down there were the actual plates of Mormon. I'm an engineer and a scientist so I brought all my tools and things of that nature so I could do that. When I got done with all the Lord gave me ten things that I needed to look for. The promise was that if I did that, that which you would call that glory, that light and truth would be revealed to me. It would give me a renewed hope and understanding of the coming forth of Zion and the establishment of Zion. And that was really beautiful in my heart. But when I was hefting the book, I had already exhausted everything I know. And I'm an engineer and I'm not there. Now I'm 85 percent confident, but that's not sufficient in a testimony, that's not sufficient for me. As I held that book, I was pouring my heart out to God. And I would say that it weighs about 50 pounds, maybe a little bit more, maybe a bit less, but it doesn't weigh 40 pounds. I'm holding that and just in a moment those plates became weightless and the power of God rested upon me and gave me that knowledge that these are the very plates of Mormon. Now that's light and truth that was delivered to me, but I didn't get the opportunity to read the pages or read what was on there. But all the things that the Lord had given me to test, had been tested. But when that plate was revealed, heaven opened to my view and I saw the Father and the Son upon the throne. And the Father did motion or signal the Son, and he came down. I say, he came down, but it was his presence that descended, I'm sure, and landed upon that little shepherd figure that was on the edge, that was under the canopy of Zion. When that happened there was that which was transferred to me, light and truth that is beyond my ability to describe—that Zion is. I don't know how to say it, but Zion is. And that's the testimony of that, that's we're looking for. And that promise there, that all those things that I held in my heart with such joy over the years and reaching for, that that promise is there—that Zion is and this is his work. The knowledge that has come to me. The Book of Mormon is a beautiful book. It's the things that are taught there of Christ that give you that understanding, that light and truth that is of great value that are there. It is an abridgment of the Nephite record. And the promise that is coming to you, is that the Lord God is going give you the source material for that abridgment.

Denver: The material from 1st Nephi to the Words of Mormon are not an abridgment. That's the complete small plates of Nephi that were appended as a replacement.

Sam: I just want you to understand that the source material that Moroni wrote, that he couldn't put but a hundredth part of the Nephite record there. That we're going to receive source material that that abridgment draws from. And that's the joy, if you can think about how the Lord worked in your heart over all those years that you taught that gospel, OK, that there is more there. And in that source book your heart will be made full. And that's the promise of God to you.

Denver: And that would I think would be of inestimable value if we can get that.

It's a little cart before the horse to have witnesses without the product. I mean the purpose of the three witnesses and the eight witnesses for the Book of Mormon in the Book of Mormon, was to get you to take the Book of Mormon seriously. To divorce them from the text, and to send them out testifying about something that is yet to be made public . . . their witness to the public and the Book of Mormon emerged simultaneously. So that you could look at their witness, and you could then read the Book of Mormon and you could decide I'm going to take the Book of Mormon seriously. These witnesses have said what they have said, so let me take the book seriously. But separated from the book, you don't get Oliver, David, and Martin [**Joseph**: But they didn't have computers.] Well, that's true.

Sam: I am in whole harmony with that, and so the purpose for the witnesses right now is the propensity for the mind of man to rush to judgement before you have the fruit. [**Denver**: And I'm not going to rush to judgement on anything—ever.] [**Joseph**: A lot of people do.] Is to get those people to wait and go forward with cautious optimism of what is coming forward.

Denver: Right. When Oliver was told, "you took no thought except to ask, you were supposed to study that in your own mind." I have to admit that my initial curiosity about this was not even aroused. It was his persistence, Russell Anderson's persistence, in emailing me that actually got me to begin to look. And of course, this will be taken into account.

God answers me. But I don't abuse the privilege. I take seriously the admonition given to Oliver, to go to God and to ask for an answer before you have done the labor of studying it out in your own mind and reaching your own conclusion. I can't tell you how often I have studied a matter out, reached a conclusion, and gone to God and my conclusion was wrong, and I get corrected.

Joseph: That makes me feel good.

Denver: Probably, more often than not I reach and conclusion and I am told, "No, and this is what you missed." But sometimes I'm told, "No, you got it right, and this is what you missed in getting it right, because there was more there for you to have considered as well."

I agree with you that Zion is the only objective at this point, at this late point in the restoration, Zion is the only worthy objective left. I've become so dissatisfied and discouraged by what the institutions have done in their quest to advocate the restoration, that I have concluded that what the world, what the saints, what the work of God needs is not another strong man, it's not another president, it's not another priest or bishop or leader. The only thing we need is someone who will teach the truth, while they live the truth, regarding themselves as nothing more than as a common man on the same level as everyone else.

I've had people ask me multiple times to permit them to call a conference and sustain me to something. And I've told them we are not going to do that. First of all, it will degrade you by doing that. And second of all it will imprison me. It will not accomplish what you think it will accomplish to do that.

Zion is supposed to be a group of people who have one level, where every man is equal; one heart, one mind, all things in common, where there is no one who stands up and says, "I get to be your boss, I get to be the one in charge." I abhor the idea of being in charge of another man's faith. And I encourage everyone in their faith. And if they've got more truth than I have, then I want to hear them and I want to be taught by them. We need to teach and edify one another, and then give each other the confidence, give each other the respect, the freedom to believe, the freedom to choose, the freedom to understand.

[Arrangements were completed to bring the book, *A Man Without Doubt*, to the office.]

Sam: I'm just pleased to be able to meet you. And I will hold you up in my prayers.

Denver: Oh well, then with that threat, I'll do the same to you. [laughter]

Sam: But I will receive it with gladness.

Denver: You know I do think that there is a lot of jealousy, envy, ambition, that underlies the strife. If you've got nothing to protect, and I've got no self-interests; I mean I go and I talk, and we go and we do what we're able to afford to go and do. I don't pass the hat, I don't ask for a donation. I don't collect anything. And I've spent my own money, renting venues, traveling, going places.

To me I believe what your great-grandfather said that "A religion that doesn't require sacrifice, cannot produce faith" [Lectures of Faith 6:7]. And so I sacrifice. If someone gives me a donation, I turn it over to someone else. I believe in the virtue of a pure religion that requires of you strict accountability, fidelity to God, sacrifice to pursue what you are doing.

There are a lot of people who say some pretty terrible things and make some awful accusations about me, and I don't answer them. I don't bother defending myself. I publish what I believe, I explain and teach what I believe brings people closer to God, and I leave all of the judgments and all the arguments and all the attacks for other people to conduct. Because I'm not interested in defending myself or doing anything other than advancing the truth so far as I can understand it.

And I wish what you do does lead in turn to greater truth and light and knowledge. But if it turns out to be otherwise in the end, I hope that you don't lose hope or faith or confidence that God *is* going to bring about Zion. It's a covenant. And God doesn't break a covenant. These were covenants that were made with the fathers at the beginning. He's not going to disappoint those with whom he made a covenant. Even if along the

way we end up being discouraged or set back or troubled or disappointed or our hearts get broken. Don't lose hope in God or in the deliberate covenantal commitment of God to bring exactly what you are talking about—the Zion that will return.

Sam: Some might say the work, 23 years in trying to bring together the ex-RLDS people was a failure. I do not believe that. And some have said, "When this becomes a disaster, you better worry, because they're going to laugh at you and scorn you." I don't care, it's the work of the Lord, and there were very valuable things that were brought forth. And any of those folks that taught. This very branch at Zarahemla that Joe is working from, came about, I believe from that effort. There are great efforts that are taking place.

Denver: Yeah, the work of God is to be taken seriously and respected, however it unfolds.

Sam: When I got to the realization, you said that there were financial reasons that they wouldn't pull together and things, but I think that power and authority is more. And many of them had that desire to reconstruct the RLDS church which had spewed them out. Why do you want to reconstruct . . . ?

Denver: Yeah. Since you know it didn't bring about Zion, why do you want to repeat the failed experiment? You mentioned before that it failed, the first restoration failed. And I think that's true. I think it fell to the ground unfulfilled, but it planted the seed. It planted what has now had an opportunity over generations to percolate. Quite frankly if it weren't for the profit motive, the reason why the various failed restoration churches have printed and distributed over millions of copies of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine of Covenants, that allows us today to inherit something, is because of that financial self-interest.

Sam: You can call it a failure, but [**Denver:** Some good came from it.] we paid the tuition; now we can take the learning.

Denver: Yes, some good came from it. And we ought to appreciate and thank them for the good. I know there are a lot of people.

Your comment about there are good people in the LDS church. It reminds me of Elijah on the mountain telling the Lord that everyone is lost and the only one that is left is me and God says, "Oh, shut up, Elijah, there're 7,000 people out there that still belong to me. Get down off the mountain. Stop self-pitying, get to work." And sure enough a group of believers finally came together in the days of Elijah. I believe that there are a lot of sincere, good decent people, but the traditions.

The Book of Mormon talks about the blindness of minds and it's not just because of sin, it's because of traditions. [**Joseph:** Absolutely.] The traditions make you say, "This and only this." Where God is saying, "No, my work comes in all directions."

Russell Anderson: Well we see God working in so many different areas. Not just among the Mormon communities, but in the Christian communities, the Jewish communities, it's just amazing.

Denver: Yeah. There weren't many Christians that came to my talks, but the Christians who did come, very many of them were pastors. And they were shocked by what they heard. And they said if I would come back, they'd get their entire congregation there. So we'll see. I'm trying to get Christianity in general to take a second look at Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon as an authentic Christian text. They will learn more by studying the Book of Mormon than they will be the New Testament because there is more about Christ in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph: And it's much clearer.

Denver: It is. But Christians are a hard lot. Those Baptists, I'm glad they treated you well. Those Baptists are among the most close-minded of the Bible thumpers.

Joseph: There is one worse, The Assembly of God. At least in our area in Springfield.

Denver: The Church of Christ down in Texas is kind of hard too. But at the end of the day, why would anyone take? As we sit around the table here today, there is an issue that is unresolved. And that is: What are we going to get out of the product down there and will it edify, satisfy and enlighten. That's an unknown. I don't know that yet. But we agree on practically every other issue that there is regarding your great-grandfather, the Book of Mormon, the restoration, its failure, what's going on in the restoration branches. There is so much that we agree upon, that we belong in fellowship with one another. We belong rejoicing together. We belong celebrating the truth and exploring the content of the prophecies that were left behind both in the Book of Mormon and in the former commandments.

We ought to find it easy to love one another. And yet one small issue somewhere is all it takes for people to start dividing up, bickering and ultimately betraying one another. That's a shame.

Joseph: You know the most grievous thing for me about the failure of the restoration movement is the fact that God gave them the kingdom, not just any kingdom, He gave them His kingdom, and they walked on it.

Denver: Yeah. They betrayed Him.

Sam: "Why have ye polluted the holy church of God, why are you ashamed to take upon you his name." Why? (LDS Mormon 8:38; RE Mormon 4:5; RLDS Mormon 4:51-52).

Denver: Yeah. There are times that I think, in all the world, the only people who understood Joseph Smith's heart were Emma and Hyrum. In all the world.

I mean he was up giving talks, Sidney Rigdon wasn't even present during the King Follett discourse, he was back in Pennsylvania. And Joseph's up there saying, "Mark it, Elder Rigdon!" in the talk, a side comment, because he knows. He is saying, "I can prove it from the Bible, you mark it Elder Rigdon." I'm using the text that goes to show you that Sidney Rigdon would challenge Joseph about what Joseph was saying if it weren't Biblical, it was objectionable. [TPJS, 346.] instead of turning loose and saying, "We have a more recent revelation from God." You want to take a text that has been poorly transmitted and corrupted and you want to value it above the more recent translation given us by God in the Book of Mormon. A more clear statement of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I mean, I don't think Sidney Rigdon understood Joseph. But I think that Joseph understood Rigdon. In fact I think that Joseph understood, by the end, the hearts of a lot of people. He had been betrayed by David Whitmer. He had been betrayed by Oliver Cowdery. He had been betrayed by Martin Harris. He had been betrayed by the Church Historian, John Whitmer—who took the church records with him. He'd been betrayed by W. W. Phelps. He'd been betrayed by insider after insider. And I think it broke his heart to find out that this John C. Bennett was this scoundrel that had been elevated to be the mayor of Nauvoo. Betrayal after betrayal, and disappointment after disappointment.

And yet Joseph remained confident and optimistic and fighting for the restoration right through the day he died. It didn't fail because of a lack of opportunity. It didn't fail because of Joseph. It didn't fail because of Hyrum. It failed because people simply would not believe, obey and do what the Lord asked them to do.

Sam: They ignored what they had in the record it's just as plain.

Denver: They didn't prize it. They just didn't prize it.

Eugene Richardson: They loved the world more.

Denver: Yeah, yeah. The cares of the world. It's that parable of casting the seeds.

Joseph: I can't walk out on that Temple Lot without grieving over the fact that . . .

Denver: What might have been.

Joseph: Yeah, what might have been. And yet will be.

Denver: It's heartbreaking.

Joseph: We have to take the long way around, I guess.

Denver: It's a curiosity. I guess it's necessary. But why it's necessary. Why people are like they are, it's beyond perplexing. But we would really rather fight with one another

over the small things that we may disagree on or doubt or have perplexity about. And we ignore the massive flood of light and truth that we agree upon.

Eugene: It comes down to chapter four of 2nd Nephi. Many years ago, John the Revelator was speaking with me. And a thought was forming in my head. And he pointed at me, didn't say a word, and what I saw on his face was terrifying. I pondered that many years. But in reading the psalm of Nephi he said, "Why do I give place to my enemy?" Sorry I'm speaking low. "Why do I give place to the enemy of my soul?" In pondering what John had done, a thought was not even formed in my own mind, and John knew that thought before it touched me. And I realized I was giving place to the wrong spirit. Why do we do it? Why do men do it? Because we are houses divided. And we keep our pet sin and we give place to the wrong spirit. It boils down to that. And that spirit tweaks our ego and everything else. Once you learn to recognize that spirit and no longer give it place, but instead give place to our Redeemer, then you're pure. But you cannot be pure in heart, in mind or soul, so long as you give place to that other spirit. And it boils down everything to that one point.

Joseph: What I can't understand about people sometimes. If they have a problem, and you provide them the answer, and they just ignore it. Do they want to solve this problem? Why not apply the solution? [**Denver:** Tradition.] The Lord said at the Waldo church he said, "A window of opportunity is open to you. All you need to do is step through it. We have common ground. We have much common ground. Take that and begin to worship God, build up the kingdom of God." And it just went in one ear and out the other. Oh what a wonderful message, oh what a wonderful message. They didn't do a thing about it.

Denver: Yeah, "Wonderful message, now leave me alone." [laughter]

Joseph: Well, we have hope. I have hope that Zion will soon be.

Denver: I think things are stirring. I think that the opportunity and potential exists. But I also think that at the time that God begins a work, there are going to be efforts to compromise, distract and confuse. You have to remain single-minded to God throughout the whole of it. And realize that the way in which God is going to bring his purposes about may not be in the way that any man can foresee. He's still going to accomplish what he intends to accomplish.

And the adversary is clever. I used to think that Satan was so coarse and base and obvious, that avoiding his snares was easy. Until I realized that even if he can't get his hooks into you, he can get his hooks into people around you. And he can hedge up your way by creating confusion.

Sam: The groundswell.

Denver: Yeah.

Shirley Richardson: The versions. . . . [inaudible]

Sam: So many of us act to stop to listen until we are on the brink of destruction.

Eugene: Unfortunately, we think we have it handled. And we're too blind to see we don't.

Shirley: Or a lot of people just don't care because they're busy. I'm taking care of my family, I'm going to work, I've got to do this, I've got to do that. [inaudible] It's like it says in the Book of Mormon, they . . . before everything happens, they're neither married or given in marriage . . . and charge ahead.

Eugene: That's talking about the flood.

Shirley: Yeah.

Denver: [Gives Joseph a signed copy of *A Man Without Doubt*]: There.

Joseph: Thank you very much, Sir.

Denver: Thank you for taking the time to come.

Joseph: I'm glad, very glad, thank you.

2018.06.23 Remarks at the 1st Annual Joseph Smith Restoration Conference

June 23, 2018

Boise State University, Boise, Idaho

People are tired and I have to tell you, I feel like someone spanked me sitting on these chairs all day. I'm fairly confident that whoever's responsible for buying these intended to make people use this room for no more than twenty minutes at a time, and then to get out so the next group can come in and be equally punished.

You know, Tausha mentioned that she was warned to stay away from some of you people when she was a kid growing up because she was raised in the LDS tradition. My mother was a baptist. My father, although Christian, was nondenominational. My mother warned me to stay away from all of you people. She was completely indiscriminate. In fact, I was so surprised when I ran into a Mormon in New Hampshire while I was in the military that I made the mistake of saying something that suggested I was interested, and since in New Hampshire no one is interested in Mormonism, they proceeded to proselytize and pamphleteer and treat me as a golden contact. I remember the first time I read verses out of the Book of Mormon to accommodate these eager young elders from Bountiful and Orem, and they wanted to know what I thought of the Book of Mormon. And literally this is what I said, "It's got to be scripture. It's every bit as boring as the Bible."

I became a convert to the LDS Church and to Mormonism. But like that other fellow who ran about – Mike - right?- Mike the mechanic. You know he has a band- "Mike & The Mechanics"- and one of their big hits was, "All I Need is a Miracle". See, I was a convert and I believed in the restoration. I believed in Joseph. I believed in Christ. But I really had not warmed up at all to the Book of Mormon.

I became a gospel doctrine teacher. I suppose it was an inspired calling to put me in that position because I had to teach through a four year cycle the four standard works. And every time you got around to the year that you spent on the Book of Mormon I had to teach the Book of Mormon for a year. Well the first time I taught the Book of Mormon for a year, I used the manual and got what the manual gave me out of the Book of Mormon. The second time I taught the Book of Mormon for a year, which suggests that I couldn't get out of the calling because God in his infinite wisdom knew I hadn't learned anything yet, I decided I was not going to bore myself by re-teaching what I had taught the preceding year we had spent on the Book of Mormon, so I looked a little deeper into the book and found there was a little more to this than I thought there was. The third time I taught the Book of Mormon for a year as a gospel doctrine teacher – now mind you, I've moved from Pleasant Grove to Sandy to another location in Sandy, and I'm never escaping the gospel doctrine position because I had to teach gospel doctrine, apparently. The third time I taught the Book of Mormon for a year, I discovered that it had a whole lot more in it than I had in me. And the fourth time I taught the Book of Mormon for a year – because I was a gospel doctrine teacher for two-and-a-half

decades, that's all I did, was teach the Book of Mormon and the other standard works – the fourth time, I literally thought I could not teach enough of what this book has to offer us. Literally they would assign you up to eight chapters to cover in a single 50 minute opportunity in gospel doctrine. I didn't welcome questions. I spent 50 minutes trying to get the people to understand and appreciate sometimes one or two or three verses out of the eight chapters and promising them, there's a whole lot more in there if you'll keep looking for it.

There was a fellow who was second in charge of the graduate program of the Institute at the University of Utah. At the time they had a failing Institute program because none of the law students were interested in hearing what they had to teach. Well, at the graduate level there is no curriculum in the LDS Institute program and so you can teach whatever you want. And he came and he asked me if I would be willing to go teach graduate level Institute class at the University of Utah Law School. And since I'm a practicing attorney and curious about whether there's anyone in the class worth hiring; I decided I would go ahead and teach. I taught for two years and we had not, after two years of teaching at the graduate level, we had not gotten through first Nephi. But those kids understood the Book of Mormon better than they had through all of their previous years including the time some of them had spent on LDS missions.

Joseph Smith did begin the restoration and he did get the foot in the door but there is so much that remains yet to be accomplished.

There's a banner up there that says what unites us is greater than what divides us. As I think about what unites us and focus on the word "unite" the only things that I know that are possible to unite us is if we are open. If I know- if I know the truth, I know the Church is true... Yeah, churches are true? – what does that mean? Correctly organized as a legal entity? How can a church **be** true? I mean, **you are true** in that I see you sitting there and you're breathing and moving; you're true. But what does that mean? Is truth capable of being embodied in an organization? We have to be open, not to organizational forms but to truth. But if we're gonna be united, it's not enough to just say, "I'm open." We need to be willing to search, because whatever it is we have, it's not enough. It doesn't matter who we are, whatever we have is not enough. Blessed are they who hunger and search. I mean Christ didn't say, blessed are they who are content and closed minded for they shall be stubborn. He wants us to hunger and search after righteousness so that we can be filled. Well, if you're filled, wait a few hours. You oughta be hungry again, and therefore you should begin the search yet again. The hungering in mortality does not end until life itself comes to an end. If you're alive you need to engage in the search. **You don't have enough**; none of us do. And we have to be willing to accept. It doesn't do you any good to sit at a banquet after you have hungered and thirst if you won't take it in. You have to be willing to allow it to come into you.

Christ said "we all need to repent and become as a little child." Repenting at the fundamental level means to stop whatever it is you're doing, in whatever direction you're heading, and change directions to face God. That's the first thing, repent. Come to face God. And secondly, become as a little child. There is no more relentlessly inquisitive a

creature on earth than a little child. They hunger and they thirst. They not only don't know things, they know they don't know things. Why? What? When? Where? Relentlessly they want to be filled. They know they're ignorant. The problem with us is we don't appreciate the enormity of the ignorance that we walk about with.

I have to ask, and today I've been delighted at being here and at listening to what you people have to say. I have to ask, what do you have to offer to me? And then the question becomes, what do I have to offer you? But perhaps most importantly of all, what do others have to offer us? Because if you take in the fullness of what Joseph Smith envisioned it's all truth from whatever source it may be derived. If you have truth, come and bring it with you and give it to us.

Christ was essentially an Eastern mystical teacher with whose deepest teachings the Buddhists and the Hindus resonate. Because the kind of allegories He spoke with, the kind of similes He used, the language that He used, it's music in the ears of some of the Eastern cultures. And to us, we want to measure it, we want to define it, we want to put it on ourselves and we want to accomplish it. We're task oriented. We have a scientific approach. We are coarse, Christ was not. Christ dealt in hues, He dealt in feelings, He dealt in sentiments, He dealt in the heart. And it's very hard to take a faith that is grounded essentially in the heart of man and to make that something so outwardly visible that it is possible for you, as a wolf, to walk about in sheep's clothing because that's the kind of people we are. We need to be willing to accept truth from wherever it comes.

There's an incident. Boy, I really have to tell you, we have new scriptures. And when I say we I mean those that have been about trying to recover the original restoration, and I brought them with me. If you think you look like a pharisee carrying about a quadruple combination in the LDS Church, these new scriptures are -- well, they announce from at least two blocks away, "I'm devout. I'm religious. I don't have sticks, I have logs. Get back."

See:

...there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and to him the Lord said in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prays, and has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on your name. But the Lord said unto him, Go your way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, ... Jesus, that appeared unto you

in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes [as it were] scales, [they left out - There is a missing part. Ananias, when they finished talking, ran for the door.] and [immediately] he received his sight, ... and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples who were at Damascus. (Acts 5:9 RE)

See, Ananias responded to the Lord's invitation to go minister to this fellow with the kind of healthy skepticism that comes whenever you're asked to go visit with people that are other, that are viewed as threatening. All of you probably come from congregations that suggest staying away and not cross pollinating is the best and most safe way in which to conduct a religious society. But Ananias went and did what the Lord told him that he needed to do, in any event. And when Saul was blessed, scales fell from his eyes. Now, I've always thought that the scales that fell from his eyes were like the scales that you see on a fish when you clean the scales off. But scales are also a balance that you use to wrongly apportion, wrongly measure, wrongly weigh the value of others. And I think the word scales is ambiguous precisely for that reason, to suggest to us that one of the impediments that Saul had was that he didn't have the right way of weighing things. Saul was always committed to God and dead wrong, and then God fixed him and he remained committed to God. There was no difference in the enthusiasm with which Saul, who became Paul, advocated for the purposes of what he believed to be the truth.

Then a little bit later,

... when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join himself to the disciples, [This is at Jerusalem, see then with the disciples over at Damascus, but when he gets to Jerusalem, that's another story. He arrives there and he attempts to fellowship there,] but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem, and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Greeks, but they went about to slay him, ... [and] when the brethren knew this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus (Act 5:11 RE).

They protected him. They were afraid of the man. Conversion has a way of doing that.

Like so many of you, I'm an outcast. I was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for forty years. I was baptized on September 10, 1973. I was excommunicated on September 10, 2013. Forty years to the day. And so for a 40 year sojourn I was among the saints.

You see, Paul's objective was always to serve God. He changed sides and when he did that he changed friends and he changed enemies. It just flows that way. God loves both sides. He makes the sun to shine on the good and the evil and he makes the rain to fall

on the good and the evil (see Matt. 3:26 RE). We are all alike to God (see 2 Nephi 11:17 RE).

In a description of Christ when He appears standing among the seven candlesticks, symbol of the menorah, which is placed in the temple symbolically before the veil before you enter into the Holy of Holies, Christ, standing before the veil at the menorah in the vision that John has, speaks, and when He speaks out of His mouth comes a sharp two-sided sword (see Revelation 1:5 RE). See anciently the invention of the sword was a great thing but all it amounted to was a real long axe blade, and if you hit something you could then pound on the dull backside of what you hit with your hand, with your arm, with a club, and you could drive the sharp side into whatever it was you were hitting with the sword, and you could successfully amplify its cutting power, its killing power. But when you got a two-edged sword that required a whole new skill set and a whole new bunch of precautions. You could hurt yourself on the back swing with a one-sided sharp sword. You could bounce it off your shoulder and get momentum. With a two-edged sword you're going to split yourself open. The rules of warfare changed. You could now hit with a front stroke and a backstroke. You could now enter the batter's box either closer to first base or further from first base because it was a two-edged sword. Why is the word that proceeds forth out of the mouth of Christ sharper than a two-edged sword? Because it cuts both ways. And in handling the word of God every one of us had better take care not to injure ourselves lest we be found to fight against the work of God.

Well, James McKay commented today about how we have not seen the fulfillment of the promises, not the gathering of Israel nor the Holy City, and he posed the question: is that God's fault or ours? Well it's certainly not God's fault so it really just leaves us and we're on stage now.

Patrick McKay talked about genetic diversity and inbreeding. Inbreeding produces idiocy, mad men, and European royalty but it doesn't produce the gathering of all truth. (I mean look at Prince Charles, really.)

I wanted to comment about church organization because that's come up. Having a central command and authoritarianism is an issue that deserves careful scrutiny if you're looking at the restoration. The restoration through Joseph Smith was intended to shed light on a lot of things and he had only a short time with us. He died at 38-and-a-half. Some people today don't even move out of their parents' house at 38-and-a-half. And Joseph Smith's life was coming to an end- ok.

When the restoration began to roll out Joseph Smith aggregated a central position, central authority. He established an organizational hierarchy in which, when they finally got it organized in the land of Zion – that is in Missouri – and they had a presidency there with David Whitmer in charge. He departed after establishing the presidency in Missouri, headed back to Kirtland, and he said now, now if his life came to an end he had fully organized the Church, because there was a church with a presidency in Zion that could replace him in the event that his life were taken. That had been done. His life,

his mission, his work had been fulfilled. This is in the 1833-34 time period. Joseph is talking in these terms. By 1838 members of the presidency in Zion had not only forsaken the Church, excommunicated, but many of them signed affidavits and participated in what eventually resulted in the Missouri..., the Mormon War, the imprisonment of Joseph Smith, and the scattering of the entire gathering in Missouri. An extermination order was issued and everyone had to flee. Joseph was taken prisoner, sitting in prison. You need to read all of the words of the letters that Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail but you also need to look at the affidavits that were signed by the members of the Church that had turned on Joseph. You need to look at the transcripts of the trial that was held in front of Judge King. You need to look at how Joseph Smith could not be bound over for trial on the charge of treason if it were not for Mormons who came to testify against Joseph Smith. The very people in whom authority had been invested were the ones that had the credibility to keep Joseph Smith in prison on the false charge of treason. And so sitting within Liberty Jail and reflecting upon the lessons that he had learned, Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail is not talking about how joyful and wonderful it is to have a hierarchy with authority. He's come to a different recognition and a different realization and he's saying, "*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood*" (T&C 139:6). The only thing that ought to matter is persuasion and gentleness and pure knowledge that will greatly enlarge the soul.

The standard ought not be what office one holds. The standard ought to be what truth you bring with you. What is the content? Is it delicious? Does it bring me to Christ? Does it make me desire to be better than I am, to rise above the condition in which I presently find myself in this fallen world? Then when Joseph Smith gets to Nauvoo and he gives a talk to the Relief Society in Nauvoo, he tells the women of the Church that the saints are depending too much upon the prophet and that they are darkened in their own minds because they're neglecting the responsibilities that are devolving upon themselves.

Joseph Smith may have established a hierarchy but through the Missouri experience he came to realize the limitations of the value of having that, and the necessity of changing the format and looking instead to persuasion, truth, pure knowledge, love, gentleness, meekness; those are the things that matter, not hierarchy. And he came close to denouncing even his own position when he said your minds are darkened because you're depending too much upon the prophet and you're neglecting the duties that are devolving upon yourselves.

I'm so glad to hear Patrick advocate the central purpose of the Book of Mormon. He talked about that. And then there was a reference to the Wentworth letter that was given by Adrian. And the Wentworth letter, he put it up on the board:

[T]he truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the Great Jehovah shall say, The work is done (T&C 146:20).

That's not a reference to a church. That's a reference to the Book of Mormon. That's the truth that has been set out, the purpose of which is to warn the entire world. In answer to the question that Patrick posed today, yes, I have thought of Christ's church consisting of us all, no matter where we are, no matter what we are. I've advocated that if a Catholic priest comes to us and wants to be baptized, we baptize them. And we don't need to insist they give up their Catholicism. I've advocated baptizing anyone and everyone who will accept the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine of Christ that's set out in the Book of Mormon. I don't care about denominationalism. I've been kicked out of the only church I ever belonged to and I don't have a church to offer anyone apart from the church that Adrian put a definition up on the board. If you will repent, believe in Christ and come to Him and be baptized, that's all I want to be involved in, that simple a matter, as a church. Organizations do impede the real church. The real church consists of faith in Christ, repentance and baptism, and that brings about the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In response to Michael Kelly's comment today: No, God's not a jerk but many who claim to follow Him really are. And if you're trying to measure His countenance by those who claim to follow Him, very often you get the misapprehension that God is a jerk. I am doing my best not to be one, but between my own weaknesses and failing I don't know how often I am a very good reflection on God, but to the extent that there is any light and truth that ever comes through me, I don't claim responsibility or credit for that. That is a reflection of Him because the only things I've ever had to offer that are valuable have come solely and exclusively from Him.

Terry Patience talked today about searching for God. My word, he has more institutional experience than the next ten guys. I mean the name Patience is an apt name for Terry. I can't imagine carrying on that sort of quest through all of the various restorationist movements, but I do agree that God does want to reveal Himself. That is the constant theme of the Book of Mormon. That's really what the Book of Mormon does, is give you account after account after account of those who have experienced God revealing Himself to a person. There's a vocabulary that gets used consistently in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon uses the word "belief" to mean that you've got correct understanding of God's teachings. It uses the word "unbelief" to mean that you don't have a correct understanding of God's teachings. You believe some things but they're mistaken. Unbelief doesn't mean that you're a non-believer, it means that the beliefs that you possess are simply wrong. Then there is "faith". And the use of the word, in the Book of Mormon, of faith, means that angels have ministered to you, because if angels have ceased ministering then there is no faith. And "knowledge" in the Book of Mormon means that one has come into contact with the Lord, and then this man had knowledge. He had faith no more for he had entered into the presence of the Lord and he knew Him.

The Book of Mormon is an account of people who have come to know God. They went from unbelief, very often from horribly false traditions, to a state of belief, to a state of faith, to a state of knowledge.

The LDS Church has abandoned the idea of Zion even though they ask in their temple ceremony, for those who go through it, to consecrate your time, your talents, and everything with which the Lord has blessed you or may bless you to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for the building up of the kingdom of God on earth and the establishment of Zion. (Those are the very words of the covenant. I know that because I went to the temple so often during that 40 years that I've got the ceremony memorized, so it didn't do any good to kick me out anyway because I know all the secrets.) See, what they've done with that, they think that they've put themselves in a position to own exclusively the right to establish Zion because the word of consecration, the covenant of consecration as adapted by them, requires that they be the possessor or the bringer of Zion and no one else. But a clever lawyer could interpret the clause to say, no not so, it's conditional because the consecration is conditioned upon the requirement that you build up the kingdom of God and you establish Zion, and if you fail to meet the requirements of the condition you have no right to the consecration. And I think the latter view is the better view, and they broke it so it's their failure.

In my view, from my careful observation of everything that went on during Joseph Smith's day and careful scrutiny of the course of events that followed his demise, a truer version of an organized hierarchical structure has no hope of bringing Zion. I know there are those who in this room have expressed a hope that it can be achieved otherwise. My personal view is that you cannot improve any chance of bringing Zion by a truer version of an organized hierarchical structure, it just will not will not work because implicit within the hierarchy is the disadvantage of stratification. If the hierarchies look like a pyramid with someone at the top and all you have to do, all you have to do to corrupt that is to corrupt the top, if you break that you've broken the whole thing. That's essentially what has happened. And over and over again people wishing that they would like to escape the corruption that they've found in the integrated structure, can be improved upon if they just get a better guy in that position, it'll all work out somehow. I believe that the correct structure is completely flat, and that that completely flat structure with no one greater than anyone else. If there be someone who would choose to help the group they need to descend below. They need to kneel to wash the feet of others. They need to elevate. They need to put others above themselves. And they need to find the weakest spots and raise it as much as they can throughout and let them all move forward together with no one atop.

Christ did not come to do anything other than to heal and to serve and to kneel and to wash the feet of others. How can I ever claim that I would have a right to stand above another person if my Lord's example makes that an obscenity for me? Peter found the Lord's humility unbecoming. "You're not going to wash my feet, Lord. How dare you kneel." "No, Peter. Peter, you don't understand. It's necessary" (see John 9:2 RE; and T&C Testimony of St. John 10:2).

When – I'll call him Brother Wiggle – said there are about a hundred revelations we agree on, yes, that is true. And what has been said about what was set out in 1831 on the law of consecration is also true. However, once again the trajectory of Joseph's life took some turns. After the experiences with the common-stock-established stores that

had been put in place that Joseph and Sidney and others participated in, in Kirtland, after the experiences in Independence, after the failures at Far West, and in Nauvoo, in 1840, Joseph Smith got up in a conference and rescinded the law of consecration. He said it wasn't to be lived any longer. That's not in our scriptures but it's in the minutes of the conference, where Joseph said it ought not be lived any longer.

Because the law of consecration is almost in and of itself an oxymoron. How might I make your heart and my heart one by a law? Even if with a deed we all have all things in common, give me the law that will make your heart and my heart one. Give me the law that will make your mind and my mind one. Because against such there is no law. The only way I know to become united in a way in which I care for you and you care for me, in a way that we could successfully consecrate our lives together, is if both of us have for the other love unfeigned. It's easy to feign love. It's very difficult to have unfeigned love. Authentic, 'I would lay my life down for you' love, which doesn't mean you always get along and agree. You can fight and yet love one another. You can disagree and yet love one another. If you love your children there are times you are going to correct them. There are some times you may reprove them with sharpness and then reluctantly show forth afterwards an increase of love. That's just life.

I was really surprised; I mean, I don't know how I missed this. I do know that it got de-emphasized but when Jim Vun Cannon said in 1984 the RLDS Church abandoned the Book of Mormon as a canon, and that that resulted essentially in what he called a civil war and split families, I knew there had been a de-emphasis, but striking it from the canon.

You know one of the things which Joseph Smith intended to do but did not get accomplished during his lifetime was he intended always to publish, in one volume, the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. It was always intended that that happen. That now has happened for the first time. It just happened a couple of years ago. And the name of the volume that has the Book of Mormon and the New Testament in it is called "New Covenants," because that reflects the covenants that were established at Jerusalem, that were established in the New World at Bountiful, and that came forth through Joseph as the covenant at the beginning of the restoration -- the Book of Mormon. So that's The New Covenants.

Joseph Smith labored over the course of his lifetime. And someone who was up here talking, talked about how the Joseph Smith translation was the Bible version that they used. It's the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible that is in the scriptures. The Old Testament has been called The Old Covenants because that includes the covenants that got established with Adam, with Enoch, with Noah, with Abraham, [and] with Moses. Those covenants are in The Old Covenants. And then The New Covenants are as I described. The text for The Old Covenants and the New Testament and The New Covenants are the Joseph Smith translation. But when the Joseph Smith translation got published by the RLDS Church, they made..., the committee that published 'em made a number of editorial changes of their own. And Joseph Smith made hundreds of punctuation changes that did not get incorporated into 'em. And during talks that Joseph

Smith gave in the Nauvoo era, there were several times when he said, the Bible reads this way but it ought to read that way. Or, this is what it says but a plainer meaning or plainer translation would be this. These scriptures encompass every change Joseph Smith made, whether it made it into the version published by the RLDS Church or not, and all of the punctuation changes, and they eliminate any of the changes that the committee that published them for the RLDS Church inserted into 'em. In The Old Covenants and The New Covenants these are the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible insofar as we have any ability to gather and make it correctly reflect exactly what Joseph intended. That's what's in those books. And then instead of the Doctrine and Covenants there's the Teachings and Commandments. Instead of the D&C it's the T&C. That avoids any copyright claims, you see.

But these include..., Joseph Smith put out not just the Joseph Smith History that you find in the triple combination of the LDS Church. When he was the editor in chief of the *Times and Seasons* he published his history, and his history is much longer there than the excerpts that got put into the D&C Joseph Smith History. All of what he put is in this and it's much longer, it takes a lot more time to read. Also, instead of the haphazard way in which it's organized, Joseph Smith's revelations, corrected – that is, going back and eliminating all of the emendations, changes, alterations, that got put into 'em after publication – the original version of the revelation has been put together, and it's been put together chronologically. The only exception to that is the Joseph Smith History, which begins the account in the 1820 timeframe, actually with his birth in 1805, is the earliest chronological description of events and so his history is the first thing in here. Then everything else that follows is in chronological order. You can see where Joseph put the *Lectures on Faith* in the 1835 timeframe by this layout. You can see when he published the *Book of Abraham* in the 1842 timeframe by this layout. In fact, it almost tells the story of the restoration and of Joseph's ministry simply by the way in which the layout of this has been gathered together.

Adrian mentioned that Joseph Smith, in retelling the story when the angel, correctly identified as Nephi by Joseph, incorrectly identified by everyone else as Moroni. And by the way, before the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon saw the plates shown them by the angel – and they never identify the name of that angel, they refer to him as an angel so the three witnesses never weigh in on the identity – David Whitmer's mother encountered the angel and she identifies him with the same name that Joseph Smith identifies him with, Nephi. In any event as Adrian referred to, the purpose of the restoration is to return the hearts of the children to the Fathers because everything that is going to happen in the last days got established at the beginning by a covenant that was made three years previous to the death of Adam, when he gathered together his posterity in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman and he prophesied whatsoever should befall them unto the latest generation. And the Lord appeared and administered comfort unto Adam, and the gathering there rose up and called him Michael the Prince (see T&C 154:19-20).

Right there, at that moment, at the beginning of the history of the family of Adam, he prophesies by the power of the Holy Ghost what should befall his descendants unto the

latest generation in the presence – Adam-ondi-Ahman – Adam in the presence of Son Ahman. Adam-ondi-Ahman was an event. It's like the Super Bowl. It doesn't matter where you play it. Wherever it is it's the Super Bowl. Adam-ondi-Ahman is an event. When Adam is there in the presence of Son Ahman, that is Adam-ondi-Ahman. Now you can say Springhill, Missouri is Adam-ondi-Ahman but it doesn't matter where it happens. When it happens – and it will happen again, in fulfillment of that original prophecy that was made in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, when Adam was before Son Ahman the first time – when it happens again it doesn't matter if that's in Mesa, Arizona or Springfield... I don't know, where do the Simpsons live? Springfield USA, or Bogus Basin. Wherever it is that that occurs that is Adam-ondi-Ahman and it will certainly happen.

The hearts of the children turning to the Fathers so that the earth is not smitten with a curse means that the purpose of the restoration ultimately is to return us back to something that was here in the beginning, the way in which it once was, the dispensation of Adam, the dispensation of Enoch, the dispensation of Noah, all of which were running simultaneously at the time of the flood. *"As it was in the days of Noah so also shall it be at the time of the coming of the Son of Man"* (Matthew 24:37).

We're gonna have three different kinds of remnants operating at the same time at the coming of the Lord, a dispensation that will reflect somewhat of the Christian era, a dispensation that will reflect somewhat of Joseph Smith's era, and a dispensation that will reflect somewhat of the original, the one in which man stood in the presence of God. Of course we've got a couple of those functioning after a fashion but we lack yet in what necessarily will involve the presence of Son Ahman to achieve, is something that He must bring about. When He said, I will bring again Zion, He literally means that because you can't have it without His presence.

That dispensation, that's the one that needs to occur. Joseph gave a talk where he referred to the spirit of Elias and the spirit of Elijah and the spirit of Messiah, because there are really three great spirits that are involved, with three great stages. Abraham is the father of the righteous because at the time that Abraham lived, the connection back to the government of God that began with Adam, to whom dominion was given over the earth, had been broken. It had been broken for generations. It had existed at one time for ten generations, continuously and uninterrupted from the days of Adam to the days of Shem, but when Abraham lived it had been broken for generations.

Now Shem – who had lived on the other side of the flood and who could have fled with Enoch's people into Zion, because people were taken up into Zion continuously, right up until the flood – and Shem did not need to remain on the earth but he remained on the earth to perpetuate what was there in the beginning. And so Shem, who would be called Melchizedek, Melek, Zadok, king, priest, the prince of peace, the king of Salem, the king of peace, the teacher of righteousness, he remained through the flood but he held onto the covenant that would allow him to lay hold upon that. And he waited through generations of apostasy.

And Abraham represents every man because Abraham came into the world in a state of apostasy, disconnected from the Fathers, incapable of laying hold upon the promises that go back through Adam, and Seth, and Enos, and Jared, and Mahalaleel and the other descendants, right down until the days of Shem. Abraham was disconnected from that. And he went and he looked and he searched because the records belonging to the Fathers had come down into his possession and he knew there was something to that. He knew there was something more to be obtained, and he longed for his appointment unto that, that which was in the beginning. He obtained a connection for himself into that. That's why he had to connect up with Melchizedek because the bond had to be formed, the covenant had to be established, the connection had to be made. And when it was made, the same right that belonged to Adam in the beginning, that right that belonged to Adam as the one to whom dominion over all the earth had been given, had been passed to Abraham. And Abraham became the rightful heir, the holder of that right belonging to the Fathers, even the first Father, or Adam, that came down from the beginning. **That's** what Joseph Smith sought to have be restored. **That's** something that cannot be done apart from the direct personal involvement of God. **That's** something that when it's restored returns us back to a state in which Eden is again possible.

The right of dominion given to Adam gets distorted in the minds of gentiles as something that allows you to thump your chest and rule and reign over others. You want to know what the exercise of dominion looks like in the hands of a righteous person? You will find Christ girded about with a towel, kneeling to wash the feet, because He's the one, He's the one to whom the right belonged. He viewed Himself as a gardener, as someone tending the creation, as someone laboring to bring about its greatest, its highest, its most perfect form, to cause it to flourish, to cause it to dwell in harmony and in love with one another.

Christ tried to explain what it was that would make us right in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, Here is the commandment: thou shalt not commit adultery but I say to you, you can walk around all day not committing adultery and still be a lustful, wretched, perverse, undesirable, unlovely, unbecoming, depraved soul. So, don't lust in your heart. You have read and it's been told you 'thou shalt not kill'. You can do a lot of damage to another human being without killing them. Words can be weapons. You can do a lot of damage with the words you speak, and never inflict a single bruise on another person's body but you can break their heart. And Christ says love your enemies. Do good to those that hate you and despitefully abuse you. Don't be angry with your brother. Don't call them names. Return good for evil.

Christ was saying the problem isn't your conduct, the problem is your heart. Christ is telling us, I want to take that heart that you've got and I want to break it. I want you to have a broken heart and I want you to have a contrite spirit because the only way you're going to let me come in is if what you are doing to surround yourself is broken down enough to permit me to come in.

(Well, I don't like going over and I saw on the schedule that there's a closing prayer at 5:15 and we're nearly there.)

Let me end by explaining that as an active faithful devoted Latter-day Saint I wrote the book, *The Second Comforter*, in order to bear testimony that all of that stuff in the LDS temple that was designed to prepare you in all things for further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord at the veil, was not just a symbolic trip to dress up funny and go down and do a show. It was designed to convey a message in which you literally expect to converse with the Lord through the veil, preliminary to entering His presence. The purpose of that was to open your mind to the possibility, as the Book of Mormon says, that you can enter into the presence of the Lord. When I wrote the book it was good LDS doctrine. I've been asked why I don't revise the book now that I've been booted from the organization and I've said, it's going to stand as a landmark. It was good doctrine once in the LDS Church; that's what the Church believed at that time. Dallin Oaks came up here to Boise to denounce that doctrine as **one of the tricks of the devil**. [Actually he didn't talk like that- " it's one of the tricks of the devil."]

Look, it's not a trick of the devil. God does want to reveal Himself and that is the constant theme of the Book of Mormon. And knowledge of God is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing greater than Christ, the originator and the finisher of our faith. Everyone always mutilates the account. Get your LDS version -- see they'll edit it. Now if I say this and they find out they'll just edit it and fix it. In General Conference, when they talk about it in the heading, they felt the nails in His hands and feet and sides, hands feet and side. That's not the way the Book of Mormon account begins. It begins with an embrace. The first wound that is felt when they come to the Lord at Bountiful is an embrace. It is the wound on His side. The first place He brings you is to Himself, standing in His presence, beside Him, in an embrace, in plain humility, as if any of us were good enough to stand in His presence. That's where it begins. Then His hands, and then as it fully dawns upon you the enormity of the gulf between you and Him, where you end up kneeling at His feet. It's the wounds on the feet you see last.

The Book of Mormon is trying to tell you something, and it is deep and profound and real. It is intended to tell you that Christ didn't just have sheep in Jerusalem. He has sheep all over this world. It's precisely omitted from the account that there are still other sheep that you don't know about so that you never become arrogant, assuming that there aren't yet still other sheep. If He identified 'em, well, you'd say they're in the club too and so they're okay. He doesn't want you to know that just yet. So that you entertain the possibility that anywhere in the world there may yet be those who know something more than you, that you ought to welcome, that you ought to listen to, that you ought to invite to come to join, and to bring with them some new truth that you've not yet heard that may be of value to you.

Well, I don't want to delay a closing prayer because I see that that happens at 5:15 and I'd hate to be standing up here talking while someone's praying. Let me end by thanking all of you that have spoken today for the contributions you've made. I've learned things today. I've had my horizon broadened. And I appreciate all the contributions that got made today, so much so I've made notes and I intend to listen to this again. As I

understand it this is gonna be put on line, is that correct? Yah, I intend to listen. Thank you all very much.

2018.07.28 The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope

Presented at Sunstone Symposium

July 28, 2018

Terry Turner: The title of this session today is The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hopes. Welcome to the closing session for Saturday. Following this session there will be a linger longer picnic with music by Angela Soffe, the Angela Soffe Band. Following the music there will be an evening of storytelling with Robert Kirby, Gina Colton, and Courtney Clark Kendrick. Tickets are limited but available for purchase at the registration desk. This session is being recorded and you will be able to purchase it after the presentation ends at the registration desk on the main floor. Please silence your cell phones and be respectful. As you leave us tonight we want to thank you all for coming and being part of Sunstone. You have now participated in a tradition of Mormon history that is over 40 years old. Mormonism can be what we make it and your participation helps us make Mormonism a little more diverse, listening, and inclusive. Regardless of your relationship with the Restoration we claim you as an important part of this community. You are wanted. Your voice is needed. You claiming the identity in your own way is an act of resistance against hate, division, and intolerance. Thank you for having the courage to show up and for engaging at Sunstone. Please support Sunstone by making a donation, subscribing to the magazine, by attending our regional conference. You are invited to attend our next regional conference in Glasgow, Scotland on September 1. Register at Sunstone.org. This session is 90 minutes long and we ask you, both the audience and presenters, to keep within the framework so that folks can get out to dinner on time.

About this presentation: This session presents a candid assessment of the trajectory taken by the restoration during Joseph Smith's lifetime and following his demise. The landscape of current restorationist factions will be considered. Our present disappointments will be considered against the background of hope to be found in the blueprint of the future presented in the Book of Mormon and by Joseph Smith's teachings. This was going to originally be my role. My name is Terry Turner. I am here today to introduce the next presenter, the only presenter apparently, Denver Snuffer. I have known Denver for 41 years. We met on the first day of law school at BYU in 1977. Denver and I formed a study group during our first year of law school and we forged a lifelong friendship, and I began to develop an appreciation for his intellect and his irreverent sense of humor. On one occasion we were both at a brown bag luncheon in the Moot courtroom at the law school with LaVell Edwards, the legendary BYU football coach, and he was going to speak. I was called on to say the opening prayer. As I walked down the aisle, Denver shouted from the back of the room, "Give 'em hell, Terry!" I was so discombobulated by his encouragement that I lost my train of thought completely and proceeded to give about an eight minute rambling prayer. In law school it was drilled into us to think like a lawyer, that was the famous phrase. We developed skills that included analysis, skepticism, and reason, and I knew that Denver had many of these qualities innately but as a friend I've watched him over the years hone these qualities and concepts in his professional and religious life.

Denver converted to the LDS Church in 1973 while in the Air Force in New Hampshire. He was invited to a friend's home to take the first discussion and showed up with a six-pack of beer as refreshments. Once converted, I watched him as he dedicated himself to a lifetime of rigorous analysis of the scriptures. He has written 13 books beginning with *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord through the Veil* in 2006 and ending with *A Man Without Doubt* in 2016. He has written extensively on his website and blog space. For several years he also taught Institute classes at the University of Utah Law School and at BYU Education Week. I do not know another person on this planet who has scrutinized the Joseph Smith papers in more detail than Denver Snuffer. His unwillingness to cease publication of his 2011 work, *Passing the Heavenly Gift* – and only for that reason – was he excommunicated in 2013 from the LDS Church. With no intention of starting his own new religion or becoming a prophet, Denver's lectures and writings have inspired the formation of many fellowships around the world, groups of like thinkers who have come together, thinking on several of the subjects regarding the restorations of Christ's church through Joseph Smith. Many of these writings have been canonized into scripture by attendees of conferences around the world. In 2017 Mormon Wikileaks revealed a chart that was shown in 1015 to the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On that chart, Denver was assigned a bubble that identified him as one of 17 "issues and ideas leading people away" from mainstream LDS doctrine. At lunch a few days later Denver asked me to be sure and tell John Dehlin, who is another good friend of mine, that Denver's bubble on the chart was bigger than John's, and that size does matter. I have always found Denver to be a seeker of truth, a good friend. I give you Denver Snuffer.

Denver Snuffer: (I don't want to hold the microphone. I feel like a lounge singer if I'm holding it.)

This year's Symposium addresses the theme: "*Threads in the Mormon Tapestry.*" In June, I participated in a conference at Boise, Idaho that invited various religious groups claiming Joseph Smith as their founder to meet and share ideas. That conference was the first Joseph Smith Restoration Conference, which is hoped to become an annual event. The theme of that conference was, "*What Unites Us is Greater Than What Divides Us.*"

Both last month's Boise conference and this month's Symposium, reflect an undisputable fact about the restoration through Joseph Smith: It is fractured into over an hundred parts. All claiming Joseph Smith as their founder, these factions disagree with one another so strongly that they refuse to fellowship with one another. Last month's Boise conference was an attempt to replace division with dialogue. The two largest bodies refused to accept an invitation to send representatives to speak at that conference but several others were represented. Perhaps the history of the two largest bodies accounts for their reluctance to participate.

The largest Mormon group is the one headquartered in Salt Lake City and controlled by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But there is only one person who actually belongs to that corporation sole. Yet he claims to

lead some 16 million followers at present, of which about 4 million are nominally active enough to self-identify as Latter-day Saints. I refer to this group of Mormons as "Latter-day Saints" in keeping with the directive from one of their presidents, Gordon B. Hinckley, who pronounced that members of that group cease to refer to themselves as "Mormons."

The Salt Lake City-based church has been the most fecund restorationist mother. Following her abandonment of plural wives, she gave birth to numerous fundamentalist organizations. Her progeny include:

The Council of Friends: an early polygamist group founded by Lorin C. Wooley in 1920. It in turn gave birth to numerous other polygamist offspring.

The Apostolic United Brethren, splintered from the Council of Friends, but like them, claims its founding reckons from 1886 with authority given by John Taylor. It has an estimated 9,000 members.

The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, founded by Leroy S. Johnson in 1954 also claims its authority came from the 1886 John Taylor incident. It is progeny from the Council of Friends. It has an estimated 6,000 members.

The Latter-day Church of Christ (Kingston Clan) incorporated as a church in 1978 by Ortell Kingston, and has roots that go back to 1926 with Charles Kingston. It has an estimated 1,200 members.

The Church of Jesus Christ (Original Doctrine), Inc., is a daughter of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and great-granddaughter of Brigham Young's Salt Lake organization. It split from its mother because Bishop Winston thought Warren Jeffs was too dictatorial, and led 700 people away from that group. This organization has about 1,000 members today and is also referred to as the Blackmore Group.

There is no accurate count of all the daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters that have come from splits from the Salt Lake City mother-church. The overwhelming cause of these departures has been the abandonment of plural wives. When the corporation sole chose property over principle, some believed the principle more important than fidelity to their mother. The daughters want both principle and property, but as Warren Jeffs' Fundamentalist Church has learned by sad experience, Federal Courts can still appoint receivers over sexually deviant religious cults that trade women like possessions.

The second largest church is headquartered in Independence, Missouri and is now called the Community of Christ. It claims to have 250,000 members. There was a time when the landscape of the restoration had the Brighamites in Utah and Josephites in Missouri, both claiming they were the authorized successor to Joseph Smith. Brighamites - because Brigham Young eventually claimed the right to succeed Joseph

as leader. Josephites - because Joseph Smith III was the direct lineal descendant of the slain founder.

Like its larger sister, the Community of Christ also has produced unwanted daughters. One new daughter from the Community of Christ is The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It is also headquartered in Independence, and split from the Community of Christ in 1991. They were disaffected by the decision to ordain women and adopt other innovations. Those who have departed the Community of Christ for the Restoration Church have other reasons for their changed alliance. During the Boise Conference, a Restoration Church leader lamented the Community of Christ's change in attitude toward the Book of Mormon as one of his main reasons for changing his membership to the Restoration Church.

In 2001, a year following the name change from RLDS to Community of Christ, church president W. Grant McMurray admitted doubts about the Book of Mormon as sacred scripture, declaring: "The proper use of the Book of Mormon as sacred scripture has been under wide discussion in the 1970s and beyond, in part because of long-standing questions about its historicity and in part because of perceived theological inadequacies, including matters of race and ethnicity." Then during the 2007 Community of Christ World Conference, church president Stephen M. Veazey ruled it out of order to consider a resolution to "reaffirm the Book of Mormon as a divinely inspired record." In so doing he stated "while the Church affirms the Book of Mormon as scripture, and makes it available for study and use in various languages, we do not attempt to mandate the degree of belief or use. This position is in keeping with our longstanding tradition that belief in the Book of Mormon is not to be used as a test of fellowship or membership in the church."

Both of the largest two Mormon divisions have experienced significant splintering. They may have good reason to fear dialogue between these divisions. As part of encouraging dialogue, this talk will deal with two issues. Both have been used to attack and criticize Joseph Smith. If you are conversant with historical or theological Mormon material you may have seen or heard of these subjects, but some of the branches of Mormonism may not have provided any information related to these subjects. The first, and more important topic is Joseph's ascent theology, encouraging man to seek reunion and at-one-ment with God and Christ in the heavens. The second defends Joseph against the accusation that he advocated and practiced the heresy of polygamy.

The institutions claiming to be an authentic version of what Joseph Smith founded have failed to produce the results Joseph foretold. This failure is due, in large measure, because Joseph's teachings have been abandoned or contradicted. There is still a great deal left undone.

Joseph told us to expect great events among the gentiles, Native Americans and remnant of Jewish people before Christ's victorious return. He did not live to see this happen. Upon his death, he left a great deal for others to complete.

Assuming the work Joseph began is to be finished, it will not happen by heaven laboring independent of us. We have work to do. At the conference in Boise, speaker James McKay from the Restoration Church in Missouri observed, there was still no holy city and no gathering of Israel. He posed the question: "whose fault is that; God's or ours?" The answer, according to the Book of Mormon, is that we must do the work, while God, as Master of the Vineyard, labors alongside us. But fault lies with us. God has been willing to do His part of the labor from Joseph Smith's day until now. God directs the work, and in this way "labors alongside" us. We must resist the temptation to insert our own agenda for God's. If we fail to grasp that the direction must come from heaven rather than as part of an agenda created by uninspired corporate planners, imaginative and even well intended individuals, then we risk working at odds with heaven. God's kingdom is a kingdom in every sense of the word, and the King is entitled to direct all of its affairs.

Today, we see all of the quarreling restoration mothers, daughters and siblings accusing the others of apostasy and preaching falsely. If you are trying to find a "true" version of what Joseph Smith founded from the quarreling contenders of today, you face the same query Joseph posed at the beginning: "Who of all these parties are right? Or are they all wrong together? And if any one of them be right, which is it? And how shall I know it?"

Sadly, it seems now as the Lord said to Isaiah: "the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes." These daughters lust after women, and property, power, authority, and make merchandise of the souls of men.

I was a one-time member of the largest branch, but as some of you know, was excommunicated over the demand I retract things I had written about their history. The resulting independence has allowed me to pursue a more unfettered search into Mormon origins, miscarriages, and missteps. Latter-day history has been so radically revised by revelations in the recent records released that anyone reading is left reeling. LDS history written before 1980 is antiquated. And we never had the more complete panoply of Brigham Young's conjectures, rants, and vulgarities until 2009.

The vast expansion of available and reliable historical materials for those interested has increased the schism rate for all the restorationist groups. There is a lot more kicking and pricking afoot, but it is increasingly more difficult to distinguish between kicks and pricks. The tapestry expands as more threads arrive.

But Mormonism's tapestry is not limited to the committed or devout. It now includes hundreds of thousands, perhaps more, disaffected former-Mormons who remain unable to fully depart. Mormonism exerts a religious gravitational pull almost impossible to fully escape. It remains with all of us, whether you are active in one of the two mother churches or one of their progeny. Mormon denominational splintering continues unabated.

Sunstone attracts believers and disbelievers, the disaffected, the orthodox and the apostate. Why does Mormonism exert that pull?

The religion Joseph Smith ignited echoes with the wonder and appeal of God doing among us what He once did long ago with the people in the Bible. The restoration suggests that the long, awaited moment of Christ's return is at last approaching. Therefore we either hope this to be true or need it to be exposed as a fraud. Either way, our fears or hopes are emphatic.

Accordingly, we all must decide what to make of Joseph Smith. All our fear, wonder and hope rests on resolving what to make of the life of Joseph:

This frames the dichotomy in the legacy of that man:

-With hope in his authenticity, we see him as God's messenger.

-With doubts about him, we see him as a charlatan.

Those polar opposites are inherent in his life, and were foretold at the beginning and reconfirmed toward the end of his life.

The angel who appeared to Joseph in September 1823 said: "He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Nephi, that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people."

My mother taught me to hold Joseph for evil. I've studied his life carefully, read what his critics and admirers have claimed for and about him. I've tried not to be hasty in reaching a conclusion. After four-and-a-half decades I have decided to hold Joseph for good. I'm all in. To me he is the real thing: a messenger sent from God to deliver a message that we reject at our peril and accept for our blessing. He had a great soul that searched, stretched, believed, hoped, fought fiercely, defied pain and persecution, and bore the hallmarks we should expect from a prophet messenger from God. He was a brilliant light: rough cut, homespun, and rustic. But he was also ablaze with insight, keen and penetrating, able to capture with a phrase a glimpse of the infinite.

At the beginning, Joseph Smith's restored religion included noble, thrilling and aspirational words, worthy enough for them to belong to God. If you divorce these words from an opinion of Joseph, and allow them to be independent ideas, they are worthy of meditation. Joseph Smith left religious writings and sermons that are the equal of the New Testament. They are the equivalent to the Vedas. They are as worthy as the Tibetan Book of the Dead.¹⁴ They stand alongside the Tao Te Ching. But they trace their origin to Joseph Smith, and therein lies the rub.

I was raised among those who had Joseph's name for evil. Baptists regard Joseph as a deceiver, liar and imposter. They find the English vocabulary has an insufficient supply of caustic adjectives to heap enough scorn on him. To paraphrase Billy Beane's description of his Oakland A's: There are bad men; and there's devils. Then there's 50 feet of crap. And then there's Joseph Smith.

When Mormon missionaries began pestering me in New Hampshire, I was amused at their sincerity and could not take seriously anything they offered. To me, they defended a false cult founded by a charlatan. I experienced an internal conflict between my mother's credo to be polite to others and her instruction that Joseph Smith was a fraud. Without resolving that conflict, I listened politely while pondering profanity.

Having nothing better to do one weekend, I went with the Mormons to a camp out in Sharon, Vermont, the birthplace of Joseph Smith. There I obtained a copy of the Doctrine & Covenants from the visitor's center. Steve Klapproth, himself a convert, showed me Section 76. Reading it was the first time I took seriously anything that came from Joseph. The words gripped me. They inspired my mind to deep reflection. They had value. It shattered the paradigm and left me unable to trust a dismissive view for Joseph. He required evaluation. Joseph's words inspired my investigation of the restoration.

In Joseph Smith's History there is a passage that still appeals to my heart and mind. He wrote, "During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three, (having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly — and if they supposed me to be deluded, to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me)..." That is still going on. Joseph is still being posthumously persecuted.

Persecution is what happens when an idea cannot be opposed on its merit. Persecution is the product of fear typically experienced by those lacking knowledge. There are two great competing forces in the whole of creation: Love and fear. I think God's love for us is exemplified in Him speaking to Joseph Smith. And I am grateful for how that has enriched my life.

Here are some of the great thoughts God inspired and Joseph Smith conveyed to us:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God. Nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries;

This is one of the great and succinct declarations about coming to know God. Finding Them is deeply personal. We come to God by giving "heed and diligence" to what God asks of us. I cannot do that for you, nor can you do it for me. It is the sojourn of every individual.

The path requires motion. We remain in motion all the time. There is no stasis, no holding a position. We advance (that is, experience restoration) or we recede (that is, experience apostasy). There is no avoiding movement.

The mysteries of God are His hidden but simple truths. They set a man's bones on fire.

To pay heed to God requires that we not harden our hearts. When we have hard hearts we know less. Even what we once knew can be lost. Eventually, we know nothing of God's mysteries and we are left alone, without God in the world.

Another similar inspired thought:

Woe be unto him that crieth, All is well. Yea, woe be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men and denieth the power of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Yea, woe be unto him that saith, We have received and we need no more. And in fine, woe unto all those who tremble and are angry because of the truth of God. For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness, and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth, lest he shall fall. Woe be unto him that shall say, We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God for we have enough. (See NC 2 Ne. 12:5-6)

All truth must come from God. The precepts of men are not only unreliable but they are corrupted by their source. God's truths do not end. This thought, like the one before, reminds us that we must seek the constant nourishment of our minds and souls to be in God's path. When God is silent, then you are cut off from truth. Those God can save are those who listen for His voice. No matter how unlikely the source from which God's voice comes, if it is God's word it is to be prized. Even when it comes from the Joseph Smith your mother warned you about.

The hallmark reaction from those disinterested in what God is saying is their angry rejection and refusal to acknowledge more. When you are content - you perish. When you hunger and thirst - you live. Living organisms require constant additional nourishment. That's how you know they are alive.

Then another profound declaration along the same line:

And because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another, for my work is not yet finished, neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words, neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. (NC 2 Ne. 12:10)

Last year I delivered a talk at the Sunstone Symposium titled *Other Sheep Indeed*. In it I invited others with sacred writings to come and bring them. That invitation was first offered by Joseph Smith in 1840. He anticipated a temple to be built in Nauvoo to which records would be brought from all over the world "bring every thing you can bring and

build the house of God and we will have a tremendous City which shall reverberate afar... then comes all the ancient records dig them up... where the Saints g[ather] is Zion." Not all of God's words are in the Bible. God has spoken to every nation (meaning religious body of people). Truth is everywhere, among all people. If we love God and truth we will want to search for it. We will not be content to leave it unexplored and undiscovered. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after more righteousness. Blessed are those who are followers of righteousness, desiring to possess great knowledge, and to be greater followers of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge. And blessed are those who do not suppose the scriptures contain all God's words and They (the Gods) have not provided more.

One of the world's greatest religious epistles was composed in Liberty Jail. It includes the following passage:

[T]he things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of Eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world[.]

These words enlarge the soul. Only a great religion challenges us to stretch as high as the utmost heavens! Search into and contemplate the darkest abyss! An expansive religion that urges us to become godlike in our interest, in our search for truth! We are clearly directed to turn our attention to the heavens and learn how they function, what they are, and who is to be found there. This is a vast religion. It is not confined to the earthly, and certainly not under the control of any institution's administrative regimentation or stifling controls. It cannot be what institutional Mormonism has become:

"O God, God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of [modern Mormonism]!
Fie on 't, ah fie!
'Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed.
Things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.
That it should come to this."

The restoration is far too great to have been reduced to the vain, trifling, low, mean, vulgar, and condescending versions presented in today's Mormon institutions. If we are going to hold a conference, it should aspire to stretch our minds upward! To make us reach beyond, and never remain content. This Sunstone Symposium deals with diverse, interesting thought, important issues and wonderful contrasts. God is being honored here. Churches should aspire to be as informative and thought-provoking.

This search into the highest heaven is the search to find holiness. Joseph Smith wanted us to ascend, like the ancients, into that realm of light and truth. How can any of us be content to listen to the institutional fare? It is incapable of sustaining spiritual life. Joseph's ideas and teachings are as far above those teachings of today as the heavens are above the earth. The restoration once sought to find what God declared as "His way" to Isaiah: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." How the restoration has fallen! It is little wonder so many now hold Mormonism in contempt. It has become unnecessarily contemptible when it ought to be inspiring.

The restoration's delight has turned to dismay; its ingenuity turned to ineptitude. Silk has become burlap. How have we allowed it to become so?

During confinement in Liberty Jail, Joseph reflected on the tragic and sudden disarray that priesthood leaders inflicted on the restoration. Whereas Joseph first envisioned an authoritative administration for the incipient faith, in Liberty Jail he stripped priesthood of all its right to exercise control and dominion. These inspired words not only undo Joseph's initial investiture of priestly authority, it also rejects the long-established Roman Catholic decision to make priesthood non-forfeitable and independent of individual worthiness:

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven, and that the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood or the authority of that man. Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself to kick against the pricks, to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by

gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul... (T&C 139:5-6)

Consider how these ideas affect religion. A calling to priesthood does not accomplish anything if the individual is not "chosen" by God. We can ordain men but heaven must ratify and elect that man. No one is permitted to function on God's behalf without God's personal imprimatur of approval.

Priesthood is connected to heaven. Without a connection to heaven, there is no priesthood. The "powers of heaven" are, of course, the angels themselves. Priests must have angelic accompaniment to claim priesthood. And angels cannot be manipulated by the ambition, self-will, or worldly ambition of men.

The called, but unchosen, use office and position to cover their sins or to gratify their pride and vain ambition. They are like the Jews who persecuted Christ, while sitting in the chief seats. Likewise, there is no priesthood in the possession of any man who exercises control, dominion, or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men in the current sects of Mormonism. Christ's gentle example of kneeling to serve presents a neon-bright example of how priesthood is to be used. He came to serve, not to be served.

He taught, invited, bid others to repent, and clarified a better understanding of the scriptures for others. He did not demand support. He ministered light and truth for all who would listen. Any other kind of conduct antagonizes the heavens, which then withdraw themselves. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, that's an end to the Priesthood.

Imagine how different things are when you know that there is no power or authority in the priesthood itself. But the power to influence others comes only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, and by kindly presenting pure knowledge. Imagine that a teacher must greatly enlarge your soul to actually claim priesthood. How different would that be for you? You would be drawn to attend a meeting for what great light it could provide to you. You would no longer endure those meetings, conferences and conversations that are low, mean, vulgar and condescending; leave if they do, if you're not edified and your soul is not enlightened. Religious classes and meetings that bore us are an obscenity. Discussions filled with a myriad of unenlightened personal opinion are the real pornography of today's Mormonism.

Joseph Smith revoked the right of priesthood to govern, and replaced it with the priesthood's obligation to teach and inspire. This ideal should still be central. We should all repent and forsake the false models of a controlling hierarchy. All the accretions of power, wealth, compulsion and dominion of the various Mormon sects should end this instant.

Another statement from Joseph makes it clear the restoration was intended to reintroduce the original religion of the Bible, not the diluted "Christianity" of his day. The original faith, in the first dispensations, had more understanding than what we find preserved in the Bible. Joseph was searching back into these beginnings. His heart was "turned to the fathers" of the first generations. He wanted a return of their original as part of the end. It was to be nothing less. Consider this declaration:

[H]as the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he so long as time shall last, or the Earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. For it is by faith that miracles are wrought. And it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, woe be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also, and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made. (NC Moroni 7:7)

If the heavens open to us, we have faith. If the heavens are brass, we are faithless. Without faith, it is as if Christ provided us no redemption. These words are as inspiring as they are sobering.

At the conclusion of the vision of the three-heavens, Joseph wrote the following. It clarifies that we are supposed to access heaven, and see for ourselves the glory to be found there:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his Kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpasses all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him and purify themselves before him, to whom he grants the privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (T&C 69:29)

This privilege of seeing and knowing for ourselves is available to us "while in the flesh." The restoration aimed to reconnect us to heaven in a literal way. This is the same that transpired with Enoch and others in earlier dispensations.

The Book of Mormon is filled with ascension lessons and examples. There is one verse that captures Joseph Smith's ascent theology. That verse compresses it into a single sentence. It explains why the Book of Mormon contains the "fullness of the gospel." And it's perhaps Joseph's most inspired declaration:

Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my Voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I Am, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world[.] (T&C 93:1)

"Every soul" includes you and me. Every one of us has equal access to the Lord. The conditions are the same for all. Forsake sins; come to Christ; call on His name; obey His voice; keep his commandments. This is far more challenging than obedience to a handful of "thou shalt nots" because so much is required to be *done*, so much required to be *known*. A great deal of study and prayer is required to stand in the presence of the Lord. Once done, we shall see His face and know that He is the true light that enlightens every one. He is the God of the whole world.

Immediately after His resurrection, Christ did not minister to gentiles. But after the Book of Mormon came forth, gentiles are also eligible for Christ's ministry in very deed:

And it shall come to pass that if the gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks[.] (NC 1Ne 3:25)

His promise to us is predicated on "hearkening" to the Lamb. Gentiles failed to do so, and upon Joseph's death, a great dearth set upon the restoration. Until there is gentile repenting and returning, it will continue to unwind. Since June 27, 1844 we have a restoration slow moving car wreck. The pace of that decay is accelerating.

We must rage against the fading of that light. "And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience we may possess your souls, and have Eternal life."

Evidence of Christ is everywhere. Joseph used cosmological terms in a passage describing the importance of light coming from Christ and His Father:

[H]e is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. ...[H]e is in the moon and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made, as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made, and the earth also...

If you are alive, you are connected to Christ. If you detect the light of the sun, you detect a testimony of Christ. If you behold the moon moving in her cycles overhead, you behold a testimony of Christ.

False traditions are as destructive for us as outright disobedience. The result is the same. The difference is that when we know we disobey we feel guilt. But false traditions fool us into thinking we're obedient when we are merely misled.

Joseph Smith also provided us with Christ's personal explanation of what He endured in order to atone for our sins. It is a profound statement, more so than anything found in the Four Gospels about the suffering that Christ had:

There are hundreds of potential quotes that could be added to this paper. One final quote will end this part of the paper:

[W]hen ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God. (NC Mosiah 1:8)

This was how Christ lived His life. He showed forth the glory of God by serving and elevating others. We, too, can serve God by giving comfort to our fellow men and women. There is no end to the opportunities to help others. This life is abundant in opportunity to reflect God's grace, kindness and help by service to others. If you act that part, you are in God's service. Think Sub-for-Santa and consider joining Sub-for-God. It will add 364 days of opportunity.

The angel who visited Joseph in 1823 said his name would be had for good and evil among all people. A similar message was repeated 16 years later in March 1839 when the voice of the Lord spoke to Joseph in Liberty Jail. God said to Joseph, "The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and Hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor." Although these two are similar, there is a profound difference between the angel's statement in 1823 and the voice of God in 1839. The angel only said people would speak good and evil of Joseph. But God added a description of those who would speak evil, and those who would speak good of Joseph.

That voice of God said, "fools shall have [Joseph] in derision." Because I accept this statement as God's, I am led to conclude all who have spoken derisively of Joseph have done so foolishly. We ought to stop our foolishness. We need to end the derision of Joseph.

God also condemned the "testimony of traitors" against Joseph. While alive, Joseph identified some of his contemporary traitors and named them: George Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, David Whitmer, W.W. Phelps, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, and Orson Hyde. These had been prominent leaders, trusted friends, and one-time believers in Mormonism. It was false testimony by those from within the flock that led to imprisonment of Joseph and other leaders.

The traitors of 1838 were joined by yet more traitors between 1842-44. In Missouri, Joseph was accused of treason and inciting violence. In 1842-44 Joseph's traitors accused him of adultery, polygamy and lying. John C. Bennett was a sexual predator

who claimed amidst his secret seductions that Joseph Smith authorized him to engage in his promiscuity.

When his misconduct came to light, Bennett admitted Joseph authorized no such wickedness. He swore under oath, "that he never was taught any thing in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel, or of virtue, or of the laws of God, or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith: and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever, either in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illegal illicit intercourse with the females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others."

William Law was also involved in secret adultery, and Joseph Smith refused to seal Law's marriage. A conspiracy of traitors in 1844 included William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster who published the Nauvoo Expositor accusing Joseph Smith of the very evil Joseph had been hunting down and eradicating through high council proceedings since the Bennett affair had become public two years earlier.

Joseph was unequivocal in his opposition to adultery and plural wife taking. About the time Bennett's misconduct was beginning to come to light, Joseph Smith organized the Female Relief Society to encourage moral and chaste conduct in Nauvoo. In addition to the steps he took privately to discipline those involved directly, he made many public declarations against plural wives and in favor of chastity and moral purity. These included, among many others:

"Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused through the fallacy of Dr. Bennett's letters, we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the Church. 'Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.'"

That was published in the *Times and Seasons*.

And then a letter that was also published in the *Times and Seasons*:

"As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan. This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges."

And then in a talk that he [Joseph Smith] gave:

"What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers."

He also encouraged the Relief Society to adopt a declaration titled *A Voice of Innocence*. It was read publicly by W.W. Phelps on March 7, 1844, then edited by Emma Smith, adopted by the Relief Society, and published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on March 20, 1844.

Because of the testimony of traitors, Joseph Smith has been held in derision from 1842 to the present. He is accused of being a sexual predator, liar, and adulterer. Fools have repeated the accusations originally made by the confessed adulterer John C. Bennett, though Bennett testified under oath that Joseph was not responsible and never behaved in any improper way toward women.

In the derision of Joseph today we now have a chorus that includes the LDS Church, which claims him as their founder. It comes from Brian Hales, who claims to be an accurate biographer. It comes from anti-Mormons, and Christian ministers, and fundamentalists who have created a caricature they claim to be Joseph. There is little difference between these people and William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*. There is an immense chorus of fools holding Joseph in derision, even among those who claim to be devout followers of the faith he restored.

I think the voice Joseph heard in Liberty Jail was God's. If I am right, then God's advice to the pure in heart, wise, noble and virtuous is to seek counsel, authority and blessing from Joseph. God's advice leads me to adopt a view of Joseph that is consistent with nobility and virtue. I do not believe you can regard Joseph as a sexual predator, liar and adulterer without holding him in derision. The chief and unavoidable result of thinking of Joseph in those terms has been a legacy of excusing institutional lying, and promoting adulterous thoughts, and inappropriately entertaining the concept of women as mere breeding stock for the use of men.

It is not possible to harbor lustful, deceitful and adulterous thoughts in your heart and claim to be pure in heart. I do not believe you can conspire to commit bigamy and adultery and claim to be virtuous. I do not believe you can decide to trust the words of traitors and villains who contradict Joseph's account of his marital fidelity to Emma and to claim to seek counsel from Joseph. In short, those who claim to accept the restoration, but believe Joseph was a sexual predator, do not qualify as noble, wise, virtuous or pure in thought.

All the restorationist groups that descend from the Brighamites are religious polygamists. Whether they think it right to practice that abomination at present, or only think it a true part of their religion, they are polygamists. Their faith descends from a

great whore, and her daughters are likewise whores. It is time for those involved to awaken to their awful situation and admit their mother is a whore.

Joseph said and wrote a great deal publicly to condemn plural marriage. He said nothing in public to defend or justify it. We have an enormous record of Joseph opposing and condemning. We have no public declaration from Joseph Smith advocating or defending it. Clearly he did not want to be known as its advocate. He wanted to be understood as a staunch opponent of it.

It is important to realize the restoration was hijacked by polygamy and has never regained the momentum Joseph envisioned. That abomination has darkened men's hearts and broken women's hearts. It is used to justify looking upon women with lust in men's hearts, contrary to the Lord's command in the Sermon on the Mount.

I hold Joseph in some considerable esteem. On the lightning-rod issue of plural wives, I've decided the historical record does not convict Joseph of polygamy, lying, deception, sexual improprieties, or exploitation of women. If I thought of Joseph Smith as a man capable of such things I would join his traitors in deriding him. I prefer to think him virtuous and noble. I think it is only possible for any person whose heart is pure, and who prizes virtue, wisdom and nobility to respect Joseph Smith by regarding him as pure, wise, noble and virtuous. To me, adultery, promiscuity and deceit are none of those things.

I reject adultery by any name or description. It is morally wrong if you call it plural wives, polygamy, "celestial marriage" or any other misnomer. Adultery is prohibited in the Ten Commandments, and remains an important prohibition for any moral society.

Mormonism should never have been saddled with Brigham Young's program of making adultery a sacrament. But Mormonism should not have been saddled with many institutional accretions. Between June 27, 1844 and today, there have been too many incorrect subtractions, and far too many uninspired additions. Mormonism today requires both dramatic subtractions and necessary additions. No-one seems willing to do that with the precision required to "Strive to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Brigham Young was not the only one who betrayed Joseph and caused his memory to be held in derision. David Whitmer betrayed Joseph in 1838, testified against him, and helped cause his Missouri imprisonment. Many years later, Whitmer's testimony as a traitor and accuser was published in *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. Though he had been excommunicated in 1838 and never lived in Nauvoo, he accepted and echoed the Nauvoo Expositor's claims about Joseph and polygamy.

Bastille posed the question in a song, *Pompeii*: "Where do we begin? The rubble or our sins?" I think it begins with our sins. They first have to be set aside through Christ. But afterwards we have a Mormon landscape filled with rubble, out of joint, out of level, out of plumb, collapsed or collapsing. Mormonism's founding texts tells us this is as it

should be for the present. We were never supposed to see Zion before the witnessed gentile failure and apostasy.

Christ declared to the Nephites a warning to the gentiles:

"And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel and shall reject the fullness of my gospel and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings and of deceits and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy and murders and priestcrafts and whoredoms and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all those things and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them."

This is not phrased as a possibility but as an inevitability. It was never a question of "if" the gentiles would reject the fullness. It has always been only a matter of "when" it would take place. The various institutions quarrel over whether it has happened. Some of them deny it can or will happen. The soothing mantra "we will never lead you astray" defies the message Christ was commanded by the Father to declare to us.

Joseph Smith has been held in derision for too long. Even those who claim to follow the commandments from God that came through him, deride his memory. This has gone on unchecked for far too long. The saints fell under condemnation in 1831 for taking lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments given through Joseph Smith. Then eight years later were warned it was foolish to hold Joseph in derision. Reclaiming the restoration requires repentance. First, recovering and accepting the text of the Book of Mormon, and restoring the former commandments to what God originally spoke. That has been done by a small group of remnant believers. But second, we need to end the derision of Joseph and acknowledge that he was pure of heart, noble and virtuous, and to act accordingly. It is foolish to magnify his errors to justify our own. It's wicked to attribute uncommitted sins to him to give ourselves a license to sin. Generations have been cursed for this error. We have been led astray. All of us in every branch of Mormonism err.

We stumble, and we have fallen down. We have discarded the expansive theology of Joseph Smith. The earliest dispensations had truth from heaven as their guide. Joseph began re-assembling what was lost, but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of heaven, and are capable of reuniting with heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods.

Now is time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust.

Some will awaken, arise, shake off the dust and push forward to recover the restoration. God will set His hand a second time to accomplish His covenants. We are promised there will be a last-days' Zion established on this, the American continent. We know that when it is here:

"[E]very man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under Heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy."

The restoration has indeed squandered many opportunities by those who went before. Most of those who accept Joseph Smith as a founder of their religion are still squandering the opportunity to see the work continue. But God's purposes do not fail and we have the option to proceed now. Some generation, at some point, still has a glorious, promised completion to anticipate. As long as some, even a very few, are willing to walk in God's path, they will see the completion of this glorious, final work. "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

Why not now? Why not us? All that is required is to repent and return. The promise we have in exchange for our returning to the path is the stuff all the prophets and righteous from the days of Adam have eagerly anticipated.

~The End~

Q&A:

Terry: I can see you are already lining up. When you step up here we have 20 minutes until 6:30 and we're going to end on time, just as we began on time. Go ahead.

Question 1: Hello, Denver. I'm a third generation polygamist. I have three wives. I have daughters and I would say shame on you for calling them whores.

Denver: I didn't call them, I called the churches whores. I would say its adultery. I wouldn't say it's necessarily...

Question 1: ...That's not how I took it. So you are saying that they came from a whoredom act, that's what you're saying.

Denver: I'm saying that all the restoration churches in the present condition are all whores, all the restoration churches.

Question 1: That's a nice spin around that. Here's my question: Joseph Smith himself in 3 Nephi Chapter 2, right? Excuse me, Joseph of Egypt, is saying that he's going to

have a choice seed come from him, who is going to be a revelator, a prophet, a seer, correct?

Denver: Yes.

Question 1: Now, did Joseph, if this is true, if Joseph of Egypt is saying that Joseph Smith Jr. is coming through his seed, is not Joseph Smith Jr. the product of polygamy?

Denver: Joseph Smith Sr. and Jr. and their descendents came as a result of a marriage that Jacob intended to contract for Rachel. It was not Jacob's choice to engage in a scene that reminds us of modern day Las Vegas, and in the morning behold, it was Leah. He had contracted for Rachel. Given the nature of the wedding ceremony, how it's conducted, the veiling of the face, the drinking that goes on, and the wedding night festivities, he woke up in the morning with the woman he did not intend to marry.

Question 1: So you had said that he was cursed rather than blessed.

Denver: He complained, and what he learned was the tradition among those people was it's not meet that the younger sister should be married before the older sister and therefore the older sister had been given to him. It was a breach of the agreement that had been made in order to obtain his wife, Rachel. Upon learning of the breach, and learning of the custom among the people, he agreed to honor their custom and he agreed to work another seven years in order to get the wife that he wanted. But he was already married to Leah, and he had two wives. The woman he wanted, the one he wanted to honor...

Question 1: ...That was Rachel...

Denver: ...The woman that he intended to sire his progeny with, Rachel, proved to be barren.

Question 1: So then, was God himself in sin when he gave Jacob his vision in the valley where he laid his head down on a rock and had the vision of Jacob's Ladder, and actually saw God Himself...

Denver: What you're trying to do is to say that the different circumstances in a different culture, in which Jacob found himself entrapped by the chicanery of his father-in-law equals the voluntary knowing and promiscuous engagement and marriages with reckless abandon.

Question 1: ...No... That's not what I'm saying.

Denver: You tell me. Look, the progeny of the inbreeding that has gone on in the plural marriages...

Question 1: ...All plural marriages?

Denver: ...Has resulted in genetic problems for people living today. There are more genetic issues in the progeny of the polygamists because the genetic code has been replicated too often. There are biological reasons to avoid plural marriages. You're telling me that if God favors this, why would God then curse genetic issues on the progeny?

Question 1: God knows the beginning from the end, correct? Because he told Jacob that he was going to be with him.

Denver: God's foreknowledge is not the same thing as God's will being implemented.

Question 1: I don't want to take up all of the time. This is becoming an argument.

Terry: Let me suggest that we limit it to one question and one follow-up question. Thank you.

Question 2: As someone who's interested...

Denver: ...And you're a descendent of polygamists and you're engaged in....?

Question 2: No, actually we come late in the game. As someone who's interested in repenting as you suggest, what then do you envision to be the next step in the process of the restoration?

Denver: There was a step that was able to be taken as a consequence of work to recover the scriptures, that occurred in a conference up in Boise where the scriptures got approved. As part of that, a covenant allowing gentiles to accept the status of covenanting, to accept the Book of Mormon, which had never been done from the time of Joseph Smith until the Boise conference – as a covenant between the believers and God – the terms of the covenant are contained in the new set, the new volume of scriptures. It's the third volume. Repent, be baptized, enter into the covenant that accepts the Book of Mormon as the word of God and the direction given to us. The covenant requires some work to be done among the remnant of the Jews and some work to be done among the Native Americans. That is something that is being attended to but not everything that is going on is necessarily something that ought to be broadcast publicly for everyone and everywhere. We all have our obligations and we all have our responsibilities. Some people have very specific responsibilities that they've accepted and that they're discharging to take care of things involved in the covenant.

There's always an obligation, when God has a people, to build a temple. When God first established the original religion at the time that He created Adam and Eve, He put them in what is a temple setting. It was a garden in which God, angels, and man mingled together. They were cast out of the garden but when He's had people on the earth He has commanded that they construct sacred space. The purpose of the sacred space has always been to reunite heaven and earth. It's not to endlessly repeat a ceremony

that you can memorize if you go often enough. Its purpose is to reunite heaven and earth and to accomplish what was originally the status of mankind in the Garden of Eden, being reunified with heaven itself. We don't have a commandment to do that but we have been told we are going to be commanded to do that. And so an effort has been made to begin to gather funds necessary. There's a statement that nothing is to be done in haste. Haste brings pestilence. Pestilence is not just bugs and vermin, pestilence is also confusion and disorder and chaos. That process is underway and at some point will culminate in an identified place and a command to build a specific, conforming structure.

Question 3:

Denver: And how many wives do you have?

Question 3: I am actually the son of a convert.

Denver: Oh, good.

Question 3: ...I [had a] convert father, whom I don't even speak to any more. But I'm very much a believer in Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. I resonate with a lot with what you said, and I have for years, about the deficiency of the Church, about the leadership of the Church, about the deficiencies of the religion that we hold to. We pretend to teach, and I can say pretend. As a Latter-day Saint I grew up in Rhode Island, a very miniscule portion, and will remain indefinitely miniscule because of what we teach. My big question to you, my brother, is how can you believe that there were no faithful disciples of Joseph Smith? I can't go there, I really can't. Why were there no faithful disciples of Joseph Smith? How can you take that position?

Denver: He's asking, how can I believe that there were no faithful disciples of Joseph. One of the problems that was had in that day is limited means of communication. Joseph would talk. There was an effort made to gather some of that material in order to disseminate it in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* but access was limited and the Church historian that had control of the material boxed everything up in Nauvoo, moved it out to Utah. There was a member of the Church historian's staff in Nauvoo who also worked in the historian staff in Salt Lake City, Charles Wandell. Charles Wandell reported in his journal that the papers that involved Joseph Smith, the diaries, the journals, were actively being changed in order to reflect the new order of things in Salt Lake City. So when the announcement was made publicly in 1852 by Orson Pratt and then advocated by Brigham Young, the average person on the street did not have access to information to be able to challenge anything related to that. The people that had possession of it were saying, this is the way it was, and they altered the documents.

This is too big a topic. I believe that many of the pioneers that sacrificed did so in truth, in valor, in honesty, so far as they knew. The problem was not whether they were good people. There were enormous numbers of devout, good, sacrificing people that laid

everything on the altar and gave us a legacy that we ought to be grateful for. But the leadership had another agenda. I don't know how you can look at Brigham Young, the first multi-millionaire west of the Mississippi, and conclude that this guy was in it solely for devout religious reasons and he was a pious, holy man. When I mentioned Brigham Young's vulgarities, I kid you not, I think his favorite word for emphasis was "shit". Brigham Young was not the guy you think he is. And if you have access to his complete set of journals you ought to read 'em, and then you ought to ask yourself, can I sustain that man as prophet, seer, and revelator? Can I sustain him as God's presiding High Priest? Because if so, you probably like Trump, too.

Question 4: I was wondering when you came to the conclusion that Joseph was not a polygamist, and if that's always been your position?

Denver: No, it's not always been my position. It probably took more than 40 years of study. For the longest time I did not reach a conclusion. I simply didn't think there was enough information there. And even today, there's not enough information available to unequivocally resolve that question, even today. If someone says they know the story of Joseph Smith well enough to be able to affirm that he was indeed a polygamist in the fashion of Brigham Young they don't have the proof. They're leaping to that conclusion. Once property became an issue in the 1860s and litigation was underway there were a lot of people who they knew the practice was of god because it has been advocated from the pulpit from 1852 on, and they were perfectly willing to stand up and to testify to support the position of the Church. But there's nothing in 1842, '43, '44, up until June 27 of 1844, out of Joseph Smith's mouth, out of his pen, out of his teachings, that say it's where his mind is. There is a great deal that says that's not where his mind is and he's unequivocally opposed to it and condemns it.

Question 5: I'm taking from this a clarion call for all of the institutional forms of Mormonism to repent and stop holding Joseph in derision. I suspect institutional repentance is highly unlikely and that leaves personal repentance personally to stop holding Joseph in derision and to seek a blessing under his hand. Whether one happens to be a polygamist or not, evidently all of us in one way or another are in need of repentance and prizing what came from God through Joseph more fully. The question then: What advice would you give those who want to personally repent and no longer hold Joseph in derision?

Denver: There's a lovely book written by Carol Lynn Pearson, *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy*. I think that's the name of it. Hand out copies of that book to Relief Society sisters. Speak up. Look, the reason why it is conventional wisdom that the argument's over, the issue is settled; everyone knows Joseph was a polygamist after the fashion of Brigham Young's version of polygamy, the reason that's over is because no one is saying, wait a minute! Brian Hales did three volumes titled, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*. In the entirety of the three volumes he admits there is only one document that exists that ties Joseph Smith to plural marriage. It is a copy in the handwriting of Joseph Kingbury. You will see it on the wall of the Church History Museum. Kingsbury says that he copied from what the actual secretary, William Clayton, [who] purportedly wrote it down. Then

Kingsbury – not a clerk to Joseph Smith, Kingsbury worked in the store – Kingsbury says he copied it and he did so quite contemporaneously. The best version is that Joseph Smith gave Emma the right to burn the original of that document. But the original of that document was read by Hyrum Smith to the Nauvoo High Council. Many of the Nauvoo High Council to whom that was read did not go west. Some of them remained in the east. Those who had a record, those who had a memory, and those who commented on it, who heard what Hyrum Smith read to the High Council, said it had nothing to do with practicing plural wifery today. It was an answer that was given about antiquity and what happened in antiquity. It had nothing to do with authorizing the practice now. But when they break out in 1852 and they publish it, they publish what's in the handwriting of Kingsbury, not a scribe of Joseph Smith. And Brian Hales says that is the single document, that's it. That's the whole body of evidence that we have that existed to tie Joseph Smith to the practice Brigham Young would institute.

Question 6: One question is fine. You quoted before, talking about how the truth scratches your eyes out and how difficult a process it is. Can you comment personally, in your own journey, how both the Church, polygamy, and these other issues as you have come to understand them, the personal effect they've had?

Denver: I'm going to answer that question in a really narrow personal example. One of my Mormon heroes, I loved the man, was Parley Pratt. The entirety of the American sense of humor recons from Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain. That's where Americans get our sense of humor from, Ben Franklin and Mark Twain. Parley Pratt learned the art of spinning a yarn, telling a history but spinning it in a yarn that just made you belly laugh, in his autobiography. I loved that book and I loved that man. One of the problems that I've run into as I've searched and searched; you sometimes learn a lot of things you don't want to learn. The varnish has been stripped off Parley. He stole the man's wife. He took the man's kids. He got murdered by a jealous husband, and there wasn't a jury in Arkansas at that time that would have convicted him if he sat on the witness stand and gave you in graphic detail what he did to murder Parley. After his death Brigham Young said that Parley deserved what he got and that Parley died an adulterer. Because in Brigham Young's view, the only one that could authorize the taking of a woman was Brigham Young himself, and Parley took Eleanor without Brigham's blessing. Therefore, that was adultery. You see how fine a line it is between you're home safe and you're out. It's just that fine a line. When you read about the sad events that lead up to the death of Parley Pratt and the practices that were going on, and the internal conflicts, and the disputes over who had authority to do what, and Brigham Young himself a practicing polygamist, regarding Parley Pratt's murder as God's vengeance and just outcome because he was an adulterer, it begins not only to take the varnish off of Parley, one of my former heroes, but it also begins to take the varnish off the rest of what was going on.

History is filled with all of the foibles of mankind's weakness. The amazing thing to me is that the closer I've looked at Joseph Smith the more he stands up to scrutiny. He had one enormous flaw. He tended to think, sort of like my wife – I don't do this, she does – he tended to think that everyone has the same heart he has. Everyone was just as good

and decent and penitent as he was. Joseph had liars lying to him and he accepted as though they were telling him the truth and he honored them as though they were telling the truth but they weren't, time and time again. There still isn't a good history. But my notes in the Joseph Smith Papers make really good reading if you ever sit down and read the margin notes.

Thank you all for being here and thank you, Terry.

2018.08.04 Remembering the Covenants Conference

Regional Conference Address

August 4, 2018

Centerville, Utah

I actually prepared a talk and a powerpoint and I brought my computer. I'll put it up on my website and you can read it there. I'm just going to talk for a few moments.

I've been struck by the content of what's been talked about today. I don't know how many here are descendants of Joseph Smith, Sr. or any of the children in that family, sons and daughters, but I appreciate very much the opportunity to address any who belong to that family. There was another great-great (I don't know how many generations and how many greats ought to go to it) grandson of Hyrum born today. I got a couple of pictures of him sent to me. He apparently doesn't like his picture being taken and he was making quite a face. The family expands. But as one of the Jewish leaders confronting Christ complained about and Christ responded, God is able to raise up seed anywhere, to Abraham and to the restoration. The work of God cannot be frustrated by anything that has, is, or will take place.

When Joseph Smith organized an institutional form for the restoration, that institutional form gives the opportunity for utterly compromising the restoration itself merely by corrupting the head. If you have all of the authority within the institution concentrated into the hands of a single individual then all that is required is that that single individual become evil, become corrupt, become self-serving, become ambitious, become someone **who fails** to retain the connection to heaven necessary in order to move things forward – hence the limitation that was put by Joseph in the letter from Liberty Jail on priesthood authority. When people desire to exercise control or compulsion, or exercise and obtain their **ambitions**, then they are odds with what heaven is trying to do.

The trick of the magician – if you've ever watched Penn and Teller, they try to figure out the magician's trick – is to have something going on that distracts you while something else is taking place so that the focus is always upon what the magician is trying to get you to notice rather than what is happening under the control of the magician. The way in which the restoration has unfolded since the death of Joseph and Hyrum, or more correctly the death of Hyrum and Joseph, has been rather like the magician's trick. Much of what those people who claim they understand and they can espouse to you their exegesis of scripture, their analysis of what the scriptures really mean, and their more obscure passages mean, are really like the magician's trick in getting you to focus on one thing while something else is really taking place.

God can fulfil the way in which he prophesied that the restoration will unfold in any manner but as soon as you think you've got some place to go that can be corrupted, the ambitions in this world are such that corruption most surely follows.

I don't lead anyone, and in my core I don't want to lead anyone. In my core. It is abhorrent to me to think that I have the right to preside over another soul. I want souls free. I want them to stand on their own. I want to encourage others. I want to raise them up, if possible to raise them up above myself but I want control over no man.

When you find those with ambition, even if they start out on a good path, the thing that the powers of this world desire above all else is to get a good person for a good reason trying to achieve a good result to resort to compulsion in order to achieve it. In that very same breath in which Joseph Smith said, "You don't know me, you never knew my heart, no man knows my history," (King Follett discourse 1844) in that same breath he says his voice has always been for good to every man.

He raised an army and he marched to Missouri to liberate the saints that had been expelled and when they got there they were disbanded, they were disbanded without any violence. He had the city of Far West ready when it was under siege and he had them surrender their arms. He raised the Nauvoo Legion. At the moment that he went back to have them surrender their arms the Nauvoo Legion was a more powerful military force than the United States Army, and Joseph Smith disarmed them. He's been accused of wanting ambitious control, of being another Mohammed, of being a variety of things but Joseph Smith's heart would lay down a life, his own life, in order to protect his friends. He's been falsely accused of many things. He's been given attributes that he didn't have.

In the description that was given here today it was mentioned that Joseph turned everything over to Hyrum. Does a megalomaniac who wants to have control over others, does a megalomaniac turn the control of the church over to someone else, his brother? Joseph Smith's heart is not what people say it was or is. He was a kindly man and he sought to do good but he didn't finish the work of the restoration.

In July of 1840 Joseph Smith gave a talk in which he was encouraging the people that believed in the revelations that had come through him to build a temple. A temple needed to be built and he made a comment that if the temple could get built and he could see it finished from its top to its completion, if he could see that work completed, then he would gladly go in peace and let his life end, if he could just accomplish that work. This was in July 1840, In January of 1841 came the revelation commanding that the temple be built. Together with a statement at the beginning of the January 1841 revelation saying, Joseph, your petition and your offering is acceptable to me and I will allow them to build a temple, and it can be built on that spot, and you'll have sufficient time to do that. But at the end of the sufficient time, then instead of blessings there will be an outpouring of cursings upon the people. And in three-and-a-half years the temple had not been completed to the second floor, and the time went out, sufficient time expired, the lives of Joseph and Hyrum were forfeit, and instead of blessings there were cursings. Well, why did Joseph, in July 1840, without a commandment from God that he knew was going to come, why did Joseph encourage the saints at that point to begin building a temple to God? Why did the commandment have to be given in January of

1841 for the temple to be built? And why were the lives of Joseph and Hyrum forfeited three-and-a-half years later when the work was still incomplete?

There were accusations about the temple committee stealing money from the temple fund. There were complaints from the mission up in Wisconsin, floating wood down the Mississippi to Nauvoo for construction of the temple, that the wood was being diverted to construct houses for the leading members in Nauvoo, and houses did get built. In fact, the Nauvoo restoration has been a testament, a testimony, to how the community diverted the effort that God commanded be spent on constructing the temple into constructing the community, and so their lives were taken.

Joseph did have a covenant and Hyrum did have a covenant, but the manner in which that covenant was to be disseminated Joseph understood required that the House of God be built, because some things do not get put outside of God's house.

We were told in a get-together in Boise, Idaho that God's people are always required to build a temple. It will serve exactly the same purpose that was intended, at the beginning of the restoration, to have been accomplished while Joseph and Hyrum were alive. To this point we do not yet have a commandment to do so but we know it is coming and we know its purpose is exactly the same. Joseph could have accomplished a great deal more. Hyrum and Joseph together could have completed the process of the restoration. It is still a great undone work.

At about the same time that Joseph gave that talk there were two letters, one written on July 25, the second one written on July 27, both of them from John C. Bennett who was the quartermaster of the militia in the state of Illinois. The first one saying he was coming to Nauvoo and that he wanted to be there with Joseph's people. The second one said he not only wanted to come but he wanted to join, to become part of Joseph's people. And both letters end with John C. Bennett, who had become the mayor of Nauvoo, saying, "Reply to this letter immediately!" Reply to this letter immediately, because John Bennett was a hasty man and an ambitious man and a corrupt man.

And when it comes to the construction of Zion God has said in revelation it cannot be done in haste because haste brings pestilence. And what is pestilential is not just bugs and rodents, it is confusion. We have a season of peace and we have a season of prosperity, and we have an opportunity in which we might be able to accomplish something with nothing more than the same thing that Joseph Smith was talking about in July of 1840. But when a command is given and sufficient time is accorded and the clock begins to run, then the tendency is to move quickly, like John Bennett. Everything is in a hurry. When you have a season of peace upon you and an opportunity to reflect upon what went wrong with the restoration at the beginning, and we have again the opportunity established by the word of the Lord that was read to and accepted by, for the first time in the restoration, a Covenant to accept the obligations that were devolving upon us in the restoration, and we have an opportunity to prepare and to do something. We delay, we hesitate, and we squander the opportunity, ultimately at our peril.

I don't care how much you think you know about what God is up to, I guarantee you that unless God has shown it to you plainly as He has done to Joseph at the beginning, you're not going to figure out what God is up to. There's a reason for that. If you could figure out what God is going to do and where and when and how, then the adversary could prevent that work from being accomplished. It is precisely because God keeps his secrets and entrusts them carefully and guardedly that the work of God cannot be frustrated and the covenants will be fulfilled, and the prophecies will be vindicated, and what was offered through Joseph will, in fact, be accomplished.

We have an opportunity, if we will avail ourselves of it, at a time of peace and prosperity, to do something to prepare in order to have that day come upon us with adequate preparation having been made in advance.

Because the institution could be corrupted and because the institution began to inflate its role. You see, at the beginning the institution was the creature of the authority of the prophet. It did not own and control the prophet but it was subordinate **to that man who could declare what the mind of God was to them**. Over time the institution arrogated, that is, in its arrogance assumed that it could control even the right to declare the mind of God. And so the institution puts people in a role to sit in the temple of God as if they were God, to declare to the people what things ought or needed to be done, and has amassed at this point billions of dollars in wealth with no Zion, hundreds of billions of dollars in property, with no ability to reconnect anyone through Covenants to the Fathers **to anyone other than the dead who reside in hell looking for redemption from the grave**. That was not the plan at the beginning. That was not the objective of the restoration. Billions of dollars have been accumulated in the pursuit of the damnation of the souls of men, damnation meaning hedging up the way so that they cannot progress. Billions of dollars!

And where is the restoration precisely? How much closer are we now to having the covenants fulfilled, the rights vindicated, the opportunity to enter into sacred space where heaven and earth and the afterlife commune together in the process of redeeming the earth itself? There will be two of these locations on the earth before the Lord returns. One will be called Zion and one will be at Jerusalem. And in the Covenant things were set in motion that will vindicate those promises. Not all of what is happening to do that can be known publicly. It's not necessary that it be known but there are things taking place, no matter how diminutive it may seem. God will vindicate His words.

When Joseph Smith said, "You don't know me, you never knew me, you never knew my heart," he was lamenting the fact that it's impossible, it's impossible to know what it was that Joseph was tasked to accomplish unless you know what it was that God showed him and tasked him to accomplish. All of the biographers, all of the people that write their commentaries, all of the friends, all of the foes, everyone that has written, from Jan Shippo to Philastus Hurlbut to D. Michael Quinn, all of them fail to occupy the space that uniquely identified who and what Joseph Smith was. Joseph Smith stood in a position in which heaven was open and the future of the world was unfolded. And a task had to be

done and a job was given to him. And at times Joseph was so overwhelmed by the enormity of the task to be performed that he couldn't find words to describe it.

Harold Bloom, the Humanities professor at Yale University, gives a great deal of credit to Joseph Smith, calling him a hermeticist and a modern cabalist. He's grasping a little something of what was going on. The hermetic tradition, the cabalist tradition, that's trying to search into the hidden mysteries that the world is unworthy to receive. Joseph Smith was tasked with the responsibility to take all of that, to embody it into something that would reconnect heaven and earth, and it required a temple in order for him to accomplish that work. He gave his life and his brother forfeited his life in an effort to support that very end. He died for the benefit of the restoration. He died for the benefit of the heirs of the restoration. He died for our benefit. It's of some terrible significance that the last in the line who held the office of Patriarch in the LDS Church was made emeritus and allowed to die and the office die with it, because it stands as a hallmark in the rejection of the restoration itself by the institution.

Don't be reading into it what I'm saying that I dislike or condemn the LDS Church. The LDS Church just *is*. It's like the Community of Christ; it's like the Remnant Church. There are a lot of good people that belong to these various institutions who are very trusting of what the institutions are doing. The leaders of these institutions I'm fairly certain don't intend to do evil but the result is evil, and all of the good intentions not withstanding. Where, where is the fulfilment of the promise? Amassing wealth and waiting is not going to achieve any good end. Repentance, baptism, and finding yourself accountable directly to God, that's where the work of the restoration is going to continue. As far as the scriptures inform us, the only thing that Enoch claimed for himself was the role of being a teacher. Melchizedek was given the praise of being called a King and a Priest, new name given to him, but his role was that of a preacher of righteousness.

There's this episode of *The Simpsons* where Bart has made a long-distance collect phone call to Australia and inflicted some family in Australia with a huge long-distance phone bill. The guy in Australia calls Homer to complain about his phone bill and Bart was laughing at him. The Aussie says, "Oh yeah? I'm going to complain to the prime minister!" and he hangs the phone up, opens up the window and yells out to this pond where there's a guy on an inner tube. He yells, "Prime minister!" And the prime minister responds because that's the way *The Simpsons* mock the government of Australia.

The fact of the matter is that King Benjamin, in his description of how he'd served his people, described his service exactly like *The Simpsons* portray the prime minister of Australia. King Benjamin, who took no money for his support. King Benjamin, who labored by his own hand for his own support so he wouldn't be a burden on his people. King Benjamin, who took up the sword in defence of his people and put his life in jeopardy for the protection of his people. **King Benjamin, the commoner. King Benjamin, the servant. King Benjamin, who mirrored our Lord.** Some claim to have great priestly authority, and it all derives from the carpenter, laborer, foot washer who said,

My kingdom is not of this world. (John 18:36)

We're not going to arrive where we need to arrive if we perceive ourselves as unequal, if we think of ourselves as greater and lesser, if we don't think of ourselves as simply common servants, inadequate as we may be, to a Lord who loved and sacrificed Himself for our redemption. **He** is worthy. We can do our best and we can make a lot of mistakes along the way. Joseph did his best and it just didn't work out. But what would have happened if the people, in July of 1840 when no commandment had yet been given, rose up and with alacrity decided that they were going to labor for the accomplishment of the task that Joseph was telling them was coming? What would have happened had the money raised and donated for the temple not been diverted by the temple committee to their own purposes? What would have happened if the lumber sent down from the Wisconsin mission been used for the construction of the temple rather than being diverted for the homes of the leading citizens? What would have happened if instead of God requiring yanking on the reins to pull the bit in the mouth of the horse of the restoration, what would have happened if all that was needed was for the reins to be lightly put on the neck of the horse of the restoration, to guide it where it needed to go? Horses are so sensitive that when a fly lands on their skin they can twitch to remove it. The people of the restoration are nowhere near as sensitive to what God would have them do, then or now, as is a horse.

Well, I want to end on time. I'll publish the talk that I prepared. It will be on my website.

It was a pretty good talk, but you can read it for yourself.

I thought if I was going to add anything to what was said previously today that I really needed to say this: Joseph was not understood, and Joseph probably can't be understood unless you have that same space to occupy with the same challenge. Given the opportunity to accomplish what the work of the Restoration is intended to result in, I would hope that we would cease from our jealousies and our ambition, our contention, our desire for one-upsmanship, our desire to prove our individual greatness - and realize that none of us are ever going to be very good servants. But we're supposed to be serving the perfect Master, and if we'll serve him faithfully instead of our own agenda he can lead us home.

He will lead some few home. But I hope it's not with the same sort of miserable, inadequate, self-serving distractions that had to be overcome at the beginning. I hope we can take it a bit more seriously and be a bit more sensitive when the Lord is encouraging us in a way, rather than requiring that He command and demand us to go in a way. Commandments are often the things that produce condemnation. Encouragement and invitation is almost always the thing that produces blessing. I hope there will one day be a blessed people.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2018.09.07 4th Address to Christians

September 7, 2018

Sandy, Utah

I think for an understanding of Christianity you really have to go back to the condition of Israel at the time of the birth of the Savior because Christ was introduced into an environment in which the whole of Judaism had been transformed by events that took place between about 600 BC and the time that the Lord was born. Judaism divided at the time of Solomon's death into a Northern and a Southern Kingdom. And the Northern Kingdom was taken away captive into Assyria and they ultimately never returned. They're the lost ten tribes of Israel. And while there is some reference of them departing out of Assyria as an organized group being led by prophets, they did not return to the area of Palestine. They turned instead and went North, into the North countries and we lost record of them. There are prophecies about their return, but history and their accounting for themselves is absent from the record.

It was some time after that, that the Southern Kingdom, which identified itself as either the Southern Kingdom or the Kingdom of Judah, or still later they identified themselves as the Jews, but some of the anachronistic statements in the Bible identify them earlier as Jews than when they were self-identifying as that. That group got also taken captive, dispossessed, and moved into the foreign power of Babylon. It was while they were in Babylon that Judaism underwent a fairly significant revisioning. When you think about it, up until the time of the Babylonian captivity, they either had from the time of Moses until that moment a tabernacle in which they could practice their formalized religion, or they had the temple that had been built by Solomon. In Babylon, they were dispossessed of their homeland, their sacred sites, their temple, their functioning religion. And so the first dispossession from their land, or their first diaspora, their first separation from their holy land in Babylon was a prelude and a practice to try and figure out how to make Judaism portable. And so in the Babylonian experience you have a kind of portability to their faith that allowed it to survive dispossession of land, dispossession of sacred sites, dispossession of temple, and a non-functioning Aaronic and Levitical priesthood. Literally, it was non-functioning. When they return again, they had to resort to genealogical study and Urim and Thummim in order to declare who could be a priest, because the priestly functions had lapsed into decay, disuse, and forgetfulness.

And during that time, because of the Babylonian society, the religion took on a kind of Babylonian intellectualism that led in turn to rabbinical Judaism in a way that Judaism had not existed before that moment. When they return, you get into the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and the reconstruction of the temple. There is reason to believe, and I won't go into it at this moment, but there is reason to believe when they reconstructed the temple upon the return from Babylon that what they built was not a reflection of what had been there previously. That 70 years of captivity in Babylon was long enough so that people with the kind of continuity of knowledge, familiarity, understanding were gone, and so you get a reconstruction.

At the time that they were taken captive into Babylon there was a lot of tension inside

Judaism as reformers were trying to make the faith fit a model that was becoming popular among other competing religions and peoples. And those people have been given the nickname by scholars of the Deuteronomists. But the tension between the competing viewpoints had not been resolved at the time of the Babylonian captivity. So they leave with a fight going on, then they have to reconstruct the religion in order to make it portable and fit into a new culture. Then they return and it appears that the people who reconstruct the temple and who re-established Judaism included people who had been persuaded by the Deuteronomists in the pre-exile. And so the reconstruction of the religion that takes place, including the books that were purportedly discovered when the ruins of the temple were being rummaged through in order to reconstruct the temple site by Ezra, that were used to rebuild the Old Testament that had been lost, were rather more influenced by the Deuteronomists as the prevailing party in the argument than Judaism had been at the time of the Babylonian captivity. So it's a whole bunch of historical events that together create a different look, feel, and flavor to Judaism even after its return.

So in the prophecy that you have of Daniel interpreting the dream and explaining the interpretation, you have the head of gold, you have the shoulders of silver, you have the arms and so on, through the body, down to the feet of miry clay and iron, our day. Daniel declares that that head of gold is Babylon. It's the kingdom in which the Jews were at the moment of that prophecy being held captive. So why the head of gold will persist all the way down to the time when there's clay and iron in the feet, and will need also to be ground into dust by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, should perplex people. Because Babylon fell and Babylon's been gone and off the pages of history beginning sometime shortly after the Jews return and rebuild their temple in their holy land. So when the Jews return, they return knowing that there is this head of gold that not only followed them, but will follow all religion, it will follow all society, it will follow all culture on into the last days. Well there's a series of kingdoms that come through between the time of the return to the holy land and the time in which Christ is born because the Medes, and Persians, and the Greeks, and then the Romans are all part of that vision of Daniel and all of them come through and sway Israel, hold influence, bring culture, bring attitudes, viewpoints, understanding. They bring government. They bring a variety of invasive thinking that cumulatively have an effect on the landscape at the time of the birth of the Lord. We have, what is it in Luke, when it's dating the birth of the Savior. We have a statement so we know when Christ was born: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Cyrenius being a Roman puppet appointed by Rome, Caesar Augustus being Octavius, who retook the name, or took the name of Caesar after he was the unquestioned head of the Roman empire, having defeated Mark Antony. So you've got the dating in the record of the Savior and the birth of the Savior based upon what's going on in Rome. This is the legs of iron.

So there is a stone to be cut out of the mountains that is going to grind to dust all of the components of the cultural, governmental, economic influences that were foreseen by the king and interpreted by Daniel going all the way back to Babylon. And Christ arrives

in the middle of those pernicious, corrupting, social influences in the remnant of Israel, in Palestine, with a reconstructed temple. This one built using the family of Herod's money and influence, under the Roman Empire's economic, social, governmental, and cultural influence in order to come into the world and to discharge His mission and ministry.

So when you put the entry of Christ into the full sweep of both history and prophecy you should not expect the Savior to establish the Kingdom of God on earth that is intended at some future point to destroy all of those influences. He's going to leave all of those things intact. The Savior is going to come. He's going to minister. He's going to accomplish His mission. He's going to die. He's going to be resurrected. And the great image is going to continue happily on its way developing down through the channels of history with all of those influences unimpeded, unimpaired, uninterrupted by the coming and going of the Savior.

Now, arguably, it was because of the presence of the Savior that some of those later anatomical developments occur with the legs, the feet, the clay, the iron as the influence of Christ's ministry took over and ultimately the desire to separate church and state came about, the desire to have religious freedom came about, the desire to create a benign environment in which it's possible for people to worship according to the dictates of their own heart came about because Christianity itself became rather a malignant force in the wake of the Savior coming and going. But that gets ahead of where we are in the story. We're going to look at the time of the coming of Christ, because Christians tend to read Christianity as if it sprung into existence with Christ's birth and it came fully formed, fully functioning, and fully capable of accomplishing the very thing that the culmination of the ages was intended to achieve. Christ didn't do that. It wasn't time yet for that to happen. In the Lord's Prayer He prays about a future kingdom: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is a petition prayer begging the Father that the time will eventually come when that event will take place. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands; it did not happen in Christ's time, and he knew it didn't happen. It didn't happen and He prayed for that eventuality. And He said, 'this is one of the things when you pray, if I'm going to teach you how to pray, this is one of the things you ought to be praying for, you ought to be asking that at some point this future kingdom will come about, so that God's will can be done on earth like it is being done in Heaven'. Because on earth we're down here in this cultural, social, legal, religious environment that is heavily influenced beginning with the head of gold and going through all of the cultures that had succeeded one another in dominating the world.

So Christ enters onto the scene inside a milieu that is corrupt. It is disconnected significantly from pre-Babylonian religion of Israel. It holds very little content that reckons pre-Moses. It has hardly any connection to Abraham, and the beliefs of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and it includes only two of the twelve tribes as the nation. And for that it includes only that remnant that returned from the Babylonian exile back to Palestine to reoccupy the land after they had been dispossessed. So He's talking to a tiny remnant of what was once a great people that consists of primarily the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the Southern Kingdom who were willing to come back from

Babylon. The ten tribes were scattered; much of those tribes were left behind. And in this Southern Kingdom you probably have onesies and twosies of the other tribes represented through marriage that had stayed within the Southern Kingdom, but primarily the blood of Israel is gone, and the religion that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and that family had, has been radically altered, revised, poorly preserved. Abraham himself was trying to restore an even earlier version of the religion that goes back to the first fathers.

So when Christ comes to minister and to serve and to sacrifice in Israel, He's dealing inside a very corrupt environment. He sets up Peter, James, and John as three who were significantly isolated and elevated from the other members of the twelve for such things as the Mount of Transfiguration when they were taken up on the mount and they saw Moses, they heard the Father, they experienced the events on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. And then there were the twelve that were called to be a group that were ordained and sent out as messengers. And then there were seventy who were called as missionaries also to go out. If you go back historically and you say, 'what is the type that Christ is organizing as the way in which he's going to plant a seed for the religion that He's trying to get people to recognize? What is the model that Christ employed?' You would say, 'Peter, James and John are an echo, an homage, a remembrance of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and the quorum of the twelve that he organized and He sent out as messengers are a remembrance, an honor to the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel. And the seventy, when you go to Exodus chapter 1 verse 5, you find that there were seventy souls who went into Egypt at the time that the rest of the family joined Joseph and the brothers and their descendants came to live in Israel.'

So what Christ is doing is He's reestablishing a kind of restoration of the family of Israel in a model that is pointing back to an earlier time, before Babylon, an earlier time when there was a different religion on the earth. An earlier time, at the time between Abraham and the twelve sons of Jacob or Israel, when Judaism had not been influenced by Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans. And I say the Greeks, much of the New Testament was actually written in Greek. If you don't think that the influence of Alexander the Great in going through and conquering first in Persia, and then second he came through Syria, and then next he went down to Egypt. And they made Alexander a Pharaoh in Egypt. If you don't think that the influence of these predecessor cultures wasn't persistent in the land at the time of Christ, then you're oblivious to the fact that the New Testament was written in Greek because Greek was a predominant language.

So when Christ begins his planting He's actually a restorer of an earlier religion. Instead of this being something altogether revolutionary and new, Christ was a restorer. He was an antiquarian. He was bringing back something which once had been. He was trying to get people to understand. See, the religion that Moses was trying to restore was originally significantly greater than the one that he wound up restoring because the people were unwilling to accept the earlier version so those things were broken, destroyed, discarded, and a new innovation was established through Moses the great

law giver, who gave a law of lesser performances, observances, rites in order to point forward to something else that would be coming so that maybe when that something else, when it came, could explain to them what the law was intended to have them observe. The paschal lamb that occurs where the blood on the lentil on the door post saves you from the destroying angel is a type of Christ because Christ's blood will save you from destruction. The rites involving the shedding of blood in the courtyard of either the tabernacle or later the temple was designed to be a propitiation, a form of paying the debt for sin. The wages of sin are death. Therefore, it's necessary that death be demonstrated through the sacrifice of animals in order to have your mind pointed forward to some great sacrifice whose effect will be saving you from sin. In the courtyard of either the tabernacle or in the temple, when you sacrifice animals and you spill their blood by cutting the neck and letting the blood flow out, blood gets all over the ground; it gets tracked, it gets splashed, it gets upon you. And prophets use this analogy of blood and sins, and blood on your garments and shaking the blood off of your garments as an analogy that's based upon the effect of performing the law of Moses, which itself is intended to point you to Christ. And Christ demonstrated, by His teachings and actions, that He fully understood that was what was happening, and that was who He was and what His role was. When Christ knelt to wash the feet of the disciples, one of the things that washing feet in that culture accomplished was cleansing the blood off the feet, that was tracked everywhere when you got near the courtyards of the temple, in order to show that they were unaccountable for sin. He was removing from them the guilt that the blood was intended to exhibit.

All of the sacrifices were intended to show that there was some great and final and last sacrifice that was intended to be offered. And Christ was that. The law of Moses pointed to a fellow. Jesus was that fellow. He came along to fulfill that. Now the people at the time predominantly rejected the idea that He was that great sacrifice. In fact, at the moment that the Savior was being tortured on the cross and in His last moments, He was being mocked, ridiculed, and invited to come down off the cross and save Himself so that they would believe. But had Christ succumbed to the temptation to come down off the cross so they would believe the effect of their belief would have been rendered null. It would have been void because it was necessary for the shedding of that blood. He had to die in order for Him to complete the journey, the circuit, the atonement, the propitiation for sin, the actual sacrifice to which everything else pointed, and therefore Christ had to die. He had to remain on the cross and He had to die. And the temptation to come down and do something demonstratively miraculous so that we could believe was an invitation to destroy the very object in which you were saying you wanted to have belief. He had to die and He did.

But, unlike all those who had entered the grave from the time of Adam until that moment, Jesus Christ did not have sin and error that kept Him in the grave. Death could have no hold on him because the wages of sin is death and Christ had not committed the kinds of things that can hold you in the grave. Anyone who can get through this experience without succumbing to the sins of this world is equally entitled to come forth out of the grave because death can have no hold upon you. And so the Savior came back out of the grave. Once the Savior had forfeited life in order to suffer death while in

a state that did not require Him to die, so that His death became unjust; what was taken from Him was eternal, it was everlasting. If He should never have died because He led a life that did not justify death, then His death was, by definition, an infinite and an eternal loss, and so His death compensated fully the law of justice that requires death. He died literally for all mankind. His death represents an eternal and an infinite sacrifice, which was the very point that the law of Moses was intended to point to because the people were unwilling to receive a restoration of the earlier religion. So Christ came and sacrificed, fulfilled the law of Moses. People didn't necessarily accept or believe that the mission of the Savior was designed and did achieve the things that He was sent to achieve. And so God, using those legs of iron, achieved the end of the law of Moses externally by the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple so that, as Christ said, 'Not one stone shall be left upon the other' and the observances of the law of Moses ended in about 70 AD when they destroyed the temple at Jerusalem and the organized practice of the law of Moses inside a sanctuary / temple set up for that purpose ended a second time. And this time ended from that moment until today. It's gone. It has not been returned.

When Christ's missionaries, His messengers, went out to proselytize and bring people aboard the religion, for the most part people believed and taught Christianity as if it were the culmination of all things Jewish - the achievement, the crowning jewel achievement of everything that was intended to be achieved in religion; that Christianity was it. And yet, Jesus pointed forward to some future, still greater event, in which everything that had been around at the beginning would be fully restored, a time when there would be a refreshing or a restitution. A time when that kingdom He prayed would come so that God's will could be done on earth like it's done in Heaven, a time when that would come to pass. Christ spent some time prophesying about what the signs would be that would be immediately preceding His return. And while He talks about some more immediate prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and about the coming loss of the temple, the greater part of what He explained in that chapter of Matthew is about one single generation that would live at the time when He would return in glory. The prophets have pointed forward to that future event repeatedly. Prophets that existed in the Northern Kingdom spoke about it. Prophets, whose records we actually have preserved in the Southern Kingdom, also have spoken about it. And the prophecy that Daniel interpreted in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar points to it, in which something will happen likened to a stone being cut out of a mountain, which will roll down and grow and fill the earth and grind into pieces this false religious, economic, cultural construct that still prevails on the earth today. And so Christ made an initial effort at restoring something that was far more ancient and that has yet to be fully achieved.

So Christians and Christianity fail to contextualize either Christ or His teachings when they look at Christianity as if it were an end in itself. It was a step in a process. And the ministry of the Savior was essential to the salvation of all mankind. But God's work has not yet been fully revealed. And God's religion has never been fully restored.

2018.09.07 5th Address to Christians

September 7, 2018

Sandy, Utah

When we have the history of the Jews and the loss of the Northern Kingdom and the ten tribes, the lost ten tribes of Israel, and then the captivity of the Southern Kingdom or the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, there's an intermediate event that occurs between the moment that you lose the Northern Kingdom and the moment that the Southern Kingdom gets taken captive. And that was an event in which another planting of Israel took place by the out-migration of a small group that were in the Southern Kingdom but had been warned by God to flee before the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. That record or account is contained in the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon details the history of people who leave the land around Jerusalem. They take with them some records in order to preserve their religion. They migrate across the Arabian Peninsula, settle into a place where they're commanded to build a ship. They build a ship and then they begin to migrate. The route that they take appears, from the record, to go down the Eastern edge of the continent of Africa, around the cape at the bottom of Africa where there was a terrific storm, coincidentally, a terrific storm at the very moment when things are getting out of hand inside the family and there's a rebellion of sorts going on. They return to peaceful navigating after that. They appear to come up the western edge of Africa and then across the English Channel, Iceland, Greenland, the Northern Canadian shore and down somewhere into the Americas where they settle. And this planting then practices their religion in a new land in which they are never exposed to the head of gold. They are never exposed to the influence of the Medes and Persians, or the Greeks, or the Romans. They preserve their civilization for a period of about a thousand years. And over the course of that thousand years, they not only practice the earlier, more ancient form of the religion that they had, they also qualify to have their own prophets come teach, preach. They have their own instructions, revelations, and connections with God. And ultimately they get visited by Christ who comes to minister to them as one of the scattered branches of the house of Israel.

Now, if we are looking for something that will come about eventually to fulfill a prophecy about a stone cut out of the mountain without hands that will succeed in defeating the head of gold with Babylon and all the other cultural influences that came about thereafter, one of the chief candidates that every Christian should be curious about investigating is the possibility that preserved in the Book of Mormon is a record that is independent of and uninfluenced by the head of gold, the shoulders, the belly of brass, the legs of iron; uninfluenced by any of that because it sprang into existence separate from those influences, was never taken captive, overrun, or imposed upon culturally, religiously, economically, governmentally by any of them. They simply had no influence.

One of the big criticisms of the Book of Mormon by people who have taken the time to look at it is that there is too much Christology in the Book of Mormon for it to be an authentic 600 BC reflection of what the Jews believed. Well, that's an interesting thing

because what you are accepting when you make a statement like that is an idea that the correct barometer, the correct measuring stick, are the traditions that got handed down from those who were influenced by the head of gold, the Babylonians, the Medes, the Greeks, the Romans. You're saying that that's your correct measuring stick, instead of saying, let's flip that and let's apply the measuring stick that has been handed to us from the source that purports to be free of those influences, and let's see if the Book of Mormon can't give us a more accurate gauge from which to measure all these things.

There was a Christian radio preacher who styled himself "the Bible Answer Man," Dr. Walter Martin. I mean, I listen to a lot of radio preachers even when I disagree with them because they entertain me. And one of those I'm entertained by today is Joel Olsteen. And there's a Catholic program on the Catholic channel on SiriusXM that gives some interesting stuff. Dr. Walter Martin, the Bible Answer man, used to use this slogan in almost every other broadcast: "It is the first principle of Biblical Hermeneutics that you interpret the old in light of the new." Meaning, when you encounter in the New Testament an interpretation of a prophecy that came in the Old Testament you don't go to the Old Testament to decide whether or not that prophecy fit the events in the New Testament. You reverse that, and you say, what does the New Testament tell us that the Old Testament means? And the Old Testament means whatever it is that the New Testament says it means. You arrive at your Biblical interpretation always by using the new to tell you what the old meant. Which is another way of saying that prophecy is so obscure that it requires it to be fulfilled in order for you to understand what it was all about. When it is fulfilled, then the evidence of what was in the mind of God and the prophet, when it first got composed, is apparent, but it is not apparent until the events happen. Which is why all of the people trying to date and foretell all of the events are always surprised because they missed something. They're always advising Herod when the wise men show up and say,

"Now where's the king that was born?" (Matt: 2:2)

And they're shocked there was a king that got born and they have to search around and rummage before they say:

*"O Bethlehem, thou art not least among the princes of Judah;
for out of thee shall come a ruler."* (Matt: 2:6)

And lo and behold, "well, he must be in Bethlehem."

"If you find him, hey you bring him to us so we can worship him." (Matt: 2:8)

Wink, wink. Nod, nod. Because they had the prophecies in front of them, but they didn't know what God was doing. And they wouldn't know it, they couldn't know it. Just like today. God's doing things and but no one knows it because it requires its fulfillment before people can comprehend what happened.

Well, if we accept Dr. Walter Martin's Biblical injunction that you interpret the old in light of the new, then, if you're a faithful Christian, and you accept that premise, what that requires that you do, is that you interpret both – because the Book of Mormon did not come translated into English until 1830, so it is the latest in time, even though a composition that began 600 years before Christ and a composition that continued to

record until 400 years after Christ, it did not come forth for **our** access until 1830. Now clearly, the last 400 years were post-Christ, but the entirety of the text reckons in its public availability post-Christ by 18 centuries. So if we accept the edict to interpret the old in light of the new, then if you want to know what the New Testament was about, and in turn the Old Testament, if you want to understand the ancient religion, then the first principle of interpretation is: you must go to the Book of Mormon to find out what that was all about.

One of the clearest examples, right in the Book of Mormon, that helps you see why Dr. Walter Martin's edict is useful is when Christ appears as a resurrected being, showing the wounds in his hands and in his side and in his feet, to the people who are gathered as a faithful body on the American continent and He tells them,

' Ye are they of whom I said, Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.

I must go to them and they must hear my voice. And there should be one

fold and one shepherd." (John 10:16)

He explains that the disciples at Jerusalem didn't ask Him about that and they didn't understand Him when He said that. And that they wrongly supposed that what that meant was that Christ would only come to speak to other sheep through the ministry of the people in Palestine as they spread the message outward. Instead, what He meant was **He, Christ, would go as a resurrected being** to scattered remnants of the House of Israel and that **He** would let them hear His voice, **see** Him, and He would minister to them. And that included within the body of those that Christ intended to minister to, when He made **that** statement preserved for us in the New Testament, was the intent to go and visit with the people who were writing the Book of Mormon. And then He extends that and He says,

"I have still other sheep, in addition to you, and I'm going to go visit with them also." (3Nephi 16:1-3)

And so, from the record of the Book of Mormon, in just one example, if you want to understand the obscure statement that Christ made, preserved in the New Testament, that He has other sheep to whom He's going to go minister, in order to understand that prophecy, you go to the last in time, the later to interpret the earlier, and the Book of Mormon supplies you that interpretation and explains, **yes, Christ meant** as a resurrected personage that He would go and He would appear. The record of Christ's appearance in his post-resurrected state in Palestine include appearing first to two women. Then He spent the better part of the day walking on the road to Emmaus with two disciples – Cleopas and an unidentified other who wrote the record, Luke. Then He appeared to the twelve. Still later, He would appear to the apostle Paul. And then when He ascended there were above 500 gathered together at the time that He ascended from the mount. And so there were multiple sightings, multiple witnesses, and **multiple audiences** to whom He ministered as a post-resurrected being. Then in the Book of Mormon, He does exactly the same thing. He appears as a resurrected personage and he ministers.

The Book of Mormon helps contextualize Isaiah, Psalms, Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It helps contextualize the prophecies about **that time** that is coming in which the head of gold is going to be ground to dust. It foretells the coming ultimately of the Kingdom of God on earth. There are a lot of prophecies that are requiring fulfillment right now that must precede the return of the Lord in His glory. In addition to everything else that you learn from the Book of Mormon, there are prophecies about a kingdom, an incipient planting, a return of a religious body, small though it may be, that will build what's called a New Jerusalem – an antecedent to the establishment of Zion – and that the Old Testament prophecies about Zion and Jerusalem at the time of the Lord's return is not talking about one location. It is talking about two separate locations because when the Lord returns the sun will never set on His kingdom. One of them will be on one side of the world and the other will be on the other side of the world. And He will establish in Jerusalem, that is, at old Jerusalem, a kingdom. And He will establish in the New Jerusalem, that is in Zion, a second part of His kingdom. And out of Zion and out of Jerusalem will go the law and the teachings that will constitute the effort and the government and the society and the culture that's going to finally free itself from the toxic influences and the corrupt traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, being influenced **all** the way back to Babylon. That's why the prophecies of John talk about the fall of Babylon the great. Because the head of gold is still with us. The Babylonian influence remains with us still in our banking, in our profit motives, in our culture, in our education, in our false ideas about what's important and what's not, in our desire for power and wealth and influence. All of those things remain with us still today. And they corrupt everything. They corrupt business, they corrupt governments, they corrupt churches. They corrupt society. Everyone is vying with one another to gain influence, power. And in turn wealth and the acclamation of this world. And it all goes back to Babylon. Which is why John prophecies the fall, not of every one of these components of the great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw, but he goes right to the head because as soon as you destroy the head everything else is going to unravel. And he prophecies about the destruction of Babylon, the head of gold that holds sway over all else. So, **if you want to tune in** to the work that God began in 1830 to preliminarily prepare for a coming harvest, you have to consider, if you're a sincere Christian, the possibility that the Book of Mormon is an actual planting of something God wanted planted in order to permit that work of God to be fulfilled in the last days. The Book of Mormon came forth as a record of a fallen people in order to **testify** of the great work of Christ.

I mentioned that one of the criticism of the Book of Mormon is the prevalent Christology as a criticism because people don't believe that Christ was so openly known, openly talked about, openly expected in the pre-Babylonian captivity of the people in the Bible. But in the Book of Mormon, we learn that there were some prophets who had left a testimony and a record before we get to Isaiah, who clearly influenced Isaiah, and who spoke openly about the coming of Christ. One of those prophets was named Zenos. In the Book of Mormon – I forget the total number of words; I went through and I copied and I pasted every quote of the prophet Zenos in the Book of Mormon into a single Word document one time – and I'm going from memory and my memory could be off, but it was in excess of 3,000 words, and I think it was 3,200 words, that are from the

record of Zenos quoted in the Book of Mormon. From the vernacular within the Book of Mormon the references there about "the prophet" appear to identify Zenos. When we talk about "the prophet" of the Old Testament we think about Isaiah; they thought of Zenos. Zenos and Isaiah talk about the same topic. Zenos went before and Isaiah came after. Zenos was apparently a Northern Kingdom prophet and Isaiah was a Southern Kingdom prophet. Isaiah's record about Christ is poetic and, like most poetry, tends to be obscure. Beautifully crafted language with difficult allegories to understand. Zenos, on the other hand, was pretty blunt and pretty straightforward. You could not miss the point of Zenos. Whereas it's very possible to take the Isaiah text and you can construe it, because of its vague allegories, to mean just about anything. Zenos could not be reformed to eliminate Christology. It was blatantly present in the Zenos text. Therefore, Zenos got dropped from the Old Testament. Isaiah, on the other hand, could be used to obscure the Christology because, although he points forward to, in magnificent ways, the coming of the Savior and His sacrifice, the suffering servant passages could be interpreted to not mean an individual Savior, Jesus Christ, but rather the people of God or Israel who went through so much persecution because they preserved a religion that testified of the true God and therefore the language of Isaiah was susceptible of interpretation to construe it away from pointing to Jesus Christ. Zenos could not be so handled or interpreted. He clearly spoke about this coming Savior. As a result, in the reconstitution of the scriptures, the references contained in Zenos were too plentiful to allow it to get into the canon of scriptures, and it got obliterated from the scriptures that were re-gathered at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the record of Zenos was included within what that planting of people in the Book of Mormon took with them. They didn't lose the prophecies of Zenos, and so it informed them about Christ in very specific ways. The presence of Christology in the Book of Mormon are the inevitable result of possessing scriptures that speak candidly, openly and frankly about the coming of this Messiah. And so, when you pick up the Book of Mormon and read it, you literally are reading a text that has not been corrupted by these other influences. And the abundant presence of a Christological theology in the Book of Mormon is not evidence that the Book of Mormon is false, but it is evidence that the traditions that surrounded the religion of the Jews, as it came to be understood when Christ came to earth, that was what was corrupted. That was what was incomplete. That was what failed to preserve the original religion that began all the way back with the first fathers when they learned of a promised Messiah who would save us from the fall of Adam and death entering the world by reversing that as the second Adam, as the apostle Paul described Him, the second Adam who would plant a restored family brought back to life through the power of the resurrection so that *as in Adam all die, [even] so in Christ shall all be made alive* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

We also learn through the Book of Mormon that the first fathers were not so ignorant as we **think them**, but that they had from the beginning knowledge of a coming Savior and a promise of redemption from the Fall. That they had from the beginning the practice of **baptism**. That they had from the beginning **animal sacrifice** to point to, as a type and a shadow, the **sacrifice** that Jesus Christ would make to redeem them from death. That Christology was not merely present at 600 BC, at the time of this planting the Book of Mormon refers to, but that **Christology** was present in the religion from **Adam** to

Enoch and from **Enoch** to **Abraham** and from **Abraham** to **Moses**, and then because of the slave culture of Egypt and the corruption that they experienced there, Moses had to bring them along with the lesser law of carnal performances and ordinances in order to point their mind forward to the **coming** of a Savior who would offer an infinite and final and eternal sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

So if you want to begin to get your hands around what it is that God has **yet** to do in order to set the stage so that His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and you're a Christian, the place you ought to begin your search to find what God is **really** up to **now**, is the Book of Mormon. And you ought to interpret the old in light of the new and accept the Book of Mormon as a guide in order to bring **you** along. The Book of Mormon poses a question that I'll paraphrase:

"Wherefore murmur ye? Because ye receive more of the word of God?" (2Nephi 29:8)

I mean it ought to be self-evident to anyone who claims themselves to be a Christian and to love the Lord that if a record comes about that purports to be a record testifying of Christ written by people who believed in, obeyed, and followed Him, that that record bears not just **serious** consideration, **but prayerful** acceptance if it is true.

Now I was raised by a Baptist mother and a Christian, but non-denominational father. My father was a Mason and Masonic lodges require that you be a believer in God and my father believed in God. He just didn't necessarily extend that belief all the way to the exuberance of the Baptist faith. But my mother was ever hopeful of turning the whole clan into Baptists. We had our Baptist preacher over for Sunday dinner with some regularity and I always liked the fried chicken. For some reason Baptist ministers and fried chicken dinner, it just goes together like hand in glove. And if you're a Baptist and you're listening to this **you know** this is authentic because **you've been there and done that**. So when missionaries came and said, "Hey, here's the Book of Mormon. It's about Jesus and it's going to help you," my response to that news was less than enthusiastic. I mean I had had all of the indoctrination that comes from Dr. Walter Martin and all the other anti-Mormon critics. I'd read his book, "The Kingdom of the Cults." I'd heard all the flaws and problems with this idea. The Book of Mormon grew on me very slowly. I had actually determined the other reasons to affiliate with Mormonism than the Book of Mormon and did so for years before I ultimately discovered the Book of Mormon to be something **terribly significant**. It took years of reading, of study, and of actually teaching the Book of Mormon before it began to penetrate into my understanding and my heart. Once the Book of Mormon began to be taken seriously by **me**, I discovered things in there that were beyond the capacity of a forger and a fraud to assemble as the critics of Joseph Smith and Mormonism have claimed. Now **I am not** a member of the Mormon church today. Although they've recently asserted that their name isn't the Mormon church, it's the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was one time a member. I had been excommunicated because I prize historical truth above institutional loyalty. And the institution, as it turns out, is disloyal to believing followers of the restoration if they're not sufficiently institutionally loyal. I don't hold any institution, at present, up as the ideal model, an example of the work of Jesus Christ. I think Jesus Christ's work has to be done independent of institutional control at this point because

every institution that's out there, just by reason of being institutional, becomes the subject of laws and taxes and rules and Babylon. Just because the institution exists, it's part of the great conglomerate that includes the head of gold, Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, on down to the present. I believe that Christ's work must stand independent of every other influence under heaven and owe its allegiance, owe its loyalty, and owe its faith to Christ and Christ alone, which makes me really ill-fitted in an institution that prizes above everything else, **loyalty** to the clan.

Well, the more I began to take in the truths of the content in the Book of Mormon, the greater the gap grew between the lip-service paid to the restoration by the Mormon church, the LDS church, and the practice of the institution itself. In fact, the Book of Mormon, used as a guide or measuring stick, **condemns** all of the institutions of Christianity. In fact, it condemns everyone except the few who are the humble followers of Christ, and points out, despite **that** "**few** being humble followers of Christ, nevertheless **they** are led that in many instances they do err because they're taught by the precepts of men." (2 Nephi 28:14)

If you want precepts that come from God, the best place to look at this point is the Book of Mormon text. The closer you look the more you'll see. The more you see the more you'll find that right now the religion of Jesus Christ is hardly practiced anywhere on this earth. If it's going to be practiced at all it needs to be done by **you**, by someone who is **eagerly** searching for and trying to find **words** that come from Jesus Christ as your guide, as something to **lead you back to Him**, as the message intended for the last days, and as the means by which you can **interpret** the **earlier** New Testament, the **earlier** Old Testament, to find out exactly what they mean because the key to unlocking **all** of what God has been, is presently, and will ultimately be involved with to fulfill all the prophecies is contained primarily in the text of the Book of Mormon. And so, if you want to escape before the ultimate destruction of that great image with the head of gold beforehand, to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, if you're a sincere Christian, you don't need to go and join another denominational institution, but you better take seriously the Book of Mormon and **study it**, and take its interpretations, its meaning, its guidance seriously, because it is the standard that has been planted in the last days as the ensign of truth to which all Christians, if they believe in Christ, need to rally in order to be part of His great latter-day work. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2018.09.08 6th Address to Christians

September 8, 2018

Sandy, Utah

In examining the mission of Christ and what was accomplished during His lifetime and what was left unaccomplished during His lifetime – but intended by the Lord to be accomplished at some point before His second coming – even the record of the Lord's accomplishment is incomplete and suggests that there is a great deal more that might have been learned or might have been recorded at the time of His ministry, but simply omitted from the record of the New Testament.

After His resurrection and His appearance to the women at the garden Tomb, He appeared and spent the better part of the day walking on the road with two disciples from Jerusalem to Emmaus – about a seven mile walk. He sidled up beside them and He walked beside them and they talked throughout the day. It was evening when they arrived at their destination. And they asked Him to come in and to sup with them, to eat with them, because they had enjoyed the fellow's company. And He went in and blessed the food. Actually, He took bread, blessed it and brake it and gave it to them. And then their eyes were opened and they realized it was Him. But their reaction to Him after they recognized who He was, was a reflection on how they ought to have perhaps recognized Him earlier in the day. Not because of seeing Him as He is and recognizing His person, but instead because of the message. Reflecting on what He had said, asked one another,

"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

And then they rose up from there and scurried back to Jerusalem to announce the news that He had appeared.

So, we know that the Lord spent the better part of the day walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus and that the subject that He discussed was the scriptures in such a way that the scriptures were opened to them and the effect of that was to have their hearts burn within them from the conviction that what they were being taught was truth. Not one word **about** what the Lord **said** or **taught when** the disciples' hearts were touched and **when** they were **brought** to understand by having the scriptures **opened** to them.

And so when something is missing from a record, a page or a hole in the record, that is called a lacuna. So one of the more obvious lacunas in the narrative is the failure to tell us anything about what Christ did to open the scriptures in order to have these disciples, these believers, these people who He deliberately chose as witnesses of His resurrection, and that **too** as **priority witnesses**.

It's an interesting study to take a look at who the Lord appeared to and in what order because there appears to be a pattern in the appearances of the Lord and the priorities of the people to whom He appeared in order to have witnesses of His resurrection. But these are two of the earliest and so they have a high priority. And I believe that one of the two witnesses was in fact Luke, who leaves his own name out. He identifies the companion who was with him, Cleopas, but he doesn't identify himself. And I think that it was Luke who wrote the books of Luke and Acts, in which he explains the history, the life, the death, the resurrection of Christ, the message, the importance of the message, the vindication of the promise of Him being a Messiah because of His resurrection, and then the immediate effect of the post-resurrection ministry of the apostles. All of those things are written about, and they're written in some detail by Luke. And yet, that talk that was so convincing that the hearts of both him and his companion, Cleopas, burned within them is left as a glaring lacuna in the narrative by a fairly exhaustive biographer. Luke picks up upon **some** details of Christ's life that **only** appear in the Gospel of Luke. This incident on the road to Emmaus is one of those, but some of the more intimate details about the birth of Christ are preserved by Luke. There are things that Luke was fully capable of preserving and conveying and he clearly, if his heart was burning within him, **that** kind of a message is going to have some durability, some persistence, **capable** of writing it, and it's gone from the record.

In the Book of Mormon, there's an early visionary encounter before they migrate very far from Jerusalem in which Nephi is shown the whole sweep of history and he begins to record the account of what it was he saw. And he's interrupted and told you can't write a record of what I'm going to show you hereafter because this record is going to be entrusted to another person who is going to write it. His name is John. And the account that John would record, the Book of Mormon doesn't recite, but we all can identify it as the Book of Revelation. And so Nephi is told, "Don't write about this visionary material. Someone else is going to do that." (1Nephi 14:20-25) So, Nephi is told he cannot write that. A fuller account is going to be given by John. But Nephi is also told that this same kind of material has been shown to others. Nephi later, in the second book that he composes, by that time 40 years has passed from the time of the visionary encounter near Jerusalem. He's now on another continent, a new world, a promised land given to them. And he's had 40 years of reflection on what he saw and what he heard. And from that 40 years of reflection he realizes that he can bear testimony of what he saw, without infringing upon the right of John to write the fuller account, simply by quoting Isaiah who wrote about much of the same material. And so Nephi adopts as his text in large measure **the text** that came from **Isaiah** as it appeared on the brass plates – slightly different than the version that we have in our Bibles that descend from the Masoretic Text – but he preserves as his testimony words that were composed by Isaiah in the form that he had them as his testimony. Then as his entire account is winding down at the end of the second book that Nephi composed, he begins at about – in the standard LDS-published version it's chapter 27 – he begins to change from quoting the Isaiah text to paraphrasing the Isaiah text in order to adapt it to a **very specific, prophetic foretelling** of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the last days in order to make the Isaiah text fit exactly what would be happening with the Book of Mormon coming forth. **Then** he gives his interpretive key from that point explaining

exactly why it was that he put those Isaiah materials in in order to have people understand that it is his testimony of what he knows and what he was shown, and to convert the language of Isaiah into the prophecy of Nephi to convey Nephi's message.

Well, we don't have any explanation from **Luke** as to why there is a lacuna in the record and the **omission** of Christ's **post-resurrection exposition, opening up the scriptures, explaining** what it was in the scriptures that bore testimony of Him. **We just have** Luke leaving it out. But in the Book of Mormon, the record that we have of Christ's appearance to the Nephite descendants, includes Christ opening up the scriptures in order to show how they bear testimony of Him, not merely of Him coming as the sacrificial lamb, but also of Him coming in the last days. Christ's missing material from the Book of Luke is **back-filled** by the Book of Mormon's account of Christ's appearance and Christ's ministry and teachings to the Nephite people.

So if anyone is a **devoted** follower of Christ and attentive to the scriptural record as the way in which they come to understand and know who Christ is and to gain a conviction of His status as the Redeemer of mankind. Anyone who is sincere about searching into and trying to find how and why and what the Savior was, is, and what He did, **is going** to be eager to **back-fill** the lacuna that appears in the Gospel of Luke and find out what it was that the Lord was saying. And **they'll be eager** and willing to look at the Book of Mormon with that in mind.

I can tell you that the Book of Mormon has received perhaps the greatest amount of neglect of any volume of scripture since its coming forth in 1830. The one who translated the record, Joseph Smith, made almost no use of it in his public ministry. He was dealing with people who were largely converts from other denominations, including initially predominantly people who had been followers of Alexander Campbell. They were among the most devoted people to the Bible. New converts who came in believed the Bible and accepted the Book of Mormon, but regarded the Book of Mormon largely as a sign that God was up to something. When Joseph Smith taught, even as the one who translated the Book of Mormon, he largely focused upon the Bible and an exposition of the content of the Bible, because prospective converts and **new converts** to the idea relied upon and had a priority for the Bible above any other volume of scripture. So adapting to the audience, Joseph Smith's teachings largely focused upon the content of the Bible. You can see leaking through in the talks, the transcripts of the talks that are preserved of Joseph Smith, that there was tension that ran all the way up to the highest level of the church. Sidney Rigdon was a counselor to Joseph Smith, and in a talk that has been called the King Follett discourse. It was a funeral sermon about the recently deceased man named King (first name) Follett (last name). We used to give names like King to people. King Follett was a fellow who had been killed in an accident in a well. He was recently deceased at the time that Joseph gave the King Follett discourse. In the discourse, he talks about a variety of things stretching on into the eternities, and the post-death course that mankind will take. In the middle of that, Joseph makes an aside. Sidney Rigdon was not in the audience at the time. He wasn't in the city of Nauvoo. He was elsewhere. But he makes an aside, specifically calling Rigdon by name, and saying, to the absent Sidney Rigdon, "I suppose that the inquiry

has to be supported by the Bible." And then he goes on to use the Bible in order to demonstrate the teaching that he is going to advance to the audience is Biblical. It is **based** in the content of the Bible itself. So, Joseph Smith is saying, "Rigdon, I'll prove the truth of what I'm about to teach from the Bible. I suppose I have to support it by the Bible." That tells you that one of the problems Joseph was confronted with is that people, including those very closest to him at the top of his organized church at the time, didn't want to hear anything that wasn't supported by the Bible, didn't want to hear him talking about the Book of Mormon, didn't want to accept something based upon the new revelations. At a still later time, a fellow who was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, who got excommunicated and disassociated himself with Joseph in 1838, he wrote in the late 1870s or early 80s a pamphlet that was called "An Address to All Believers in Christ." And in that, David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, complained that the revelations of Joseph Smith were given too much priority. I assume that the attitude that David Whitmer reflected 30 years after the death of Joseph Smith was an attitude that he held even while Joseph was alive, one of the reasons why he became disaffected and that **he** didn't want to see the revelations of Joseph Smith expounded upon. **He** didn't want to hear material that was more recent. Although David Whitmer did hold the Book of Mormon in some considerable regard and he remained true to his witness as one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

Well, after the death of Joseph Smith, among the people who are nicknamed "the Mormons", the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints being the largest one of those, the one that most Christians would be familiar with, the church that sends out the missionaries two by two in their white shirts and ties to knock on people's doors, the one that sponsors the Tabernacle Choir, the one that sponsors Brigham Young University, the largest single denomination. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did not give any serious consideration to the Book of Mormon until the 1950s, and only then, in the 1950s, because the church president – at the time it was a man named David O. McKay – asked a professor at Brigham Young University, whose name was Hugh Nibley, to write a priesthood manual that could be used by the institutional church to teach a course in priesthood for a year. When that interview took place, in the accounts that Hugh Nibley tells of it, he wanted to focus upon the Book of Mormon, and David O. McKay's reaction was surprise because no one took that book seriously. And Hugh Nibley was saying, No, he believed in it. The seriousness with which the Book of Mormon was taken after the 1950s is largely the result of a now-deceased Brigham Young University professor, Hugh Nibley, and his **conviction** that the Book of Mormon was an authentic book.

I say that to a Christian audience because the Book of Mormon has largely been so neglected by the people who are nicknamed "Mormons" that if Christians were to take that book up and to examine it through the eyes of a devoted Christian believer, I believe that Christians are going to find treasures within the Book of Mormon, an understanding, as a result of their Christian background from the Book of Mormon, that the Mormons themselves have never been able to harvest, have never noticed, and do not have the eyes with which to even see its presence. The Book of Mormon remains a **Christian treasure** that has **yet** to yield its greatest results, having only been taken

seriously. In 1950 there were **leaders** in the church who had never **read** the Book of Mormon. Mormon church leaders who did **not** read the Book of Mormon, **much** less understand it. It was quite some time after that before the Book of Mormon became something in which there was some **regular** study among **Latter-day Saints**.

Because the Book of Mormon was published before there **was** an LDS church, and because the Book of Mormon stands as an independent witness, there is no reason why accepting the Book of Mormon requires you to be institutionally loyal to **anyone**. You can be a Baptist and believe in the Book of Mormon and there is at least one minister out there who is **doing that right now**. There is no reason why Catholics, and Presbyterians, and other mainstream Christian denominations can't pick up the Book of Mormon and make use of it without pledging allegiance to any institution that claims ownership over the Book of Mormon. In fact, **the most accurate edition** of the Book of Mormon currently in print is one that was prepared **independent** of any institution and is available for purchase on Amazon. It is part of two books combined in a single volume called The New Covenants. The **first half** of the book is the New Testament and the **second half** of the book is the Book of Mormon. They were intended to go together as a witness by people who on one side of the world and on the other side of the world both witnessed the ministry of a resurrected Lord, who showed the prints of the nails in His side, and in His hands, and in His feet. And had people bear testimony that it was Him who was sacrificed, that rose again from the grave, and who is the Savior **prophesied** of by Isaiah; He uses Malachi in the Book of Mormon; He uses other texts to demonstrate and to teach His identity as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind. And I believe if the Presbyterians, and the Baptists, and the Catholics were to pick up the Book of Mormon and treat it seriously **it would yield truths to them which** they could then preach **independent** of the LDS church or the people who are nicknamed "Mormons" and they would find themselves growing closer to Christ as a consequence of having this material available to their study.

It's been too long that the Book of Mormon has been neglected. It's been too shoddily handled by the people to whom it was originally given. The copyright has expired. The book is now available to the public. The institution that got it originally has made precious little use of it. And if you find yourself not only disbelieving the LDS church, but because of your institution's **native hostility** towards the LDS church, you will find in the Book of Mormon a great deal of ammunition to use to condemn, to criticize, to censure the LDS institution because the Book of Mormon spares very little ink in criticizing, condemning, and judging harshly the people to whom the Book of Mormon would be delivered, including the LDS church. The use to which the Book of Mormon can be put by Christians is so relevant to the Christian belief system that if Christians will soften their heart and consider it and allow for the record that is latest in time to be used to help understand the records that are earlier in time – because God's latest word clarifies and governs the interpretation of His earlier word – Christians are going to reap a fabulous reward in doing so. And, **unlike the texts** that we have in the New Testaments, many of which are copies of copies of copies, that we **know** have been altered in the process of transmission. Bart Ehrman, a one-time believer, now agnostic, parsed through the texts of the New Testament, compared it to quotes in the anti-Nicaean, the

pre-Nicaean fathers, and to internal evidence in the New Testament itself, and reached the conclusion that the New Testament text deserves great deal of skepticism because the method and manner of its transmission has been demonstratively shown to be inaccurate and the record to be muddled. In one place, the less-altered text of Hebrews, preserves the words that are drawn right out of the seventh chapter of Proverbs:

"This is my son; today I have begotten you," (Hebrews 5:5)

A statement that was made prophetically about Christ. The Book of Hebrews preserves it in that form.

The gospels, however, were altered, and the statement that was made at the time of the baptism of Christ when John the Baptist was baptizing the Lord was changed to be:

"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt: 3:17)

Because of a controversy that erupted over the nature of Christ during the Christological debates of the third and fourth century and it's one of the illustrations that Bart Ehrman points to in his book, *"The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture."* That title **tells** you something about the transmission of the New Testament The Orthodox corruption of scripture. Bart Ehrman isn't the only scholar, but his books are fairly easily available if you're interested in the topic through Amazon.

Another scholar who has done essentially the same thing in picking apart the **Old Testament** and the integrity of the transmission of the **Old Testament text** is a Methodist scholar in England named Margaret Barker, whose works demonstrate that there was an earlier, an older religion that got **defeated** at about the time that the Jews were taken captive into Babylon and on the **return** from the exile a **new** religion that had been altered emerged. Christians generally view information like that as **threatening the very core** of their religion because, if their Bible is flawed and not inerrant, if their Bible has been poorly transmitted and is inaccurate, then the **basis** upon which they seek salvation is itself threatened.

The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, bears witness of the very same Lord, in essentially the very same kinds of terms, identifying Him as having **accomplished** the work of the redemption by the **sacrificing** of His sinless life in order to defeat death and to restore mankind back to life. But **unlike** the transmission of the **Bible record**, the **Book of Mormon** record was preserved for generations by a singular transmission through a line of record holders. At the end of that line, a prophet named Mormon, hence the name for the book, **did** a **summary** explanation **excerpting** from all of the prior records a final and inspired God-commanded and prophetically-infused record summary of the preceding nearly millennium of history, giving us the truths that God wanted preserved. He turned that record over to his son. His son finished it up and then buried it up. And when it came forth out of the ground it was translated by the person who accomplished the translation through the means he called **the gift and power of God**. And **the original language** in which The Book of Mormon was first published in the last days was **English**. The original of the first transcription has been preserved in

part. It was put into a cornerstone and water damaged it and so we only have about 28% of that original. But, the original was hand copied before it was taken to the printer for the first printing. And all of that printer's manuscript still exists. And then the one who was responsible for the translation of the Book of Mormon had the opportunity to review it for another edition in 1837, and to review it and again publish it in 1840. We do not have the transmission issues with the Book of Mormon that are existing with the current Bible. Christians hear this criticism about the Book of Mormon that there's been 9,000 changes made to the text. Those 9,000 changes have been located and largely dealt with, **every single one**, in that New Covenants edition of the Book of Mormon that is currently in print and available through Amazon. **Most** of those purported changes are punctuation changes. **Many** of them come from the fact that when it was first printed it was printed like a book, but it later became versified and divided into chapters, and footnotes were added, and in the tally of changes, many of the changes also are superficial changes to versification, and chapter divisions, and other such things. There were some errors made. There were some lines that were dropped out between the original manuscript and the printers manuscript that have been located and have put back in. But even with **every one** of the identified changes to the Book of Mormon, the fact is that it is **demonstrably, on a whole other order of magnitude, more faithfully preserved and more reliably a text attesting to Jesus Christ, than anything that we have transmitted** in the bible.

In short, if you are a Christian who feels some insecurities as a consequence of the criticism leveled at the Bible because of its clear transmission issues, it's very demonstrably true problems of conveying the text from the original authors down to what we get printed – and, the vagaries of how you convert some Greek lettering into other languages. At the time the New Testament was written, the form of Greek that was used didn't have lower case, it only had uppercase. It didn't have punctuation. And in almost every text there's no separation from the end of one word and the beginning of another. Dividing it up into words, upper and lower-casing the alphabet that was used, all of that was accomplished by monks hundreds of years after the original text had been handed down. Well, the Book of Mormon has far greater integrity. So if you're insecure about the reliability of the content of the Bible, **none** of those insecurities should attach to the text of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is not only a testimony of Jesus Christ, but it is perhaps the most reliable testimony of Jesus Christ that exists in available print right now, today, in the English language.

So, if you're a Christian and you're sincere about your faith, I think you neglect the Book of Mormon at your peril. If God has sent to you a message, a testimony about His Only Begotten Son, in order to bring you closer to Him, to prepare you for the day of His coming to judge the world, and you decide that you're simply going to dismiss that message that came from God, then what kind of a Christian are you really? Have you no faith? Do you think that God cares less about the generation of people who will be on the earth at the time of His returning to judge the world, cares less about them, than He did about the people to whom He came and ministered when He came here to sacrifice His life to redeem mankind?

Now, it's true at His first coming precious few took seriously **the message** and **accepted Him**. But God bears testimony whether **you** will listen to it or not. **Wise men**, who were some **distance** from the place of the Lord's birth, **watched** for and understood the signs testifying of Christ in the heavens above. Based upon the appearance of the sign, and the **journey**, and their **arrival**, it took them **two years**, according to the New Testament record, to get from where they were to where the Lord was. And **Christ** is called a **young lad** when they bring gold, and frankincense, and myrrh in order to worship the newborn King. And when they depart they depart without advising Herod where they'd found the newborn king because they'd been warned in a dream, which means God had been talking to them also, and they returned perhaps on a two-year journey somewhere else. The people who were on **this continent**, the **American continent**, watched for signs in the heavens, **knew** about His birth, **knew** about His death, and were anxiously testifying of Him before He came to visit with them.

The testimony of Christ to the world by God at His first coming was not local. Admittedly, the record begins with Zacharias [Zechariah] bringing incense to burn before the veil of the temple, to recite the prayer asking God for the redemption of Israel to take place, when an angel appeared. And the record begins with the angel announcing that, "Your prayer about the redemption of Israel is going to be answered, and your wife's going to have a son who is going to go before the face of the Redeemer of Israel," (Luke 1:5-13) which seemed improbable to Zacharias [Zechariah] because of the age of his wife. Nevertheless, it was vindicated. That's not the beginning of the testimony concerning Christ by God throughout the world. And at least some company, two-year's journey away, heard the message and appeared to worship Him. How many others were there throughout the world? Has a Christian ever contemplated the **fact that** God's testimony to mankind was not tightly confined to a small group of people in Palestine, but it went out **so far** and **so wide** that one group responding to it took two-year's journey to get there? The Book of Mormon testifies that there were yet others, on the entire other side of the world, separated as they were by oceans, to whom Christ went to minister.

The purpose of the Book of Mormon, among other things, is to remind us living at the time when Christ's return is imminent, **that His message is global**. If you think you can just brush off a message that was intended to help prepare Christians for His return, well, you're like those whose hearts were hard and refused to hear even when Christ walked among them. We ought to be rather like those who would undertake an arduous two-year journey just to come into the presence of the Redeemer of mankind.

If you refuse to take the Book of Mormon seriously as a Christian, **you are no more Christian than the Jews who crucified the Lord, giving lip-service to a false and inadequate religion, rejecting the message of a Messiah who intends to save your soul, because you prefer your false, inadequate, partial tradition to the truth of a living Redeemer. The Jews didn't reject Jesus because they had no religion. The Jews rejected Jesus because the religion they had did not adequately encompass the truth concerning Him and so they felt comfortable rejecting Him – just like Christians who feel themselves adequately informed from a false and incomplete set of beliefs about the work of Jesus Christ to be willing to accept the record**

that was intended to come forth to prepare the world for His return. You're no different if you reject the Book of Mormon. And I testify of that in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2018.09.30 Keep the Covenant: Do the Work

General Conference Address

September 30, 2018

Layton, Utah

I haven't had an opportunity to go through all of the questions that have been submitted but I have to tell you, kids write a lot better questions than adults do. I probably should just use this instead of what I've prepared.

Let me thank the organizers of this conference. First of all, I appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to come and to speak but I also appreciate all of the effort, the work, and the sacrifice that goes in when someone volunteers to put together a conference because we don't have any standing fund. The people who volunteer to do conferences undertake a burden that's not just physically and emotionally demanding, it's also financially demanding. The people who put together a conference make enormous sacrifices, individually and collectively, and I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak and the work that has gone into this.

Like the other two speakers this afternoon, I want to talk to the kids who are here today, and the parents are perfectly well invited to eavesdrop. My comments are tailored to the children who are present, or who may listen to this at a later point.

I've been looking forward to talking to the youth since I first learned I was invited to speak at this conference. The future always belongs to the next generation. If the next generation is not able to learn and continue their parents' faith, every achievement can be lost.

All talent, intelligence, and skill are perishable. Unless studied, knowledge can be forfeited. It's by your effort to preserve what has been newly restored that the covenant given by God will endure. Every past covenant has been broken. There are still remnants who benefit from past covenants but today only one covenant exists intact.

Many of you are being raised apart from formal, institutional church organizations. You are being taught in your homes instead of church-owned buildings. Your experience will be very different from that of some of your friends. It helps you to understand that God can be close to you wherever you worship Him. Most of your parents, when they were children, likely experienced religion only in a formal, organized setting with officials leading and controlling everything. Now they ask you to commit to following God with much more of the responsibility resting upon you.

Institutional, formal churches invest in programs and productions to help their members believe in God. Institutions pre-package what is taught, so their members will agree with them on religious worship. God has provided you scriptures and given you the ability to read and think. You need to find God directly, and let your religion include your individual search for truth.

Joseph Smith defined "Mormonism" in this way: "One of the grand fundamental principles of 'Mormonism' is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may" (DHC, 5:499). We all want to freely search for truth, and when we find it, we want to be free to accept it. That is Mormonism. That is us.

There is a new edition of scriptures available in paperback and online. They will soon be available in a leather bound edition. These new scriptures are the most accurate and complete volumes of Joseph Smith's work made available. If you study them, your understanding of the restoration will exceed all others. Make them something you review daily, even if you only have a few minutes.

While Joseph Smith was alive, he taught that the restoration would fail if the saints did not have the new translation of the Bible published as part of their scriptures. Joseph said, "God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church. Said the Lord would cut his work short in righteousness and except the church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall." (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 2, p. 85, as in original.)

After that warning on July 17, 1840, two men were assigned to go on a mission for the purpose of raising money to publish the scriptures. These included a new edition of the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

In October 1840, a letter to all the saints was published in the *Times and Seasons* asking for their full support in the effort to publish "the new translation of the Scriptures." That effort failed to put the Joseph Smith Translation in print, and Joseph died without it ever being published. Excerpts with edits done by others were published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but it failed to include all of Joseph's work.

The new edition of the scriptures is the first time the full work Joseph accomplished, without additions and including hundreds of punctuation changes previously omitted, has been made available in print. You are the first generation to have these scriptures available. Do not neglect them.

There are two things that will bring you closer to God than anything else. Start this in your youth. First, personal scripture study. Learn from them when you have time. Your private study will be more important than what others tell you about the scriptures. Second, personal prayer. Your private time spent in prayer will have the power to shape your life. If you study the scriptures when you are alone, and you pray in private, these two things, more than anything else, will draw you to God. They will change your destiny.

There is a great gulf separating us from the first fathers of mankind. At the very beginning, a book of remembrance was kept in the language of Adam. Enoch taught repentance and knowledge of God using that book of remembrance. Those records were passed down for generations until Abraham. He learned of the first fathers, the

Patriarchs, from those records. Abraham wrote: "But the records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord, my God, preserved in mine own hands." (T&C Abr. 2:4).

At the time of Abraham, Egypt was the greatest civilization on earth. Egypt was great because it imitated the original religion of the first fathers. Abraham explained:

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Zepthah, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was Patriarchal. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. (Abr. 2:3).

Egypt began by imitating the pattern Adam, Seth, Enos and their direct descendants through Noah used to organize the family of the faithful. Abraham calls it a "government" but it was a family. The title "Pharaoh" originally meant "great house" or "great family" because Pharaoh was the "father" over Egypt who taught and led them. Over time, however, the title "Pharaoh" came to mean "king" or "tyrant" who controlled people.

The first Pharaohs, or founding father[s] of Egypt, imitated the first fathers of mankind. He could only imitate because he did not have the right to act as the patriarchal head of mankind. He nevertheless tried to be a shepherd who led by righteous example. Abraham knew more about the first fathers than did the Egyptians because Abraham had the original book of remembrance written by the fathers in the language of Adam.

Today, scholars are trying to understand ancient Egypt. The earlier or farther back in time you look, the closer Egypt's imitation is to the government of Adam and the Patriarchs down to Noah.

The records of Egypt from the very earliest time are lost. But we have some records. The oldest are the Pyramid Texts. Then a few centuries later there are Coffin Texts. Then much later are the Book of the Dead Texts. Near the end we have the Book of Breathing Texts. There are thousands of years between the first Pyramid Texts and the last Book of Breathing Texts. Within those thousands of years, the religion and knowledge of Egypt became more and more corrupted.

The earliest records of the Egyptian religion carved in the Pyramid Texts date from 2,500 BC. That was before Abraham, before Joseph was sold into Egypt, before Moses, and before the Exodus from Egypt. It was long before King David, King Solomon, and Elijah. These are their earliest records.

More than two thousand years later we have the last records, The Book of Breathing Texts. These were written at about 300 years before Christ. They were written during the time when Greece and Rome controlled Egypt. After Alexander the Great subdued western Persia, Syria and Tyre, he conquered Egypt and became an Egyptian Pharaoh. When he died, one of Alexander's generals, named Ptolemy, replaced Alexander as Pharaoh. The descendants of Ptolemy followed him as Pharaohs in what is called the Ptolemaic Dynasty of Egypt.

You have probably heard of Cleopatra. She was a descendant of Ptolemy and was Queen of Egypt at a time when Rome controlled Egypt. Rome fell into a civil war during Cleopatra's lifetime, and Mark Anthony, one of the generals of Rome, fought against Octavian hoping to become Emperor. Cleopatra sided with Mark Anthony. Cleopatra and Mark Anthony both died by suicide when Octavian defeated the Roman-Egyptian military controlled by Mark Anthony. When Octavian won, he became the undisputed Roman Emperor and Egyptian ruler, and his name was changed to Caesar Augustus. Jesus was born while Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor and ruler of Egypt.

Beginning long before Abraham, and ending just before Christ was born, the records of Egypt were carved, painted or written. The religion of Egypt changed and became more elaborate in places and more vague in others over those thousands of years. The very first Pyramid Texts date from the 4th Dynasty. The next records, the Egyptian Coffin Texts, date from the 7th and 8th Dynasties. They show changes in the religion of Egypt from the earlier Pyramid Texts.

Abraham lived during the 9th or 10th Dynasty, at a time called the "1st Intermediate Period." This was a period of significant change, or apostasy, for the Egyptian religion. But even before Abraham, the order established by the first fathers, despite efforts to keep the faith, had been poorly preserved. The Pyramid Texts are the oldest records, but they were carved during the 4th and 5th Dynasties. By the time these records had been carved, six or more centuries had passed between the original and their preservation. This would be like us composing the history from the time Robert the Bruce gained Scottish independence through the death of Joan of Arc, for the first time today.

After the 1st Intermediate Period came the Middle Kingdom, during the 11th and through the 14th Dynasties. It was during the 1st Intermediate Period that Joseph was sold into Egypt. The Book of the Dead dates from the New Kingdom, or 18th Dynasty. Moses lived during the beginning of the 18th Dynasty and Josephus dates the Exodus from Egypt at that point.

Over the long time period of their history, Egyptian religion changed. It began emphasizing ascending to heaven following this life. But it later emphasized navigating the dangers of the underworld where the dead face perils, tests and judgments. It's more accurate to say Egypt had "religions" rather than a religion, because so much changed over their history.

Solomon dedicated the Temple at Jerusalem during the 20th Dynasty, a little over 1,000 years BC. An attempt to reconstruct the religions of Egypt requires the study of materials that date over nearly three thousand years. Over that time a great deal of change, uncertainty, apostasy and error crept in. Much was lost but also much was added. Some things were amplified or extended and represent uninspired efforts to improve on the original. Even the most meticulous scholar, using the most inspired approach, will never be able to reconstruct the original religion, or "that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam."

Yet God demands that our hearts turn to the fathers or we will be wasted at His return. This requirement is not to turn to them in just a figurative way, where we do genealogical work to connect ourselves with our recently deceased forbearers. That work is a wrongheaded effort to seal people to those kept in prison. The return of our hearts will require us to have the same religion, and the same beliefs in our hearts that the original fathers had beginning with Adam. Only in that way will our hearts turn to the fathers.

God declared to Abraham that the chosen descendants, the people of God, would call Abraham their father. They would need to have that same religion belonging to the first fathers. God explained, "For as many as receive **this** gospel shall be called after thy name and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as unto their Father." (Abr. 3:1, emphasis added.)

The term used by God ("this gospel") is the original holy order the first fathers, including Adam, possessed at the beginning. Our hearts must turn to the fathers because their religion – not apostate Christianity, or Judaism, or apostate Mormonism, or some remnant or relic of Adam's religion, but the order of the first fathers – must be fully restored before we have this gospel possessed by Abraham, who had the records of the fathers and therefore knew the original.

Adam still presides and still holds the keys. Joseph Smith said, "Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been, and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed." (T&C 140:3).

I'm going to interject a thought. Every single dispensation that has ever been or ever will be is always the last dispensation, until apostasy, and then it's no longer the last dispensation. You are living in the last dispensation, and hopefully it won't end as all others have ended.

In an October 1840 proclamation to the saints, Joseph and the High Council in Nauvoo hoped to see happen in 1840 what did not happen then, has not happened, and may only happen if people honor the covenant offered last year. The proclamation said:

The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals; its glories are past description and its grandeur insurpassable. It has been the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of this world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, which all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began: for in it will take place the glorious fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers[.] (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 412; also *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178.)

Joseph understood that the project was reclamation and restoration of what once was and had been lost. We're not trying to create something new; we're trying to reclaim that which is the oldest of all, the original religion.

That grandeur was not achieved in Joseph's day. The restoration has never reached the magnitude God intends. All the institutions of Mormonism are drifting away, aimlessly. They are more interested in preserving power for themselves than in preserving the restoration. Taking the scriptures as your guide, you will be better prepared than any other generation to arise and fulfill the promises and the prophecies. Joseph Smith did not complete the restoration. But he laid a foundation that should not be ignored. The Community of Christ and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are both being led down to destruction and are bound in the chains of hell because of their studied ignorance.

Apostasy means a deliberate rebellion against God. They are in apostasy because they are deliberately changing the ordinances, have broken the covenant, and are rejecting Joseph Smith's teachings and revelations. They have been deliberately walking away from the restoration and choosing to align themselves with a doomed world. This process was described by Alma:

... he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (NC Alma 9:3).

Ignorance and hell go hand in hand, you see. The loss or the failure to retain the truth is the chains of hell.

Increasingly these largest branches of the restoration are abandoning Joseph's work and, like the Egyptians, are replacing their beliefs with uninspired additions and shocking deletions because they do not know what to keep or how to keep it. You can

behold the growing ignorance in the meetings, conversations, conferences and spirits of these people. Online discussions by rank-and-file members of these churches are filled with corrupt ignorance and vanity. Voluntarily they "know nothing" about the mysteries of God. This erosion of knowledge has grown year-by-year until now their meetings and conferences are astonishingly superficial and banal. I do not rejoice in this, but mourn it. It does not need to continue. They can repent and return. Nothing would please me more than to see the Community of Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints decide to change their downward course. Like everyone else who is lost in darkness and foolishness, I invite them to repent and return.

The gospel is vast, and only the beginning, introductory part of the restoration was established through Joseph Smith. There is still a great deal left to recover. The task is daunting. Unto what can I liken it to help you see it clearly:

I stand beside a great ocean and I cannot convey it to you. I am but a man and all I have is a cup with which to show you. If I labor all my life using my cup I can never convey the ocean to you. Using the limited talent and means I have, and with only a cup at a time, I can never convey enough to allow you to comprehend the ocean's sheer size. My effort mocks the great ocean because my measure is too modest, comparatively microscopic.

Using a cup, how can I ever portray the depth and pressure of the ocean? How can you ever discover its vast range of temperature in my small cup? How will you understand the relation between temperature and current, or the great power of the ocean's current? How shall I explain the effect of the moon on the ocean's tides when I have only a cup to declare it to you? How will the great diversity of both plant and animal life living in the ocean ever be understood when I have only a cup to show you?

In the top 600 feet of the ocean lives 90% of known oceanic animal life, but the ocean is over 36,000 feet deep. Mount Everest rises 29,000 feet, and the ocean plunges down more than 7,000 feet beyond Everest's height. If 90% of the animal life we know lives in less than the top 2% of the ocean, how much life is there in the oceans we know nothing about. Life we have not even a hint exists may thrive in abundance in depths completely hidden from our knowledge.

The grandeur of Christ's gospel makes my capacity to declare it pitiful. I confess my inability, and I fear I can never do enough to help this generation to awaken and arise. If I can help you grasp even a little of it, then let me point you to God who can do the rest. Men cannot utter what you need to learn. I am not capable, and it is not lawful.

[G]reat and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his Kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpasses all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him and

purify themselves before him, to whom he grants the privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (T&C 69:29).

You can know. God can show it to you. I testify to you that that has and does happen. But if God deigns to show you some of His great mysteries, never think that excuses you from the labor still left undone. Rejoice in your knowledge, but do not forsake God's work.

There have been some people who have been pointed to the greatness of God's work and have been so captivated by the wonder of the ocean's shoreline that they have gone astray. They have wandered off into their own exploration, thinking they have found something greater in a starfish than what has been shown to them in my cup. They have failed to continue because they think themselves independently enlightened and self-sufficient. One of the immediate casualties of their arrogance is their loss of any part in Zion. Zion will be interdependent, cooperative and community-based. Zion will not consist of a solitary spiritual sojourner wandering the vast intertidal zones of an almost infinite shoreline. No matter how much they may discover along that journey, they will not grasp the ocean's depth they could have found in Zion.

There are many paradoxes, meaning apparent contradictions, in the gospel. Very often we must accept two truths that seem opposed to one another. The gospel is more art or music than math or science. But some kinds of art require math and science to engineer its creation. The scientist and artist may believe their skills conflict, but the gospel includes all truth and therefore unites both.

You will find paradoxes. Welcome them. Often ocean life depends on the pressure of the great deep to exist. Pressure more than a thousand times our atmosphere at sea level exists at ocean depths, yet there is life there. That life exists with 15,750 pounds of pressure on each square inch, and is utterly dependent on the physical law that you cannot compress a liquid. Things that live there would explode if suddenly brought here, and if you were taken there suddenly, you would be crushed. The gospel is an ocean, and includes both.

We live with conflicts, paradoxes and opposing opinions. We must be at peace with all these.

There is a poem in the Book of Job I rather like. This is taken from a modern version:

*Have you given the horse strength?
Have you clothed his neck with thunder?
Can you frighten him like a locust?
His majestic snorting strikes terror.
He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength;
He gallops into the clash of arms.*

*He mocks at fear, and is not frightened;
Nor does he turn back from the sword.
The quiver rattles against him,
The glittering spear and javelin.
He devours the distance with fierceness and rage;
Nor does he come to a halt because the trumpet has sounded.
At the blast of the trumpet he says, 'Aha!'
He smells the battle from afar,
The thunder of captains and shouting.
(Job 39:19-25.)*

The culmination of the ages will require us all to face the conflicts, the unease, anxiety, or what Jesus described as "the distress of nations, with perplexity." (NC Luke 12:17). The paradoxes and perplexities will require us all to charge ahead, like Job's horse to the battle. A final conflict may still be comparatively afar, but it is coming. It can be seen in the news, media, politics and society of our day. It creeps ever closer, and is even now only held at bay by the providence of heaven. This is a time to prepare. We are now in a season to reclaim and restore incomplete gospel understanding. These are precious moments and need to be well spent. We need to gallop into the clash of arms, and devour the remaining distance with the fierceness and rage of a committed heart determined to defy the idolatry and foolishness of our vain age. Stand fast in the truth. Defend yourself with knowledge. Knowledge of the truth comes from above and fortifies the soul with light and truth.

Social media makes minds weak, hearts faint, and fills a person with vanity and foolishness. It should not be embraced but relegated to the insignificance it deserves. The fabric of the electronic world consists of widespread opinions based on misinformation and lies. These are accepted as truth or proof in our day. Those who are most engaged in social media are the most prone to believe in lies. Social media can cause emotional and mental deficiencies. Turn from it.

Political leaders do not want to solve problems; they want to preserve them so they can falsely promise to find an answer one day. They need problems to support their craft. But if an actual leader labors to solve a problem, it threatens the lying craft of the political class. The politicians of our day need persistent problems to motivate voters to give them authority and uphold them in their ambition. Do not be fooled. Our deliverance will never come from Washington or any other nation's capital.

Still, in almost every measurable way, the world is in a better state today than at any other time in history. Manufacturing can produce more useful things all throughout the world. We can grow more food, transport more material, produce more energy and create more wealth than any prior generation. But there is a great threat hanging over it all that can destroy every part of it – the lies and madness of deluded mankind. The contention, anger and hatred that dominate daily conversation have stirred up the world to anger. "For the kingdom of the Devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance or the Devil will grasp them with his everlasting

chains and they be stirred up to anger and perish. For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men and stir them up to anger against that which is good." (NC 2 Ne. 12:4).

Do not be angry with anyone, but certainly not with one another. Nearly all of the violence described in the Book of Mormon came because of anger. Christ condemned this. "Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away." (NC 3 Ne. 5:8).

There will be no deliverance by any government, church or institution operated by men. The pitiful arm of man is nothing compared with the arm of God. The Lord is the creator of this world, and He gave dominion over His creation to Adam. Adam still presides, and the original order set up in the beginning will return before Christ comes to take back His creation. His kingdom is coming. Accomplishing what needs to be done before His return will make us subjects to the Divine King.

Skills are needed. Learn useful things to help preserve order and comfort. Agriculture, metallurgy, medicine, mechanics, construction, engineering, hydraulics, husbandry, and every practical skill will benefit God's kingdom. So will literature, music, art and humanities. Society needs to have fire to cook, and fire in our hearts to make life whole. Learn all the useful knowledge the world can offer, and remember that knowledge of God is more valuable than it all.

The Apostle Paul is credited with being the Father of the Protestant Reformation. His words about "grace" were used to re-conceive man's salvation. Martin Luther saw in Paul's words the possibility of salvation by grace, separate from institutional authority and control.

At the time when Jesus Christ had living officials administering rites of the gospel, Paul was able to wrestle from heaven a dispensation. Using that dispensation, Paul became a dispensation head who did more, worked harder, and labored more abundantly in ministering to Christ's sheep and spreading the gospel than any other man we know of. Paul was not jealous of the others who knew Christ and had been called by Him to the ministry. But there is some evidence of fear and jealousy towards Paul for his success in obtaining an independent dispensation of the gospel.

Paul explained his diligence in spreading the gospel:

[I]n labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews, five times received I forty save one; three times was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; three times I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; journeyings often, perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren; in weariness and labor, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; beside those things that are outside, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (NC 2 Cor. 1:39).

Despite the opposition Paul experienced among believers and non-believers alike, he remained of a cheery disposition. "... I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content." (NC Phil. 1:6).

It is this kind of contentment that should be seen among people today. When God's people are stirred to anger with each other, then even God is against them. After the spot for a temple in Missouri was revealed, the people who went there polluted it by their jealousies and fighting. The unbelieving Missourians were used by God to expel them from the place they had hoped to build a temple. They were surprised the holy spot could be taken from them. After it was taken God explained why:

Verily I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted and persecuted and cast out from the land of their inheritances, I the Lord have suffered the affliction to come upon them wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions, yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels. Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son, for all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified. Behold, I say unto you, There were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them, therefore, by these things they polluted their inheritances. They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God, therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble. In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel, but in the day of their trouble, of necessity, they feel after me. (NC T&C 101:1-2.)

If the covenant with God is kept, then He will allow His house to be built. The covenant cannot be kept if there is jarring, contention, envy, strife, lustful and covetous desires. If we do the same as those who went before, we would pollute the ground again. I am thankful we do not yet have a place to pollute. It would be better to never gain a promised place for God's house than to take possession and pollute it.

The content Apostle Paul taught the believers of his day, "Let your consecrations be without covetousness, and be content with giving such things as you have; for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (NC Heb. 1:58).

Alma taught a lesson that we accepted by covenant as a statement of our faith:

And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God after which ye have been received. And now I would that ye should be humble and be submissive and gentle, easy to be entreated, full of patience and longsuffering, being temperate in all things, being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times, asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal,

always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. (NC Alma 5:6).

The greatness of a soul is defined by how easily they are entreated to follow the truth. The greatest of those who have ever lived have been submissive and gentle souls. In a day when Satan accuses and rages in the hearts of men, it requires extraordinary will and steely determination to remain easily entreated by truth.

I have pondered how much more ought to have been accomplished during Joseph Smith's lifetime? Joseph was only able to accomplish a fraction of what needs to be restored. Joseph faced continuing troubles because of the ambition of the believers. Too many of the saints aspired to lead. They wanted control over others. It hindered the work. Joseph was not able to finish the restoration. Our hearts must turn to the fathers in heaven, and we cannot ignore that duty because of any other vain ambition here and now. We should be less astonished by the earlier failure and far more astonished at how little we have learned from their failure.

In a letter written in July 1840 Joseph explained:

In order to conduct the affairs of the kingdom in righteousness it is all important, that the most perfect harmony kind feeling, good understanding and confidence should exist in the hearts of all the brethren. And that true Charity—love one towards one another, should characterize all their proceedings. If there are any uncharitable feelings, any lack of confidence, then pride and arrogancy and envy will soon be manifested and confusion must inevitably prevail... (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 362, as in original.)

In that same letter Joseph said he wished the people would progress, but did not see that possible until a different spirit led them:

It would be gratifying to my mind to see the saints in Kirtland flourish, but think the time has not yet come and I assure you it never will until a different order of things be established and a different spirit be manifested. (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 363.)

It is in consequence of aspiring men that Kirtland has been forsaken. (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 364.)

After nearly a half-year of imprisonment, Joseph described the importance of a calm mind in order to hear the still small voice of God. His mind was afire with all the distractions of being in prison, and his family and friends expelled from Missouri at gunpoint. Friends had been killed. Church members had betrayed him. God spoke to Joseph when he freed his mind of these concerns and quietly pondered, opening himself up to inspiration.

Learn from these words Joseph wrote while in Liberty Jail about how to set aside all that distracts us to hear God's voice:

We received some letters last evening: one from Emma, one from Don C[arlos] Smith, and one from bishop Partridge, all breathing a kind and consoling spirit. We were much gratified with their contents. We had been a long time without information, and when we read those letters, they were to our souls as the gentle air is refreshing. But our joy was mingled with grief because of the suffering of the poor and much injured saints, and we need not say to you that the floodgates of our hearts were hoisted, and our eyes were a fountain of tears. But those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation can have but a little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is. One token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling. It brings up in an instant everything that is passed. It seizes the present with a vivacity of lightning. It grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger. It retrogrades from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice, and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings, and mismanagements, lie slain victims at the feet of hope. And when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the Voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My son, peace be unto your soul, your adversity and your afflictions shall be but a small moment, and then, if you endure it well, God shall exalt you on high[.] (T&C 138:11).

This world is a place of trial and testing. Before creation it was planned that when we came here we would be "proven" by what we experience. That happens now. Prove yourself by listening to God, hearing His voice, and obeying. Sometimes we are like Alma and want to do greater things to help God's work, but the greatest work of all is to respond to God's voice and prove you are willing to listen and obey Him.

I want to show you the depths of truth that spreads through the ocean, distances and directions that are infinite. But I must be content to use only a cup to give what little a man can measure and convey. Only God can show it because it is too great, too far above man's poor ability. It is not lawful for man, neither is man capable to make it known, for it is only to be seen and understood by those who purify themselves before God; to whom He grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves, while in the flesh.

It was a year ago that a renewed covenant was given to all willing to accept it by God. New covenant people sprang into existence when a few accepted that gift. Until that moment, there were only lost and scattered remnants who, although the object of God's earlier covenants, lived in ignorance of God's renewed labor in His vineyard. Now, in addition to other remnants, there is a new covenant remnant aware of God's renewed labor, a remnant who has been asked to labor alongside the Master of the Vineyard as He sends His final invitation to come to His wedding feast. Christ spoke of this very thing when He taught the Nephites. He foretold that the barren gentiles would eventually produce more children for His Kingdom than the remnants on this land and at Jerusalem. Christ said:

And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child, for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall he be called. (NC 3 Ne. 10:2).

We can see a new and different meaning in Christ's Book of Mormon prophecy to the Nephites. Before Christ's words seemed to foretell that the lost and scattered remnants would build the Lord's House and the New Jerusalem, now it appears that there are covenant receiving gentiles who are included. Gentiles who repent and hearken to Christ's words, and do not harden their hearts, will be brought into covenant as His people.

Christ mentions three distinct bodies. First, those who have accepted the covenant and are numbered among the remnant of Jacob to whom Christ gave this land for their inheritance. Second, the lost descendants of the remnant of Jacob on this land who will repent and return. Third, as many from the House of Israel who will repent and return. These three will build a city that shall be called the New Jerusalem. All three of those will come to know God in gathering and laboring to build the New Jerusalem. Then they will go out to assist all of God's people in their lost and forgotten state to be awakened to the work of God, and gathered as if one body of believers. Then all who have any of the blood of Abraham, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, will come to be taught in the New Jerusalem. There the Power of Heaven will come down to be among them, the angels and Enoch with his ten thousands will come down, the Ancient of Days or Adam our first father, and Christ also will be in the midst of His people.

The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. The scriptures describe events now underway, and call it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process of the spirit withdrawing will end on this continent, as it did with two prior civilizations, in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as the light of Christ or spirit of truth is eclipsed, men's cold hearts will result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked. The covenant established a year ago, if it is kept, will prevent the loss of light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. Be charitable and be patient and labor to reach others. Even if they should judge you harshly because of their traditions, you should nevertheless be kind to them. They are going to grow to fear you, but that's only part of how darkness responds to light. Give them no reason to fear you. The time will come for us to gather, but between now and then, be leaven. Preserve the world. Be

salt. Preserve the world, even if it hates you. The soul of every person is equally precious to God as is yours. If your kindness and example should awaken another soul, you will rejoice with the angels over them.

There is a need "to set in order the House of God," which can only be accomplished through a temple where that work can be performed. The temple is not the "House of God" needing to be set in order. But a temple is required to accomplish the work for God's House, or family, to be set in order. As once described by God:

"Organize yourselves, prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a House of God, that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord with uplifted hands unto the Most High." (T&C 86:29).

Let me end with a few concluding words of wise counsel:

First, just because you young folks have thought about something, that does not necessarily mean you know enough to form a reasonable opinion about it. Likewise, holding an opinion does not mean you know the truth yet. Always be open to learning more and the possibility that more information may well change your thinking, change your opinion, and bring you closer to the truth.

Second, and I hope you remember this, words only have the control over you that you allow them to have. Some people use coarse language because they do not know any better. Coarse language alone does not necessarily reveal the worth of the individual or the thought underlying the words. As Joseph Smith once said, "I love that man better who swears a stream as long as my arm. And administ(er)ing to the poor & dividi(n)g his substance. than the long smoothed faced hypo(c)rites."

Many of my childhood friends and most of their fathers could conjugate obscenities into nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions. That reflected little on their inner character. An afternoon I spent with my father and a few of his friends, all of whom were veterans of World War II, reminded me of the heroic deeds and selflessness for others matters a greater deal more than coarse language. That afternoon humbled me. I was a law student at the time, and thought myself better educated than all those men, my father included. A few hours in their company, however, brought the sober realization that they had done great deeds, laying their lives on the line, and through their valiance I had inherited privileges they secured. Do not give a handful of coarse words power they do not deserve to have.

God's great power does not require an earthquake, a fire, or a whirlwind. Sometimes God's mighty power comes in a still small voice, or in a dream warning a family to flee to safety. God uses "small means" and "simple things" to accomplish His greatest

influence. If you will allow Him to guide you with small means He will save you from destruction here and in the hereafter.

Finally, virtue matters, morality matters, chastity matters. One of the greatest sources of joy and misery is our ability to produce children. The union of man and woman inside a marriage, where children can be born to parents who want them, and are prepared to love and care for them, is how the power of procreation was intended to be enjoyed. Separate from that, it has produced a great deal of misery in this world. Be moral. Be chaste. Guard your virtue.

I teach these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Questions & Answers

Now, there are a couple of things before I start answering these questions. There have been several people who have asked me about large print editions of the scriptures and the first large print volume that is now currently available is the Book of Mormon. It can be purchased through Amazon and it is available. I brought one with me that was given to me by the folks at the Scriptures Committee. There were multiple people who have asked me about large print edition set of scriptures. I don't know who asked first. The people who asked were elderly, so it's really ungracious of me to say this but whoever is first up here to pick this up, it's yours. Some of you may want to stay seated and be entertained by what could be a potential rush between the elderly.

One other thought. I know that there are those who have reasons that have inhibited them after they had been rebaptized. They did not want to submit their name to the Recorder's Clearinghouse. There are some people who have what I consider to be legitimate reasons for that. But precautions are taken. Any incoming information to the Recorder's Clearinghouse is recorded in handwriting in a book. There is no database. There is nothing that can be looked up electronically. No one can hack and retrieve a site. The only thing that gets recorded is the name, in handwriting, with archival ink on archival paper, a single copy, the purpose of which is to go into the library at the Temple to keep the record. Whatever reason you may have to inhibit you from submitting the name, the process is not completed until after you have submitted the name for recording at the Recorder's Clearinghouse. Rest assured that the confidences will be kept and there is nothing to be hacked.

With that, I have got a bunch of questions. These are from the kids, as you will presently see.

Question: I and many other teens would like to get to know you better, so what is your favorite color? It's the only question I could think of.

Denver: Blue. It's the color of my eyes. It's also the... well, enough said.

Question: What do we need to do individually to prepare for the end times?

Denver: Don't suck.

There are people who are so alarmed about the idea of the end times that they want guns and ammo, they want food storage, they want all kinds of precautions to be taken, when if you are young, what you should be doing is prepare for a full life, gaining skills, gaining the ability to help in a community.

There are a lot of skills that simply do not exist any more. My guess is, if I asked for a show of hands, and I went through the particular skills necessary to take and preserve, first of all to grow and then to preserve, the kinds of things that you would need for gardening and preserving food over winter, that among us there probably isn't anyone under the age of 15 that has a clue about how to do that. Learning how to cultivate and how to preserve food is a kind of skill set that is vanishing from the world. Everything is being mechanized. Everything is being automated, and we are relying upon distant sources for every day items. When in fact, if there's a disruption in the supply transportation system, you may find yourself in a position where it would be nice if you knew, not just how to grow food but how to preserve food.

Beyond that, carpentry skills. Blacksmithing. There are a number of fundamental skills. Learn something useful. Mechanics. Architecture. Engineering. A community is barren if there aren't people. Cowboy poetry may be the greatest thing that people enjoy to take their minds off the fact that every batch of stored tomatoes has now fermented and no one likes tomato wine. So, cowboy poetry, get some of it.

The best way to prepare is to prepare for a full life, and then bring the fullness of that with you to a community, and make everyone who gets in your presence richer by your presence. The songs that were sung, the talent that was exhibited, the mandolin that was played, the guitar that was played, the singing that went on here, those are important parts of rounding out a community. Prepare for life, and if you do, prepare to bless others' lives.

Question: Why did Jacob never write about his experience of seeing Jesus and why did he never talk about it with Sherem? Nephi says Jacob beheld Christ's glory in his youth, and later Nephi says that Jacob is a witness.

Denver: The only way in which Nephi could have said that Jacob beheld Christ's glory is if Jacob did in fact talk about it. The only way that Nephi could know that Jacob was also a witness is because Jacob explained, declared, [and] testified concerning it. I don't know what was going through the heads of those who maintained custody of the small plates of Nephi. But the small plates of Nephi appear to have been created one-hundred percent by Nephi, and then they were handed down.

Nephi wrote 85-90% of the small plates of Nephi material in First and Second Nephi and then he handed that record, with blank pages, to Jacob. Now, implied in that is, here is a record, it includes blank pages, you can add more. Apparently no one took any thought for generations to add more. If you read what happened to the plates in the handing down in the small books that follow after, some of the people made their carving on the very day that the plates were delivered to them. They said, "I've got the plates and now I'm turning the plates over to this guy. Tag, you're it." That's their entry into the record of the small plates of Nephi. No one appears to have looked at it and said, well, why don't we add yet more?

Nephi left explicit instructions. Early on when they arrived in the Americas he made the large plates, and on that there was history carved. It was approximately 30 years after that, it was 40 years from the time of the first experiences they had in the wilderness, so it was decades after the first experience, it was three decades after the large plates were made that the small plates were made, and the purpose for that was very specialized. Its purpose was not to record history. He says, the more history part of our people are on these other plates, so if you want to know everything that went on you need to go to the other plates because that is the location of which the history of the Nephites. He wanted only those points of sermons and teachings which were the high points, to lead the posterity, in order to come to Christ. That was the purpose of the small plates.

Apparently, whatever it was that Nephi learned about Jacob's experience in coming to Christ, he learned directly from Jacob, and in all probability it got recorded on the more history part, the large record, but Jacob's record – which he ends twice, he actually completes his record and then he writes a supplement or an addendum to his record – it's a well conceived, well executed, and well thought-out record that ends before he winds up with another episode that he thought really needed to go into the record. Then he adds onto that and his record ends a second time.

He had a very specific purpose in mind. He was following the example of Nephi, who gave a record, adopted the testimony or language of Isaiah in order for Nephi to testify to the things he had seen and he had heard, because he was forbidden from writing his own record about them, so he adopted the words of Isaiah to bear his own testimony, and then he ends, as our young Brother O'Rullian talked about in that 2 Nephi chapter 27-28 area. He even quotes a verse, (I'm using the LDS chapter and versification) 2 Nephi 28:14. The very first book I wrote, *The Second Comforter*, has a dedication in it that dedicates the book to the few who are the humble followers of Christ and cites 2 Nephi 28:14. Embedded within that verse is the reality that there are only a few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless they are lead, but in many instances they do err. So Nephi explains why he used the Isaiah text.

Jacob followed the example of his older brother and he does the same thing for the same purpose. He takes a lengthy, prophetic description of the house of Israel down to the end of the history of the world and into the millennium, which he turns into what's traditionally called Jacob chapter 5, to bear testimony of what God had shown him. He

begins, or prefaces, the Jacob chapter 5 material with saying, "I told all of the people to come up to hear me deliver a sermon on the morrow, and if you'll come up to the temple and hear me I will deliver to you a prophecy." The people come up and he says, here are the words of my prophecy, and then he quotes Zenos, because it is his prophecy, his – Jacob's – prophecy. It is his –Jacob's –vision. It is something he can testify to because he had seen it. It's unnecessary for Jacob to say, "I'm going to rewrite the entire allegory of the history of God's people into a new story. I'm going to drop vineyard and olive trees. I'm going to use apricots or strawberries or pomegranates or pineapple. I'm going to use pineapple. That way Rob Adolpho will identify and resonate with this when the final day comes. Aloha!"

I think that the testimony of Jacob and what Christ showed him is in Jacob chapter 5, and I think he was working on a text to try and duplicate the work that his elder brother had set, in the pattern that existed in the Book of Mormon before that.

Question: In your...they started to write "opinion" and then they crossed that out and wrote, "view," and then, parenthetically, "hopefully informed by scripture". (Kids are more candid than adults.) Would Zion and its temple be established before or after judgments are poured out on the world? And then he or she gives some examples: EMP, nuclear, ground war, et cetera.

Denver: It's really clear that you can use the scriptures to only figure out timing in a macro setting. Their purpose is not to permit you to figure it out in a micro setting and to be able to know when to buy and when to sell General Motors stock. If you knew that then you could frustrate God's work. But let me give an example:

There was a series of events that occurred during the creation of the world. At one point there is a counsel and in the counsel there is a selection that gets made. Two critical roles that were necessary to fulfill in this world was the role of the first father, or Adam, and the role of the Redeemer, or the Messiah. The first role to be filled was the Messiah, because the Messiah needed to redeem the whole of creation. In fact, it was as a result of the appointment and the identity of the Messiah that the creation itself could then proceed, because He then says, let us go down. The creation, in order for the Redeemer to redeem it, needed to be the Redeemer's creation. It needed to be infused with His ownership, possession, control, legal right, His inheritance. He had to choose him at the very beginning, before the creation itself could even commence.

There was one who stood up and said, "Hey, I want to be that role," and he was rejected. He resented the fact that he had not been chosen. In the new scriptures, the Old Covenants, the Book of Genesis, you get a description of those events, and in the Teachings and Commandments, where the Book of Abraham is preserved, you get another description there. You can find it in the Book of Revelation. You can find it in Isaiah. The best descriptions are in the Moses account in Genesis now, and Abraham's account. They get a conflict. One is disappointed with the conflict, and one is appointed, and then the creation proceeds.

The creation goes on for several indeterminate periods of time, during which certain milestones have to be achieved. They go down. They do a labor, and the labor is given the demarcation or identifying term of "day". You learn in the Book of Abraham that as they commence the labor of the first day that they go down to achieve this discrete part of the work. While they are doing that, it occupies perhaps some lengthy period while they watched and they waited, in order for certain things to come together. How long that lasted we don't know, because the labor is called "a day" but the labor took so long as the labor took. Time had not yet been appointed and so it could have been, in our temporal well that we live in, it could have been millennia. It could have lasted a long time but it's called a day. And they watched. This period of creation we have no way of knowing and I'm not going to conjecture, but it's a long period of time.

When it's all done you get, in two places, this really clearly put. One is just in a side comment by Christ. Christ says, "I saw Satan fall as lightening to the earth." Another place is in the Book of Revelation where John records that there was not "place found for him" any further in heaven and he was cast down to the earth. From that, we know that Lucifer's disappointment and consequently his invidious rebellion lasted from before the time when the first was chosen and the creation began, until finally the earth was finished. It had to be completed because he was cast down to the earth, and he can't be cast down to the earth if the earth does not exist.

You know from reading the scriptures and taking them all as one and putting them together, that information leaks out. There must be a people in a city of righteousness in which the tabernacle of God has been erected, looking up when the Lord returns. There must be a period of destruction of the wicked that precedes the Lord's coming. How much those events may overlap...

Sometimes I get in trouble.

It's apparent to me that some skills exist that the Lord is going to require in order to complete the House of God. It cannot be completed if, as a result of warfare and disruption, there is no ability to get those skills employed in the work of fashioning and fabricating the appointments that are necessary for the House of God. I don't know how much of an overlap there is going to be but there certainly has to be some very specific things done to make the House of God suitable and appropriate for the restoration of the original religion. I think that the New Jerusalem has to be in existence, the House of God has to be in existence, it has to be accepted by Him, and there has to be a righteous group of people that are gathered and looking forward to His return. Sometimes God is a minimalist, and the way in which prophecy gets fulfilled is so modest that it can escape the notice of all the great ones of that age, as in the coming of Christ when He was born in Bethlehem. Sometimes He does rather dramatic things like the cleansing that occurred on this land before He visited the people in Bountiful.

Question: What is your best method for interpreting scriptures?

Denver: Number one, I assume that all the scriptures are trying to tell me the same thing and they are not trying to contradict one another. There are simply different facets triangulating in onto the same subject matter. I have learned through a legal career that it is possible for multiple witnesses to all be telling the truth, yet giving very different accounts of exactly the same event, and it's because of the vantage point of the observer. I don't think that you can take many of the prophets and divorce them from their day and have them be sensitive and focused on a distant audience in another language, at another time, with another culture. One of the very best at doing that was Nephi. Isaiah did that but his focus was on the house of Israel and the remnants of the house of Israel. As Nephi said, it must necessarily be so that he speaks concerning the gentiles, because you can't get this far down in history without the mingling of the blood between the one and the other. Nephi wrote, but he had a very particular audience in mind. He had the gentiles to whom the Book of Mormon would come in the last days, and he talks as if that's his audience. He wants to speak to us. He wants us to be informed about how it all fits together.

I got into a lot of trouble with the powers that be in the LDS Church because I took what Nephi wrote and the prophecies that came through Joseph Smith, and I said, let's assume that Nephi knew what he was talking about concerning our day, and let's assume that Joseph's prophecies are addressed to our day. What would our history look like if we wrote it from the humbled standpoint of people who had incurred God's ire because of the way in which we had failed to measure up to what had been asked of us? The Book of Mormon rather looks like the gentiles are going to get it and fail with it.

Christ's prophecy, in the LDS version in chapter 16 of 3rd Nephi, talks candidly about when the gentiles shall reject the fullness. If we take Christ at His word then we only have two choices. One choice is that the glorious gentiles have not yet rejected God's word and, therefore, everything is intact and all is well in Zion, but we're going to. The second option is, the gentiles managed to reject the fullness of the gospel right then upon the death of Joseph. If you read what the Lord said in January 1841, he described how you could know whether or not the gentiles, to whom the restoration came, were going to be rejected.

If they were not moved out of their place, and they were blessed and God defended them, then they've done what God asked. But if they were driven out of their place, and they suffered scourging and sore trials after being run out of their place in Nauvoo, then you could know that they didn't measure up. I accepted the premise that prophecy ought to control the themes of history instead of our theoretical reconstruction of history like historians and scholars do. If we're humble enough to say, we're not going to try and write a historian's account, we're going to try and write what the prophets told us would happen, well then, it looks rather like *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

My method of interpreting scripture is to try to take them all as one, to take them literally, to try and understand them. In particular, if they're condemning me, if they're warning me, if they're telling me to repent, to take it personally and to assume that I'm not great, I'm not right, I'm not all that, and that like so many who have gone before, I can fail. I

can fail miserably, and that only through the humble acceptance of every word that comes out of God's mouth can I have any hope for salvation.

Question: In the Covenants and Commandments Section 33 it says, "And I, John, saw that He received not the fullness at first... and in this way He qualified (different from D&C 93) to be called to become the Son of God[.]" Could you elaborate on "qualified" and "become"?

Denver: There is actually another place in Alma where Alma is talking about how, in the first place, they were all on the same level and that it was through heed and diligence that some rose above, and so they qualified to become called to the Holy Order.

If I had a board I would draw a line and I'd say, in the beginning when the souls of men are created, we all stand on exactly the same plane, there's none greater and there's none less. Everyone stayed on the same plane. There was God the Father, and God the Mother. These were exalted beings whose glory surpasses all description. But we, their children, are not like them. They are something altogether much greater. Jesus Christ was the one who – the words are "heed and diligence" in Alma – gave heed and diligence to what the Father commanded. And so Christ began to rise in glory, in knowledge, in intelligence. The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. He became a greater light. He became a possessor of greater truth. Christ rose above. In fact, I think the argument can be made from scripture that we collectively, and perhaps every one of us individually, could not have faith that we could be like God the Father until Jesus Christ proved, that by His heed and diligence, it was possible to become like God the Father. We gained faith through Christ in the Father, because Christ proved the word of God, so much so that Christ came to be known as the Word of God. Whatever the word of the Father was, that did Christ. When we saw Christ's ability to rise up as a consequence of that, we had faith in the Father through Christ. And so Christ's example as the Word of God led us to have faith that if we were to do the same thing, that is, give heed and diligence to the words, that we might likewise rise up.

Christ qualified to be the Son of God by giving "heed and diligence" to the word of the Father. And we, in turn, gained faith in the plan, in the word of the Father, by witnessing what it was that Christ exemplified. As a consequence of that we had the faith to come here, to place ourselves in peril, knowing that the only way you get out of this world is through death, and that the grave can forever take possession of and imprison the dead unless someone rescues you from death and hell. We had the confidence to come here knowing that when we arrived these tabernacles are not going to last. Sometimes they wear out before we get a chance to exit here, but if you work them hard they work better, so exercise. Take your vitamins.

Christ qualified, not because he was created uniquely, individually, and differently, or occupied a different level than did we at the beginning. Christ qualified because he gave heed and diligence in a way that exemplified the plan of the Father and the possibility that all of us can likewise do the same thing.

Some of these questions are so good that I'm going to keep them and I'll probably talk about this in the future. I like that one a lot.

Question: Are there any signs in the heavens we should be watching for?

Denver: Yes.

I'm pretty sure you're getting tired of hearing me talk, and I know that there are other things that people want to take care of before they leave here today. I'm going to hold onto these and try and fashion another talk at some point in the future. Here is one I'll mention.

Question: How often should we be getting rebaptized?

Denver: There was a time when baptism was done as a sign of commitment or recommitment. For example, in the Kirtland temple they had an ordinance that they initiated involving the washing of feet. When that was first done, several of the people who wrote about it in their journals mentioned that they would like to do that every year on that same date; they would like to come back and go through the same experience. You go one year later and there was a little of that, but as you get further down the road on the annual, they wound up with a mess on their hands in Kirtland and it was discontinued. That was a similar kind of ordinance practice, the purpose of which was designed to turn over a new leaf, put sins behind, rededicate yourself, and be more committed.

Joseph once commented that daily repentance and daily returning to God is not pleasing to God because He expects you, when you repent, to stay committed, but if at any time a person feels the desire to be rebaptized as a sign of renewed commitment to God, I don't think there is anything wrong in it. If you're rebaptized one time as someone who is accepting God's work as part of a new dispensation, that is the only one you ever need to report to the Recorder's Clearinghouse. All other baptisms are for your own personal edification.

When they had a wooden font in the basement of the incomplete Nauvoo temple, they instituted an ordinance of baptizing seven times for healing, akin to the captain of the Syrian host coming to Ahab to be healed of leprosy and the king sending the captain of the Syrian host to Elijah, and Elijah telling him to go be baptized seven times in the Jordan River. Elijah did not even come out to meet him, he just sent word. The captain was indignant and left, and his cohort said, "Well, if he'd asked you to do some great thing you'd have done that. This is a trivial thing. Why aren't you willing to do the trivial thing?" It persuaded him. He went back, he dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River, and he was healed of his leprosy. That's when the story really gets interesting because it involves graft incorruption of the priesthood but we won't go there.

When Emma Smith was ill, she had been blessed but things hadn't gotten better for her. Joseph had Emma in the wooden font of the Nauvoo temple baptized seven times for the healing of the sick. It wasn't baptism for renewal or recommitment, it was baptism for healing, which is a completely different purpose.

There was a time in pioneer Utah when baptisteries in the temples were used for baptisms for healing, being baptized seven times for healing. That was accepted but it's been long since discontinued. In fact, that practice is little known and rarely practiced. I think I've only seen it done one time. But I was there when it was done once among us, and I see nothing wrong with that. Rebaptism as a dedication I think ought to be when you feel the need to rededicate yourself. I don't think anyone should be forbidden from being rebaptized. But report it for recording at the Recorder's Clearinghouse only one time.

I have said before and I'll say it again: Anyone who wants to be rebaptized – a Catholic priest or a Mormon mission president – anyone who wants to be rebaptized is welcome to be rebaptized. We don't exercise control over anyone. We're interested in studying, knowing, and obeying the gospel of Christ. If you feel some denominational loyalty, I don't care if you want to be a Mason, or you want to be a Knights of Columbus, if you want to be a Baptist, or you want to have fellowship with Presbyterians. Rebaptism is a sign that you have accepted the restoration that began through Joseph Smith and has recently been renewed again with God willing to extend a covenant to the gentiles. We're not trying to organize anyone into a group in which some preside over another.

I only come here and talk because I'm invited. I don't presume I have the right to be here. If I'm not invited, I won't speak. I may come but I won't speak. Everyone, in my view, occupies the equal and exact position as do I. There is no one greater and there's certainly no one lesser. Among the people that I have come to know, some of you are great individuals who have lived more commendable lives than have I. I mentioned that I grew up in Mountain Home, Idaho. If it wasn't criminal, it wasn't entertaining when we were kids. Heavens, the Supreme Court Justice who has been accused of inappropriate conduct would have been a paragon of virtue in my high school.

I admire and look up to many of you. I think that in some respects, God wants to make sure that no one haughty, proud, and who thinks themselves better than another, will ever be permitted to speak on His behalf. I think God wants the weak things of the world, I think He wants the broken things, the things that have no doubt about their admiration for God because they see nothing about themselves that's worthy of admiration. Someone who only wants to be as accurate [and] as truthful as they can be, and to trust God as the author and the finisher of His work. To get themselves out of the way and let God be the one who is the mover.

I bear testimony of the things that God has said to me. I communicate them as honestly and as forthrightly as I'm able to do, but I take no credit for it. I don't pretend that I deserve to be anything. I think many of you are greater people than you hardly comprehend.

You young people, early in your life, having an opportunity to grow up without many of the regrets and foolishness and stupidity that others... I did not seriously cross the restoration's path until I was 19 years old. You are growing up exposed to it so early in life that you can become an encyclopedia of truth if you'll dedicate yourself to it. The gospel is vast and it is glorious. It is edifying. Don't waste your time with science fiction. The gospel is far more interesting. It has so much more reach.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Hey, that Book of Mormon is up here. Someone with bad eyesight, hobble up here and grab it.

2018.11.03 7th Address to Christians

What is God Up To Today?

November 3, 2018

Boise State University, Boise, Idaho

Christ made a comment about those that would be able to enter into the Kingdom of God and he said that:

"Except you become as a little child, you shall not be able to enter into that Kingdom." (Matt: 18:3)

And that thought about what it means to be "as a little child" is one worth considering. It's one worth puzzling over.

Hold that thought for a moment because I want to talk about a related subject and that's **perfection**. Every one of us, if I say the word perfection, every one of us have **something** that comes to mind. In the course of your life, my guess is that every one of you have had moments that you could point to and say, that moment was absolutely perfect. There's nothing about it that I would have changed.

When you ride a motorcycle; roads have a design that is, for safety reasons, capable of handling traffic at speeds that are called the design speed, which means that a vehicle can operate up to that design speed, on that road, safely. But the speed limit is **never** the design speed. Because they build in this margin of **safety**, so they **tell** you to drive five or ten or 15 miles **below** the design speed of the road so that there's a margin of safety built into it. If you're riding a motorcycle on a road, particularly a rural, winding road, like Idaho five that goes from the Montana border to the Washington border, and you go the posted speed limit, the motorcycle does **not** cooperate with you. It doesn't like that speed. It's hard to handle. But if you speed up, where the motorcycle and the road and you are in syncopation with one another and you're riding at the design speed, **everything** is **easier**. In fact, it is almost **thoughtless** as you go. The rhythm of the road, the design of the road, the pace the motorcycle is at, **everything** about that.

On Idaho five, there are places where the banking - they call it "super elevation" - of the road is 25 or 30 miles an hour above the posted speed limit. We were returning from the Black Hills of South Dakota, coming through Northern Idaho on Idaho five, going the design speed. It was a moment of absolute perfection, when the joy of the experience, the feel of the humidity, the pace of the road, everything about that moment was perfect until it was interrupted by an Idaho State patrolman, who **fortunately** was pointed in the **opposite direction** as we went by at the design speed of the road. Well, he had a lot of recovery to do to reorient himself, and to start from zero, to get to where we were. And we happened into, fortunately, a little village and went a block off the road, found a gas station, hopped off and there was a fellow there who owned, he owned a Moto Guzzi, which in northern Idaho is a pretty rare a motorcycle to be driving. It's a V-twin, but unlike a Harley Davidson, which is an inline V-twin with a front and a back, this one has V's that go out either side. It's still a V. It's not like a BMW, that's a Boxster, horizontally

opposed. And so we acted like we'd been there all week. And the police came through, making their noise and they went on their happily way. And he said, "They looking for you?" We said, "That's possible, but..."

There are moments where, because you can't be planning next week or regretting last month, you can't be doing anything other than that moment. If you're on the bike and your mind is elsewhere and you're going the design speed and your mind is elsewhere, you can kill yourself or you can badly injure yourself. You can do extraordinarily stupid, haphazard, dangerous things if you're not absolutely in the moment. Perfection is one of those things which occurs absolutely in the moment. Think back over your lifetime at those moments when you would not change a thing. You were so content, there was nothing else that you would want or change about that moment.

There's a character, a samurai, that an American struggled to try and understand in the movie, "The Last Samurai". And although they grew to have this friendship with one another, Kamatsu always, Katsumoto, was always looking for the perfect cherry blossom. He would study the cherry tree as it blossomed in the Spring at his, outside his own temple, always looking for the perfect cherry blossom and never finding...there was always a problem with it. Well, as he lay dying on the battlefield, at the end of his life, one of his last breaths, he's looking up and seeing in the distance the cherry trees blooming, and he observes, "Perfect, **they** are **all** perfect." And it didn't matter what flaws they had. The fact is they were all perfect.

I can remember sometime . . . the scene presents itself vividly in my mind. I can't tell you how old I was or what grade I was in, but during recess, playing marbles with friends - and recess was maybe 15 minutes - but it was timeless. Out, playing marbles with a friend, in the dirt with your marble, all eternity could come and go in that moment of such profound contentment.

I have dogs. And dogs are always content and we're told that dogs do not have any sense of time. They may live only 10 to 12 years, but as far they're concerned they've lived for all eternity, because there's a timelessness to the experience of being a dog. They're not in a hurry to get somewhere, unless of course you've got the leash and you're going to take them out, in which event they'll anticipate that moment, but there's a **timelessness** to the idea of perfection.

I can recall an afternoon, I had come out of my house and I was sitting on the front porch. And I was all alone. The temperature that day must have been exactly the same temperature as the temperature of my skin so that I could not tell where **outside** of me and **inside** of me began and ended by feeling the breeze. The **temperature** was **exactly** the same temperature as I felt. **And** it was **so calm** an afternoon...**so calm** a **moment** sitting there that I was taken in by the moment itself. A **bird** flew by and I could **feel**, I could **feel** the movement of the bird's wings through the vibration of the air because it was **just that calm**. I **thought**, as I sat there, **this is Heaven. This, this moment, this experience, this is Heaven** because it, at that moment, was perfect, something that I would not change.

I was out walking and I came upon this songbird that was just singing the happiest little tune you could ever imagine. I don't know what kind of bird it was, but it was sparrow-size and small and very happy and singing its tune and doing all that God endowed it to do. And I came upon **it abruptly** and, because of where it had situated itself and because of where I came upon it from, it was trapped. And it was singing loudly. And when I got there, it was so loud and so startling that I stopped and looked at it and it **immediately** stopped singing. And it knew, it was like the bird realized, if I wanted to I could capture it, if I wanted to I could kill it, if I wanted to I could exercise whatever control I wanted over the bird. And it **looked frightened**, less than an arm's length away. Foolish to let a human get that close to you, in that vulnerable a spot. And the stopping of the singing was so abrupt. It's like the last notes still hung in the air as this frightened little creature looked at me. And I thought, "Hey, I'm harmless," but it doesn't know that. So I thought, "What's the best way to communicate to this trapped little animal that I'm harmless?" I turned and I walked away and I tried to whistle a little like what the bird had been whistling like. Miserable imitation. I mean, it was probably screeching to that poor thing, but I whistled as I'm walking away. And within a few steps, if there's anyway to describe it, I would say that the bird's tune resumed on a happier note than it had been before. **That** was a moment that was perfect.

I'm sure every one of you have had moments in your life that you can point to and recall and say, that moment, that incident, **that** was perfect. If we can conceive of perfection, or if we can experience it even for just a moment, that means perfection exists. It's real. It's attainable. It can be had, even in this place, and even with you, and even with me, perfection is possible.

In this creation, there are two opposing forces that cause everything there is to be and to exist. Those two opposing forces are not good and evil, although we tend to **call** them "good" and **call** them "evil". The two opposing forces are, in fact, love and fear. Everything that is **generative** or **creative** comes about as a consequence of love. If you think about all the problems that people have with one another and what would solve them, the one thing that could solve **every problem** is love, if we loved one another enough. And all of those vices, all of the suffering, the anger, the pride, the envy, the impatience, the greed have their **root** in fear: "I fear I will not have enough and therefore I envy. I fear for my own inability, and therefore I resent your ability." Everything that produces negativity comes about as a consequence of fear.

The apostle Paul, in a letter to the Ephesians, wrote:

*"...that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one **all things** in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, in Him."
(Ephesians 1:10)*

The entire history of Christianity is plagued with disunity. **Christianity** was **born** inside the crucible of disunity. When **Christ** sent **12 messengers** out as missionaries to deliver the message, calling them apostles, which simply means someone with a

message, he sent these twelve out, and they brought 12 different **versions** of what **they** learned from Jesus. And there was no attempt at having a unified message.

The **earliest** studies of the Christian faith focus not upon **Christianity** in **aggregate**, but the various forms that Christianity took as a consequence of **which one of the apostles** happened to be teaching their **particular view**. And then the apostle **Paul** comes along and **teaches** yet another view. And so you have such strong disunity among Christians in the first generations that by the time you get to the third century, **Christians** are **killing Christians over Christianity** because they harbor that much resentment at the different views that were held. I don't know if the word 'fortunately' or if the word 'unfortunately' should be applied, but fortuitously, as it turns out, when Constantine wanted to unite his Roman empire, one of the features of the unification of that empire that he recognized he needed to incorporate was **religious** unity. And so he chose Christianity to become the new **state** religion of a unified **Roman** empire that he was trying to hold on to and manage as a single intercontinental empire; **only to learn**, after he had made Christianity the official state religion, that that would not do the empire any good because Christians within his empire were killing other Christians within his empire **over Christianity**. And so he convened, under house arrest, a group of bishops at **Nicaea**, which in **hindsight** in order to **portray it** as something really good and inspired, the house arrest of all the bishops to force them into a unified statement is now called the first great ecumenical council of Nicaea, which is a fancy way of putting a positive spin on a very ugly moment in which the emperor **didn't** give a **crap** what they **agreed** on, **he just wanted an agreement**: "If I'm going to make this infernal **Christianity the Roman state religion, by damn, it better be a religion in which I can have peace!**" It's practical, it's pragmatic. But it **certainly doesn't guarantee** you a form of Christianity that bears anything other than the hallmarks of compromise in order to **solve the violence**.

And so we get the state religion of Rome which evolves over time from being the Roman empire, and Catholic meaning universal church, to the **Holy Roman Empire**, which is Catholicism. And you had a **period** of **relative Christian** unity. **Unity** marked by the **absence** of **killing one another, not necessarily** the **absence** of a **Christian spirit**, because Christianity itself became a political power broker, in which there were really only a couple of professions that had the status that would allow you to enjoy a good life, and one of them was being in the clergy. And so, the **clergy** became politically and it became **economically** a source of power. And the Holy Roman Empire, in the form of the Catholic church, exercised all of the abuses and excesses that you would expect from any kind of dictatorial government that has power over people.

People that have power tend not to be respectful of those that lack power. And if you can treat people as your servants, your slaves, your serfs, then you treat them accordingly. And so Christianity developed into a monolithic and very abusive control, centered in the Roman clergy, headquartered in Rome. For a **whole** variety of reasons, including **ambitious**, local kings who wanted to declare their own independence from the Roman hegemony and who wanted their own ability to waylay the money that was

being aggregated through the church and getting exported. They wanted to keep that money locally and get their own hands on it.

A moment came in 1517, when it was possible for Martin Luther, pricked as he was in his conscience because he **believed** what Paul had written, he **believed** what Matthew, Mark, and Luke had recorded. He **believed** in the faith. And he saw that what was acting itself out on the stage of life bore **no** resemblance to the lofty perfection that is spoken of in the teachings of the New Testament. He simply had had enough, but his life was spared because politically there was a political leader who saw some advantage in providing protection to Martin Luther. And so Martin Luther was spared from what had happened to others who had rebelled against Rome. He wasn't burned at the stake. He was instead allowed to post his disagreement and ultimately found a new **brand** of Christianity in which he believed it would be more **authentically** Christian and less **inauthentically** autocratic and authoritarian. But just like what happened in the New Testament, with the 12 apostles, **immediately** upon the emergence of **Lutheranism we get**, in the same generation - these people met and spoke with one another - John Knox, John Calvin, Zwingli, Martin Luther.

Not only did the fracturing of Roman hegemony cause **Protestantism**, but **Protestantism immediately began** to say, "We disagree with you about..." - choose your topic - and you have multiple Protestant denominations immediately springing into existence. And what had been coercive unity through Roman dictatorship and artificial unification of Christianity for a millenium and a half. Immediately upon the first fissure showing up, you have fracture after fracture and disunity after disunity, because Christianity simply disagreed about so many things. And it was **inconceivable**, **inconceivable** to them that Christianity did not require you to divide up into mutually exclusive camps in which **your** brand of Christianity ought to be, at least claimed to be, **superior** to **their** brand of Christianity. And if heaven is only for those who have the truest form of Christianity, then those people really need to go to hell because they aren't quite Christian enough in the **truest** way, in the most meaningful way, in the **most correct** way.

So let's go back and read that verse again:

*"...that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one **all things** in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, in Him."
(Ephesians 1:10)*

All things. I don't know how many of you sitting here today hearing those who have spoken about Buddhism or speaking about the Native American tradition or speaking about Messianic Judaism. I don't know how many of you sitting here today have thought, "**That speaker** has said something **true**, and **I believe that**." Whether you think that may be part of Christianity or the **teachings of Christ or not**, when you hear truth... The dispensation of the fulness of times, which has to occur before the return of the Lord, has to gather together **in one all things**. If that **thing** to be **gathered** has been fractured and lost to Christianity, but **preserved** in Hinduism; if that **thing** to be

gathered is a truth lost to Christianity, **broken** away and **preserved** in Buddhism; if that **thing** to be **gathered** into one appears **anywhere**, then in the dispensation of the fulness of times it all must be brought back and gathered into one.

If you take a piece of art, sculpture, and you **fracture** the sculpture into bits, and then you gather the bits and you reassemble them, you will not have the unity and the perfection of the original until **every piece** has been found, **every piece** has been gathered, and **every piece** has been put into its proper perspective; only when they've all been gathered and only when they've all been put in their **proper place**, because the sculpture ought not look like Picasso and the cubists. It **ought to look like what it was when originally formed**. When that happens, so that you can now see the beauty that's there, then you've completed the gathering. But the prediction is that it will gathered together **in one in Christ**, so it doesn't matter if you're a Hindu and you think Christ is outside, he is other than our tradition. Your tradition must be gathered home also into Christ because it fits there. And if you're Buddhist and you say, "Ours is not a religion but a philosophy, a way of thinking, a way of disciplining the mind." That way of thinking, that way of disciplining the mind likewise must be gathered together in Christ for it to find its home. Because the purpose is the salvation and eternal life of every being, of every person. Until we gather all the parts, it is **not** possible to **gather** in one **all things** that belong with Christ. The **search** must be **global**, the **search** and the **invitation** must cross cultures, traditions, religions.

You see, the philosophy that motivated Constantine in coercing Christian unity was the desire to see Christians not fight with one another. If you say fighting with one another is the evil end to be avoided, there are really only two ways to approach conquering that evil end to be avoided. One of them is to do what Constantine and the Popes have attempted and what some other centrally-controlled religious organizations likewise attempt today, and that is by **coercion** and **exclusion** and **punishment to discipline** the adherents so that they fall in line. That is a compressive, coercive, and dictatorial way of trying to achieve the Christian unity that we seek after.

Another more benign way of attempting exactly the same thing is to say, "You are free in all your thinking, in all your beliefs. We require **very** little of you. We believe in the Doctrine Of Christ, which was read to us here today. It's very short. **Belief** in Christ, **belief** in His Father, **acceptance** of the Holy Ghost, being baptized in faith, and then **allowing** that Holy Spirit, that Holy Ghost, to animate you in your search for truth." And if we begin with **diversity**, then we begin with appreciation for that diversity, because coming together in the unity that Paul speaks of, **in the dispensation of the fulness of times, is not because someone beat you into submission. It's because someone had something to say that resonated as truth to you in such a compelling way that you found yourself persuaded**. You found yourself **enticed** to accept it, you found yourself **prizing** it, and you **welcomed** it, and you embraced it. And if someone has not yet embraced it, you explain to them why it's delicious to you. And if they reject it for a season, **that's okay too**.

Joseph Smith had a revelation that was actually dictated from beyond the veil and then recorded by a scribe, read back, and then once the transcript was read back and it was correct, Joseph and Sidney Rigdon, who shared in the vision with him, said, "Yes, that's correct," and then it would move on. This is part of that revelation. It's talking about people who at the end of this experience, in this world find themselves disappointed by what they did not accomplish while they were here. They did not accomplish what they wanted because they received not the gospel neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenants.

When he [Gary Gibson] spoke of the Book of Mormon earlier today, the whole text of the Book of Mormon comes down to **experience after experience** being retold by people who during their lifetime they had this opening up of the heavens to them and they came into contact with Jesus Christ, having the heavens open to them and recognizing who He is and what His role was. It's an experience that they **tell over and over** again, throughout the entirety of the Book of Mormon, because the people that wrote the accounts in the Book of Mormon had had that experience.

The testimony of Jesus is not something that comes from **you**, "I have this, and let me tell it to you." The testimony of Jesus is something that **He gives** to you as **His confirmation** to you that you have part in His kingdom. To receive the testimony of Jesus is to **receive** from Him the promise that **He** will give you eternal life. The Book of Mormon is filled with accounts of people that had had that experience. And that's, at one point, an expected and normal part of the Christian experience. It became very rare, unexpected, and in fact is denounced by many denominations as something that doesn't happen, can't happen, ought not happen, and if you've think you've come into contact with a divine being then you've been misled because, well, "Jesus is busy and He can't be troubled with **your** lot. He's getting ready for the second coming. He's got a lot of wicked to burn. He's got stuff to do. And so don't think that you're going to have an encounter with Jesus." However, my view is that Christian salvation is based upon the testimony of Jesus to you of your salvation.

I also think that it **doesn't** matter when you live, or what the circumstances were, if you are true and faithful to Him, **you will have that experience**. In the case of Stephen, in the Book of Acts, He was in the process of being **stoned to death**, and it was in the **last moments** of his life that the heavens opened up to him. He saw Christ. He forgave the people who were in the act of killing him because he was filled with a devotion that comes from having Christ Jesus confirm and testify to Stephen of his salvation. And he parted this life rejoicing.

Joseph Smith had an older brother whose name was Alvin who **died** when Joseph was still a young man. In the **last** moments of his older brother Alvin's life, Alvin said that there were angels in the room and that the angels were talking to him and that he was conversing with them. Many years later, Joseph Smith had a vision of the celestial kingdom, and in the celestial kingdom he saw his brother Alvin and he wondered, "Why is that Alvin got to be in the glorious afterlife when he died before the gospel had been fully restored?" And he was told **anyone, anyone** who would have accepted the truth,

the gospel, the testimony of Jesus, the prophets and the everlasting covenants, **anyone who would have done that**, even if they die when it's unavailable, they will be saved.

St. Francis believed in and practiced the Sermon on the Mount. St. Francis lived at a time when Catholic hegemony made Catholicism **'it': the only religion**, the only brand of Christianity. He went to the pope and he said he wanted to found an order, the Franciscan order, and they would take a vow of poverty and they would practice the Sermon on the Mount. And the pope told him, "Well that's ridiculous, no one can do that. And if you can find people who will do this, come back and ask me again. But this can't be." St. Francis was known, if you saw him in winter, cold, without a coat and you gave him a coat, he'd accept the coat. And He'd wear it until he met the next person that needed it more than he and then he would give it away. So he was always needing coats and always giving away what little he had. St. Francis found 12 men who would practice that order. And the pope gave him the Franciscan order. In the last days of St. Francis' life, at a time when the only brand of Christianity was corrupt, St. Francis said that angels were coming and ministering to him. I believe it to be an authentic part of every Christian's life.

I believe there's a revelation that talks about how there are those people who will **not taste death because** it shall be **sweet** unto them. Why do they not taste death? Because death means *bitterness*. And if, in the authentic Christian's life, the final moments that they spend here are caught up with the testimony of Jesus, confirming that they have part with Him in his Kingdom, like Stephen, in the very act of being stoned to death, they part this life rejoicing, because whatever they're going through, it doesn't matter, it's joyful to be reunited with that person who represents perfection itself.

The **highest aspirations**, the **highest** ideals of Buddhism are present in the Gospel of Christ. The **highest ideals** of Hinduism are present in the Gospel of Christ. The problem is that, in that disunity, in the fracturing, **some of the bits** of the sculpture that left Christian awareness and departed into the East but were retained by the Hindus are understood by them, are practiced and accepted by them, but they're outside of the typical Christian awareness. You will not understand the sayings of Jesus the same if you could put on Hindu eyes for a moment and read what is in the sayings and the teachings of Jesus Christ and of His followers. You'll not understand the teachings of Christ as well until you've put on Buddhist eyes and you've relooked at the gospel of Christ through that prism, because part of the picture will be missing. Christianity may be **disciplined and had its story down**, but it lacks the depth, the richness, the kindness, the texture - it lacks the meditative power that you find in Buddhism and Hinduism. As you heard from the people practicing those philosophies, religions, viewpoints today, the fact is that they're fractured too. Part of reunifying everything in Christ is going to reunify the Hindu world as well, reunify the Buddhist world as well.

The title that my talk was given is, "What is God up to Today?" He's up to the work and the challenge of reuniting **all things in one, in Christ; not by exclusion and subtraction and coercion**, but **by openness** and by addition and by tolerance.

Thank you.

2018.11.10 Remembering the New Covenant

November 10, 2018

Graceland University, Lamoni, IA

I have come to realize that everyone's religion is eccentric. And it doesn't matter how plausible an explanation they can make for it if you give them enough time. The first blush expression of whatever the religion is, it's always eccentric.

I was talking to a law partner of mine who is— He's extraordinarily orthodox, mainstream Latter-day Saint. He's been in a bishopric; I think he's in a high council right now. And I'm currently an excommunicated, former member of the LDS church who is a religious fugitive and vagabond at the moment. And he was— They're very careful not to talk religion with me at my law firm because who knows, the contamination of heresy may spread, and so everyone kind of avoids the subject. And I said, "Everyone's religion is eccentric." And he said, "No, no, not like this other guy..." And I said, "Wait a minute. You believe God is so pissed at the world that He wants to beat the world for their sins, and so to placate Himself, He sent a son here, and He killed the son or had the son killed, and that satisfied this angry God. And you believe this, and you think that that's truth." And he said, "Well, there's more to it." And I said, "Of course there's more to it! But if I want to put it in terms that make it appear to be out of proportion, it's possible to do so, and you can do that with any religion. Doesn't matter what it is."

So, I actually blame you people—probably these two on-campus ministerial folks. I blame you people for me becoming a Latter-day Saint. Now follow the logic on this.

I was raised by a Baptist mother. My father was Christian and a mason; he had hoped that I would join the Masonic lodge. And he put up with the Baptist minister coming for Sunday dinner, which was always fried chicken and mashed potatoes. (I don't know what it is about Baptist ministers that provoke the fried chicken. They do, and it's actually pretty good, so I was always glad to see the minister come if not for any other reason than the meal.)

Growing up, I never had the conviction that the Baptists really had the answer. So by the time I entered the military, I was vaguely Christian and unbaptized. And because **you** people didn't send out any missionaries, and Salt Lake **did** send out missionaries, I was confronted with the Joseph Smith story and all that by the LDS version of the Restoration. I didn't even know there was another version that was out there at the time. And they challenged me to read the Book of Mormon as part of the missionary discussions. And I read— They had earmarked, gave me a free copy, and I read those pages. And they wanted to know, after I'd read them, what my impression was. And I can still tell you exactly the words of my answer. I said, "It's gotta be scripture. It's every bit as boring as the Bible." And I meant it. It did not connect for me. In fact, there was so much about the Restoration that my mother had told me, and I had that point of view that Bryce spoke about already embedded in me that made it impossible for me to really see this other paradigm that they were trying to advance and get me to buy into.

The angel who appeared to Joseph Smith preliminary to the Book of Mormon plates being shown to him said, [paraphrased] Your name shall be had for both good and evil, or that people everywhere are going to speak of you in terms of both good and evil [see Joseph Smith History 1:33.]

I grew up with a Baptist mother who only spoke evil of Joseph Smith. So to me, Joseph was not to be trusted. He was a scoundrel. He was a predator. He was the epitome of what goes wrong when someone seizes upon the idea of a religion to advance their own personal lies, agenda, wealth, power, and influence.

It really came as quite a surprise to me when we were at the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont, on a campout— They had a stake president; they had a fireside. The stake president got up, and he told the story of David and Goliath, which is Biblical (my mom had drilled that into me), except that he took this story as if it were actually true, as if all these people and all these events had really happened. And it struck me that there was a kind of naive, innocent literalism to what this guy was doing with the religion, and it was Biblical. And to me it was disarming; it was a little unsettling. How can a Mormon devotee of this imposter, tell a Biblical story in a way that evidences not only acceptance, but persuaded me that there might be more to it? He had actually computed the height of Goliath. Today, we have NBA players that are nearly that height. I mean, to me Goliath was like some Hollywood-animated character. No, he was of an attainable height. And the size of the spear that he threw—he calculated that. He gave that number, and I thought, "Actually, the guy who is nearly nine feet tall could throw a spear that has..." Everything about it seems plausible. Everything about the story he told convinced me that maybe, maybe there's something there. A kernel. Maybe there's a little spark of something good, even in this horrible, flawed religion developed by an imposter.

Well, they had a visitor center. And the visitor center had literature. The fellow I was with — They had what was called the Doctrine and Covenants. That's about that much of this book. The fellow I was with at the visitor's center told me there was something in that book I ought to read. I assumed that if you're gonna take a book, and you're gonna start dog-earing it that you're going to have to pay for it. And he had dog-eared the page, and I thought, "Gah, you haven't even paid for this thing, and you're wrecking these people's book." And this elderly lady behind the counter told me that the book was mine. And I said, "Uh... I didn't bring any money, and I'm not..." And she said, "No, no, we give these away." And I thought, "Wow, foolish people. Here they are, they're giving their stuff away. And here, it's now my book, and you've dog-eared it? What the...what are you messing with my book for?"

The section that he had dog-eared is one that is common to both the RLDS and the Community of Christ, and that is the vision of the redemption of the dead that is Section 76 in the LDS version. It has a different number in the Community of Christ. But it is a vision of the redemption of the dead, in which during the translation or the editorial revisions that Joseph Smith made to the New Testament, in the Gospel of John, he comes across a statement concerning the afterlife which made him wonder about the

segregation of people in the afterlife and the two categories of heaven and hell, and there had to be something more to that. And the vision of the redemption of the dead unfolds. I read that, and my reaction— The only way I can describe it is I was thunderstruck. How could a man who is an imposter and a deceiver compose a transcript of such sublime meaning and beauty as this? It was at that moment, for the first time, that I thought there may be more to Joseph Smith than what my Baptist mother has told me.

It's a fearsome thing to let loose of the anchor that holds you in the harbor that you were raised with as a child. But it was at that moment, whether I was willing to cut that anchor or not, that the chain was broken. Because if my mom could be wrong about the potential virtue of Joseph Smith, she could be wrong about a number of other things. Therefore, the search into the restoration of the gospel actually began as a consequence of that moment.

Now, the missionaries were persistent, basically because there's no one in New England that was interested in Mormonism at the time. I had joined the military. I grew up in Idaho. And I had been assigned to New Hampshire. In New Hampshire, it was the New England States mission, and I don't know how many missionaries they had out in that mission (a couple hundred, I guess), and **one** of them had actually managed to get **one** person who was willing to put up with their pamphleteering and film-stripping. And so I'm pretty sure that in their zone and regional meetings they talked about their investigator. Reluctant though I was, I was the guy that showed some interest.

As the stories unfolded, and you hear about the pillar of fire that descends, and within it personages who speak to Joseph and call him by name, and the story progresses. And a few years later he's praying, and a conduit opens up and a light and a person of light appears and tells him about a book that is buried in a mountain that's engraved on gold plates, and you hear about the founding stories of the Restoration. The impression, naive as I was, the impression I got was that you people, you people have religion like the New Testament. Angels come talk to **you** people. **God** appears to **you** people. It's like Paul on the road to Emmaus, except now it's happening today. This is the **old** religion, the one that Moses went up on the Mount— The bush is burning, the voice, the finger of God writing on tablets of stone—it's happening again! Oh my word! Baptists have an old book, but you people have angels!

I'm thinking that I occupy a position of vast inferiority to **you** because the heavens are open to you, and they're not to me. And I would like to have that experience. I would like to be part of you people. I want to rise up to your glorious level because, from where I am, all I got are words in an old book, written by other people in another language, in another time, from another culture that I'm trying to make applicable to me by interpretation. But you people have the heavens, themselves, available to you.

So I want to obtain a testimony so that I can believe like you people believe. And I recall the night in which I sincerely undertook to try and be like you great people. I prayed, kneeling beside a government-issued bed with an army blanket on it. I had a roommate,

but he wasn't there. He was out partying somewhere, and I was alone in the barracks. And I knelt down; I prayed— I wanted to be like you guys. And with all the fervency and sincerity of a young soul wanting desperately to be something akin to what you had attained, I poured out my heart. And when I was done praying, I got up, I sat on the bed, and I waited. And there wasn't a conduit to heaven, and there wasn't a glowing man in the dark. It was just me, alone in the room, sitting there. I don't know what I expected, but there wasn't any of that.

And as I thought about it, I thought, "You know, this story these Mormons are telling can't be true because there aren't any more angels appearing." As I thought about that for a moment. I knew what was in the New Testament because we read that every morning at breakfast with my mom growing up, and there was nothing in there that said, "I'm revoking the authorization of angels to appear." There literally was nothing in there. Then I thought, "Okay, but Joseph's put out new scripture, and the Bible says, Whoever adds to this book shall be cursed; whoever takes away from it God will take away his part in the kingdom." That's in the book of Revelation. But then it entered my mind, "Wait, the book of Revelation was actually written earlier than many of the other New Testament books that are in there, so if it literally means you can't add scripture, we have to throw out most of the New Testament. So that's not a legitimate criticism." I went through issue after issue after issue, thinking of a problem why **it can't be true**, and as I thought of the problem, an answer always came that said, "No, because of..."

After this meditative process that went on for about just under a couple of hours, my final thought was, "Okay, yeah, all of that may be good and well and not a reason to reject, but how do I know there's even a God?" [Clapping once] That quickly, the words came into my mind, "Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two hours?" At that moment I thought, "This was not the way in which I expected to encounter God. But if I have now encountered God, and if He has spoken to me, and if this means that I can get into His good graces, then I have to act in response to what He just told me, or I might be cut off, and I would like more of this, not less of this."

So I told the missionaries I got an answer to prayer. And I thought, "I'm gonna be the world's worst Mormon, but okay, I'll be a Mormon. I'll try. But I just don't have what it takes to be that great a person" ('cause I think you people are all great). And I went ahead, and I got baptized, and to my surprise, that connection with God did not go away or diminish, it grew. And it grew brighter and brighter.

Understand, I assumed God and angels and the heavens themselves were wide open to all of you. I assumed it was a common experience for people to have angelic ministrants. I had every expectation that sooner or later you're just going to find yourself in the presence of angels, because that's what the Restoration is all about. So I had no doubt that that would happen.

I had an experience in which I did encounter an angel. He had very little to say, but he certainly would have answered a question if I had put one. The words that he said to me

were, "On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." And then he waited.

Now, some things that ought to be obvious if that's a statement that's made is, "Okay, how does one prepare? What is this ministry? What are you talking about? How am I to do what you just suggested I ought do?" But I wasn't doing that. I was looking at him; I was looking at the clothing; I was looking at the scene. I was trying to take in— And there were things that were visible that were odd to me. Art, for example. And I thought, "Why would you have artwork in the afterlife or in the eternities or...?" I was like a tourist. If I'd had spray paint, I might have sprayed, "Denver was here." I may have behaved really poorly, but I did not ask a question.

So he leaves. I'm left thinking about that scene, and I can conjure it back up into my mind. I can see that moment right now, and it's been decades.

Well, I didn't, at that time, know that you ought to keep a journal. I didn't, at that time, know that you ought to keep a record and know dates. But I kept it in my mind, and I did what I thought was a calculation. And I calculated out when the first day of the third month of the ninth year had arrived, and on that date I'm expecting, "Hey, hey! Something big!" And the date comes, and the date goes, and nothing happens—just another day in school. It's just nothing at all. So I thought, "Okay, 'and so you must prepare' is how heaven gets out of this. I didn't prepare, so it's my fault. I blew it. Not worthy, not prepared. Shoot! I wish I had known what I should have done." Because obviously, I had not done it.

The next year, on the first day of the third month, on my door comes an LDS bishop and Sunday School president to call me to be the new gospel doctrine teacher for the ward. It was actually a few days after they had extended to me the request that I teach gospel doctrine that I went back and realized it was the first day of the third month. And then I went back and recalculated everything, and because I had not kept a record, I had assumed that the nine year calculation began from the year in which I was baptized, which was 1973. But it had been sometime apparently months later in '74, so I was off by a year in my calculation.

Well, in the LDS church, the gospel doctrine teacher is given a one-year curriculum to teach, in which you spend one year on the Old Testament, you spend one year on the New Testament, you spend one year on the Book of Mormon, and you spend one year on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History. And then when you finish with that, you start all over again, and you spend one year on each one of these, and you go through, and you teach them for a year. And then when that year ends, you start all over again.

When I got called to be the gospel doctrine teacher, I had not yet gained any appreciation for the Book of Mormon. In all honesty, I didn't know what to make of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith, the vision of the redemption of the dead, some of the things that Joseph taught, some of his revelations resonated with me. Old testament,

not a problem; the New Testament, loved it. The Book of Mormon, to me, was a— It was hard for me to have that book resonate with me. I taught it. They give you a manual. I followed the manual, and we got through the year. And the calling to be the gospel doctrine teacher didn't end. So we cycle through, and I taught the Book of Mormon for a second year.

In year one I used the the manual. In year two, I said to myself, "I'm going to bore **me**, even if I'm not boring the people. I'm going to bore **me** if I do that again." So I began to push into the Book of Mormon a little more carefully, using more resource material, studying it a bit more closely, and using outside material that had been provided by— This was the LDS church; this was by scholars. I began to have a little more appreciation for the Book of Mormon. There might be a little more to this.

Well, as circumstances would have it, I moved from the city I was living in to a new city in Utah, and I would have been released if I had stayed where I was living. But when I moved to the new place, the new bishop asked me, "What is your calling in the ward you're leaving?" And I said I was a gospel doctrine teacher. He said, "Oh good, good. We are releasing ours. We haven't yet called anyone, so we're going to call you." So I changed cities, but I kept the calling, and I continued on being "this guy" teaching these scriptures. It was easy to push this material into greater depth. That was easy. This was a little more difficult.

By the time I got through teaching the Book of Mormon a second full year, I began to realize there was a good deal more to this book than I had anticipated. And so the next time I went through, I assumed that this text was actually what it purported to be, and I began to have respect for it, trying to get **it** to tell **me** what **it** contains.

The third year I spent on the Book of Mormon, I began to have experiences and a growth in faith that resembled those very earliest days encountering the missionaries. You see, I had joined Mormonism in New Hampshire, but I had gone to college in Utah. And in Utah, Mormonism is jaded. In Utah, Mormonism consists of one guy who holds all the keys, who's the president of everything, that one rises to their feet when he enters the room, and you don't sit until he sits, and when he's through talking and he's ready to leave, you rise, and you stay where you are until he leaves the room, because holy, holy, holy, **he is the man**. That's Mormonism in Utah. No one expects an angel, except **that** guy might get one. No one expects an open vision, except **that** guy might get one. No one expects God to have a darn thing to do with you or me because He's too busy with **that** guy. He's the one who, if someone were to walk on water today, would be **that** guy. We are mere minions supporting the pyramid, atop which is **that** guy and God. And God won't talk to us, but He will talk to **him**. So in Utah I realized angels don't come talk to people, and they don't expect angels to come talk to them. And no one expects spiritual connection to the other side except for an office, and that office owns the right to that. But we don't.

The problem with that realization is that it was contrary to my actual experience. I knew that I wasn't just a minion at the time; I was a newly potential baptized person when God

spoke to me, and I was a newbie, ignorant, fresh-out-of-the-water newbie when an angel had spoken and visited with me. So I knew the paradigm that prevailed in Utah could not be true. But it was only the third time through teaching the Book of Mormon for a year that that light, that ignition began to return, and the other side began to become more accessible, more understandable, more lively, more communicative.

When I taught the Book of Mormon for the fourth year, I was able (in a 50 minute class) to cover one or two verses. We were assigned like eight chapters, and I said, "Okay, eight chapters—you can read the material. I want to delve into the meaning of this verse." And for 50 minutes I talked about one verse or sometimes two verses. Because the Book of Mormon has that much to say.

There's a bunch of scholarly efforts to talk about the content of the Book of Mormon, but the Book of Mormon itself explains how the translation process was done. This is in Second Nephi chapter 27. Nephi has used the Isaiah material to testify about Nephi's experience. He does not have a Jewish intent, an Isaiah intent, in using Isaiah's words. Nephi has been prohibited from writing about the vision that he has had, but the angel tells him, "others have seen this." And so, Nephi, intending to express his own testimony of what God has shown him, uses Isaiah's words to tell you Nephi's visionary experience. When he gets to chapter 27 of Second Nephi, he begins to transition. He ceases to be directly quoting Isaiah, and he begins to paraphrase Isaiah in a transitional chapter 27 before he then gives you an explanation for why he said all of the Isaiah materials that went on before. And chapter 27 begins to be the transition from Isaiah quotes, Isaiah paraphrase, Isaiah meaning in the words of Nephi, in the experience of Nephi.

So, in 27 we get to the Isaiah material where he talks about the words of a book that's going to be delivered to someone who's learned, who says he can't read a sealed book, and then he's going to go from there when the learned won't do it. And God tells you how the Book of Mormon was translated: *"I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee... I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work"* (2 Nephi 27:20-21, emphasis added). The translation of the Book of Mormon was not done by Joseph Smith; it was done through Joseph Smith. The translator of the text of the Book of Mormon was God. God told Joseph what was in the text of the Book of Mormon. You want to know who translated it? God.

Then we have The Testimony of the Three Witnesses. This is what the Three Witnesses say: *"And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of **God**, for His voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true."* God translated the Book of Mormon. After God gave Joseph the words that God wanted to be included in the Book of Mormon, then the angel showed the plates to the Three Witnesses, and God vouched for the translation process that He had done, by the gift and power of God.

Joseph Smith once said that a man can get closer to God by heeding the Book of Mormon than any other book, and that it was the most correct book that there is, and that if you will abide its precepts, you will come closer to understanding God.

I started out with the Book of Mormon as a pedestrian looking at the book and saying, "Yeah, it's something. And it's part of the religion." If I had not been called to be a gospel doctrine teacher and left in that position— I moved again into a third location. I taught gospel doctrine in Pleasant Grove, UT; Alpine, UT; and Sandy, UT in two different places there. I was this guy going through this material. It took between 10 and 20 hours of study and preparation each week for a 50 minute class, as I went deeper and deeper into the text of all these materials, but deepest of all into the Book of Mormon.

I think that you can be a Mormon Community of Christ member, a Mormon Latter-Day Saint, a Mormon in some of these rare splinter cults— I'm an independent, freelance, converted-to-my-soul believer in the Book of Mormon and the value of the Book of Mormon, without any denominational affiliation. I believe to my core that the Book of Mormon is the keystone to a religion, but I'm not sure it is the keystone to the religion that they practice in Salt Lake City anymore. I'm not sure it's the keystone to the religion that's practiced in some of these splinter groups. I don't know enough about the Community of Christ to be able to evaluate that, but in June of this year I went to a conference in Boise, Idaho. I spoke there, and I heard from a group. These were— There was a member of a presidency and a seventy who had previously been members of the Community of Christ, and they had split primarily over the issue of the standing of the Book of Mormon; they had formed something that they called the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. And their chief objection, according to these authorities from that group, was that the Book of Mormon was not being held in the kind of esteem with which, that they would like to hold the Book of Mormon. Therefore, they considered their version of what they were doing to be more genuine, better, and what have you.

I'm to the point where I believe truth is truth. I believe the Book of Mormon has value. And I'm tired of the peephole mentality where "I want to see the Restoration, Joseph, and the Book of Mormon through this lens, and anything that falls outside of that lens is corrupt, is to be opposed." I don't understand why we're fighting. I don't understand why we're competitive! If you can teach me something about the Old Testament that I do not know, I want to hear it. If you can teach me something about the New Testament that I don't know, I would love to learn about it. If you've got some insight into the Book of Mormon that can expand my understanding and appreciation of it, I would love for you to give that to me.

And I have to tell you, the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is a mess. I mean, to put it mildly, it's a mess. It does not reflect the voice of God to Joseph Smith in the way in which the voice of God came to Joseph Smith. When the revelations of Joseph were sent for publication in what would have been called the Book of Commandments, printed in Independence, Missouri, Oliver Cowdery and William Phelps felt that they had the editorial right (Oliver believed this

because of some things that had been said to him in revelation) the editorial right to make changes and alter the text. And they felt comfortable doing that.

The Book of Commandments got— The press got wrecked by a mob, and so, although a handful of the manuscript printed sheets got salvaged and they got put together, the Book of Commandments got superseded by the 1835 publication in Kirtland of the Doctrine and Covenants. During the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants publication, Joseph Smith undertook to take the Lectures on Faith (that had been delivered at the School of the Prophets in Kirtland) to turn that into a standardized text that could be used elsewhere for instruction and understanding of doctrine. And so in Joseph Smith's journals, he enters comments about the labor he was doing to get the Lectures on Faith prepared for publication. Everything else that went into the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants had been turned over to a committee. And the committee took what the Book of Commandments had done, and then the committee (now including Sidney Rigdon, among others), took and expanded and expanded— Section 27 of the Doctrine of Covenants in the LDS version is a **vast** expansion of something that was originally very small; I think four verses. And it's now like 35 verses.

Joseph Smith, when the Doctrine and Covenants was presented to the conference in 1835 for a sustaining vote as a statement of the religion, personally vouched for Lectures on Faith, and signed his name attesting to it being true and accurate, and he would **answer for anything** that is contained within that text. And the rest of the book was sustained by people as a standard of the faith and accepted, but Joseph made no such vouching for the balance of it. And the balance of it contained expansions, changes, deletions, improvements, as folks thought that they were making.

Today if I were a gospel doctrine teacher in an LDS church, I would teach people how to parse this book in order to get back to where it ought to be. I would be unfit for the ministry, because I'd be subversive.

The truth is oftentimes very subversive, because people really like to take textual material that's considered authoritative and to wrap themselves in the cloak of that authority, in order to justify the agenda that they would like to advance. Sometimes the reasons people do that are noble. Sometimes the reasons they do that are laudable.

When Martin Luther was confronted by a corrupt Catholic church, the problem that Martin Luther had to solve was how you could have salvation while you depart from the authoritative hierarchical structure. How do you get salvation and authoritative baptism without priestly authority, because the tradition that had been handed down for a millenium and a half—now and this was 1517 when Martin Luther finally reaches the point that he splits—how do you survive that split if authority to seal on earth and in heaven, if authority to baptize remains with the Catholic church, and they excommunicate you. How does salvation itself survive? The way that Martin Luther solved the riddle that allowed him to make the split—noble as that split may have been, laudable and as good as it may be that he took the step—was to take one of the letters of Paul in the book of Romans and to take the phrase of "salvation by grace" and to

wrap himself in the authority of the words that appear in the book of Romans to vindicate the split to say salvation can be attained independent of the hierarchy, independent of the priesthood, independent of the ability claimed by the Pope and his priests to seal on earth, to forgive sins, to do what they do to minister in the gospel. And we have a chance, by the grace of God, to lay hold upon salvation and to make our way back to redemption independent of that structure. Martin Luther, bless his heart, created the rationalization that allowed John Knox and John Calvin and Zwingli and the other protestant reformers, in one generation, to split into numerous different protestant congregations. Just that quick—one generation. Those men met with each other.

So then we get all the way down to the Restoration through Joseph Smith, when Joseph is troubling over which church, which branch ought he join. I mean, everyone knew in Colonial America that Catholics were wrong because the protestant reformation had succeeded in getting a toe hold in the Americas as an **escape** from the religious oppression of Europe. They were burning people at the stake; they were killing people over religious issues at the time that the colonies were founded.

One of the things that the Constitution wanted to do was to divorce federal power from religious power. And when the Bill of Rights was adopted, the very first one was to guarantee religious independence so that people could think. So Joseph could rest assured that you don't even need to trouble yourself over Catholicism, but as to everything else that is out there, "Which of all the churches ought I to join?" And the answer that he got was that, "Don't join any of them. They teach for commandments the doctrines of men; they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

What do you think it means that religions **deny the power of godliness**? If you're open to it, it puts you right back where I was, sitting on a bed in a barracks, talking to God and getting answers, because God is willing to be a **lively** participant in a **living** religion in which **you** and **He, together**, are part of the **living** gospel of Christ.

The religion that Joseph Smith restored was intended to have a **powerful** form of godliness. Something that God only changes you and changes the landscape inside of you, but ultimately is intended to change this world; ultimately is intended to bring again something like the Garden of Eden.

In the letter Joseph Smith wrote to the publisher of *The Democrat*, the portion of which is now the "Articles of Faith"— John Wentworth had sent a letter to Joseph; Joseph responded; he described the faith— Joseph said that we believe that there was going to come a time when there would be a Zion that would be built upon this, the American Continent, and that the earth was going to be renewed and returned again to its paradisiacal glory.

I mean, think for a minute about what happened at the Fall. At the moment in which the Fall occurs, the harmony that once existed between this creation, man, and God was fractured. And man is sent out to labor by the sweat of their brow. Well, that fracturing in the Joseph Smith translation version of the book of Genesis— It's in the Joseph Smith

translation that's used by the Community of Christ; it's in the Pearl of Great Price as the book of Moses in the LDS scriptures— In that account there comes a moment when Enoch is caught up into the Heaven, and Enoch has this visionary experience, and he sees what's going on on the earth, and he's lamenting, and he wants to know when the earth is going to have the Lord come and visit it and redeem it. And the earth itself, in this vision, mourns over the wickedness that is upon her face. She wants that to be cleansed.

That vision of Enoch suggests that this earth is sentient; this earth has a spirit; this earth is alive. If this earth mourns over the wickedness that is upon her face, she's literally talking about something as intimate to her as your face is to you. If you can sense it, when there's something—a fly, a mosquito, something that happens, a leaf brushes up against your face, the wind blows—if you can sense that on your face, and the earth is mourning the wickedness of men that's upon her, how must the earth be responding to the way in which men behave?

Does any man or woman have any business to look at another person on the basis on how they believe in these things and to judge and dismiss them? Do we have any right to treat one another as if we are in hostile camps? If we believe that something happened with Joseph Smith, and if we believe that the Book of Mormon is a gift given us for God, and if a person can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book, then we outta celebrate whenever anyone says something laudable, praiseworthy [praiseworthy], noble, or enlightening concerning the restoration and the Book of Mormon.

I am shocked at how bad a job we've all done with the history of the Restoration and the history of Joseph Smith. Right now the LDS church is in the process of publishing *The Joseph Smith Papers*. When they come out I read them cover to cover like you're reading a novel. My set of these books, I don't know how many— They're in the teens now— but my set of these books has cross references, interlineations, I point out where the historian's office is making a mistake because it's contradicted by something that's in an earlier volume. They're not keeping their version of the story straight, but they are publishing source materials. Source materials, if you focus on them, will give you a much better view of what was going on.

The fact that Bryce tells a story that's preserved within the Community of Christ tradition-history of Joseph Smith III about Emma's insistence— If you read the source material, you realize that as between the two of them, Emma Smith was the stronger personality. Emma Smith was the one who provided for Joseph a backbone, a stability. Emma was better educated than Joseph. Joseph not only loved her; he prized her. He deferred to her. He sought counsel from her. The relationship between Joseph and Emma Smith is **not at all** what is portrayed in Salt Lake City. They **do not** understand the relation between Joseph and his wife, Emma. It doesn't exist. And the stories that are told there, and retold there, based upon third and fourth-hand accounts, some of which are summoned 40 years after the fact in order to support the institution that is in a death grip with the United States over the issue of plural wifery—and I'm expected to

trust a 40-year late reminiscence about Joseph's behavior in Nauvoo, Illinois at a time when litigation is trying to confiscate all of the property belonging to the institution of the LDS church, and the LDS church needs this supporting material in order to justify the changes, the aberrations that they have adopted to Mormonism?

There are a couple of really well-known, well-respected Latter-day Saint historical writers that I've crossed paths with. I won't drop names—that just seems unseemly to me. But both of these—one's called the "Dean of LDS Historians" as a nickname—one of these fellows and I were talking about the subject of plural marriage and Joseph and all that. I posed the question to both of these fellows, "If you take Joseph from the time of his birth to the date of his death, and you say we're going to draw a line right here (it's going to be on June 27th of 1844) and you're going to look at everything that existed in written form that had been preserved through that moment in time, and you just stop the record right there at that moment, can you unequivocally state there is evidence that Joseph Smith had another wife other than Emma Smith?"

Now, understand, these people are well enough acquainted with the body of the original source material— Most people are not well enough acquainted with that. Even the revelation that purportedly occurred in Section 132, which is the big revelation that justifies it, is not in the handwriting of a clerk that wrote for Joseph Smith as a scribe. It's in the handwriting of a fellow who worked at the store who was never a scribe, who claims that he copied from the journal of Joseph's scribe at the time. It's a copy of a document that got destroyed, so we can't put that document before this date. And it didn't even come to light until some time 1852, okay? It could have been created in 1850, 51, 52. Could've been created after June 27th. If you stop the clock right there, and you say, "What does the history of Joseph Smith reveal about that topic?" Both of these fellows said, "Okay, I see where you're coming from. Okay, yeah, I get it. I just don't believe it." Tradition and peepholes are really difficult for people to part with.

When you have been muzzled into a paradigm that says, It is this way; it can be no other way— We are just as apt as the protestant folly because the Lord wasn't commenting to Joseph about the Catholics. He was talking about the protestants. We're just as apt as they were after Joseph had explored the various alternatives, to have God say concerning **us** now today, we teach for doctrines the commandments of men; we have a form of godliness; but we deny the power thereof; and that our hearts are far from Him.

If your heart is close to God, it also tends to be open to your fellow man. I wish that we felt no insecurities about our own beliefs and were willing to say, "I'm prepared to revise what I believe if you can give me reason to do so." I welcome, want; I hunger, and I thirst after knowledge of things that are true.

I wrote a book called *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, in which I analyzed the history of the Restoration from the vantage point of using what the Book of Mormon says the Latter-day gentiles are going to do. I didn't approach it as if I were a historian. I approached it as if I were trying to understand what the prophets in the Book of Mormon said the

gentiles were going to do with the restoration of the gospel, and I posed the question, "What would **that** history look like?" On the assumption the Book of Mormon is telling us what the gentiles were going to do with it, I wrote a history that said, "This event means this part of the prophecy of the Book of Mormon was fulfilled. This event means what Christ said concerning the Latter-day gentiles was vindicated. This event is immediately following God telling you what the evidence, what the sign would be, and so this should be understood historically as fulfillment of God's sign."

And by the time I finished writing that history and got it out into print, what has been going on in Salt Lake did not appear to be all that praiseworthy from Heaven's perspective. It appeared to be a shabby decay and a ruin. It appeared to be the very spot in which God said, "After they've done this, I'm then going to breathe new life into it again. I am going to bring again Zion." The problem with the book is, if you believe that all members of your organization ought to be minions holding up a pyramid, atop which sits one guy at the pinnacle who has the authority, like the Pope, to bind on earth and in heaven, and everyone ought to be submissive and supportive, then that kind of history-telling becomes threatening.

I was given the ultimatum that I either had to take that book out of print, or I would be excommunicated. For a whole host of reasons, including the fact that I have a publisher, I have a contract with the publisher, I went to the publisher and said, "I'm being given an ultimatum, it needs to be taken off." He said, "Well if the church is opposed to it, it's a good book to keep in print. So no, we're going to keep this book in print." So then I was told that since the publisher was interested in keeping it in print, they would be willing to purchase the copyright to the book. And so I went back to the publisher, and I said, "What would it take to buy the copyright from you for this book?" And the fellow's reaction was, "You are shitting me!" (I mean, I'm quoting him, so don't blame me for his language.) He said, "If they're that interested in buying and getting it out, this book **has** to stay in print! This is Martin Luther, this is Galileo, this is historic! We have to keep this — No. No amount of money!" I said, "Well, okay. I don't want to be in the middle of a lawsuit, but...."

As I thought about the reaction, it struck me that it really doesn't matter if the book ever has wide appreciation. The book has depth of meaning. It's not important that you influence millions of people casually. But it is a wonderful thing if you can influence a single soul deeply.

Christ's ministry was relatively modest in it's accomplishment in terms of the people He influenced directly. By the time what Christ had founded had widespread political, economic, and even military influence, it had become so corrupted that Christianity itself was more political than it was religious. Today we have over 100 different denominations that claim Joseph Smith as the founder. But the fact is that precious few people have allowed the message of the Book of Mormon, that was intended to redeem not only latter-day gentiles but to redeem a remnant of the natives that were on this continent, and to ultimately redeem some of the Jews that remain as a remnant and to

bring them together in a cause that will make the earth herself rejoice because wickedness has ceased from off her face.

If anyone can grasp the depth of what the Lord complained about—a form of godliness but deny the power thereof— If there's one piece of lifeline that God has extended to us in our day to get us out of that decrepit condition, it's the Book of Mormon. We share that across all of the fractured parts of the Restoration, wherever it is. I know that the Book of Mormon contains valuable, indispensable prizes that have been given to us by God. I know that because I've lived it, and therefore, I look at the Book of Mormon as more miracle than mere text.

I wanna thank you who have enough interest to show up on occasions like this, to be inconvenienced on a Saturday. And I want to thank the, in particular, the people here from Graceland for allowing this to take place. And thank Bryce for going to the trouble of getting this all organized.

I know that Joseph Smith was singularly called by God, not merely as just another protestant leader, but as a founder of something that was intended to retain vitality and godliness in a power that can change absolutely the destinies of where we're headed in eternity and the heart that we have within us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2019.01.13 Book of Mormon as a Covenant

January 13, 2019
Columbia, South Carolina

I have this portable triple combination that I brought with me because the copy that I have of the new scriptures is so cumbersome, and we have to pack everything to catch the plane flights. So, although I really prefer the new scriptures, for portability sake, I brought these.

One of the things that I have, and I want to point out to you these features in the new scriptures in hopes that you will take note of the same kinds of things. One of the things that I have found is that when you get a new set of scriptures, everything is laid out differently than the way that it used to be laid out in the set that you are accustomed to reading and using. As a result, what used to be on the top left-hand side is now on the bottom right-hand side. Everything is reoriented. And the new scriptures do not have versification. They are divided into paragraphs in order to have complete thoughts gathered together. The paragraphs are numbered in order to cite them, but the purpose was to be divided into paragraphs so you got a complete thought. Therefore, when you're reading something you're used to seeing out of context— Some verses in the scriptures are a phrase. They're not even a sentence. They're just a phrase. But the phrase belongs inside a sentence, and the sentence belongs inside a paragraph, and when you pick up the new scriptures and you read them in this current layout, everything changes. You begin to see things....

I have read one way a passage in a January 1841 revelation—the entire time, over 40 some years—I read it the same way. I got the new scriptures with the new layout, and I read the same material, and all of the sudden, it has a different meaning. I'm not going to take the time to read it, but I want you to find it. It's the January 1841 revelation. When you have time, read it. And read the words about *they shall not be moved out of their place*, which I have always read to mean the people who are in Nauvoo. And if they are faithful, the people who are in Nauvoo shall not be moved out of their place. In the new scriptures, I read that, and I believe it is referring to Joseph and Hyrum Smith. That they would be preserved and not moved out of their place if the people were faithful. And if they were not, they were going to lose Joseph and Hyrum. Now it doesn't matter whether the words are referring to the people living in Nauvoo or to Joseph and Hyrum. The sign was that they would be moved out of their place, and both were. We lost Joseph; we lost Hyrum; and we lost Nauvoo. So, things like that happen when you've got the new scriptures.

Last night, as I was listening to Jeff and others who spoke, one of the things that struck me is that almost all revelation—going back to the days of Adam and coming right down to today—come as a consequence of understanding scripture. That was true even of Enoch. Because Enoch had a record that had been handed down from Adam. And in the case of Abraham, the records belonging to the Fathers fell into his hands, and he studied them to gain the understanding that he had. Micah quotes Isaiah. Isaiah quotes Zenos and Zenoch. Jacob quotes the allegory of Zenos. Nephi quotes Isaiah. All of

them study scripture in order to get an understanding, and revelation is largely based upon expanding your understanding of scripture. The Book of Mormon is really the keystone of the religion but also the the keystone to revelation itself. It was intended to open our eyes to things that we couldn't see before. The Book of Mormon is really a giant urim and thummim intended for our benefit.

I was also struck by something that I went and found this morning. This is a passage in which Nephi is describing the saints at the very end, at the end of time, just before the scene wraps up.

And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and it's numbers were few because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters. Nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw. And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together... multitudes upon the face of the earth, among all the nations of the gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld [that] the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth. And they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.

And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth. And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots, and behold, thou seest all these things. (1 Nephi 3:28-29)

These words don't say that the coming conflict is against the covenant people of God or the church of the Lamb. Nor does it say that the wrath of God consists of God picking a fight with the wicked. In the case of the wrath of God, people are stirred to anger against each other. They decide. The wicked destroy the wicked because the wicked decide that they cannot put up with peaceful coexistence anymore. Their hearts are so angry with one another that they manage to inflict violence and death and destruction upon one another.

Like the judgment that Mormon describes in Mormon chapter 9 (of the old set), God is a bystander. The wrath of God is manifest by the rejection of God and the violence that people turn upon one another. And the power of God and the glory of God—meaning the peace of God and the ability to live with one another in harmony without this raging conflict—that power is manifest among the people of God, the church of God, and the covenant people that belong to God. So, if you can maintain peaceful coexistence with one another as you worship God in the coming days, the power and glory of God will

descend and be with you, because you managed to extract yourself from the coming conflict, rage, hatred, polarization. And if you don't think those days are not commencing, then, well, you're not watching the news. It's just an ongoing political battle escalating continually.

Well, the Book of Mormon— This is the Book of Mormon Covenant Conference. The Book of Mormon tells you what it's for.

Oh, one last thought about the church of the Lamb of God. At the time— at the time that these words were being written by Nephi, and he had seen the vision, and he's talking about what he saw. At the time that he's writing that prophecy, the earliest stages of the Nephite civilization had just begun. Nephi is still living. He has a wife. He has some children. He has brothers. The total group that are involved is not much larger than the group that we have right here today [about 25 people]. He's looking down through history prophetically and he's saying the saints—the covenant people of God, the people that the Lamb of God's church—that group is "few." Now if it was 16 million people scattered globally, in the reality of Nephi's context, he would not describe them as few. He is not making a comparative analysis. He's simply describing what he saw. He said they're all around the world, but there's only very few of them. If you go to the fellowship locator and you look at what you see among those that have identified themselves with the last days' covenant, they're all over the world, but there is really very few of them.

We tend to think about numbers in the Book of Mormon as if their numbers were akin to what we're accustomed to seeing in our day. One of the distortions that comes in is the rank, the identification. If we're talking about someone who is a general, we would say, He's a general, and we would expect a star to be on his shoulder. If they're talking about someone that is a general, they would call him a captain of 10,000. It does not mean that he has 10,000. A captain of a hundred does not mean that he has a hundred. It means a rank. A captain of 50 does not mean that he has 50. It means that he has a rank. When the pioneer companies were organized, and they divided into captains of 100's and captains of 50's and captains of 10's, those were simply identifying a role, a rank, a position. It didn't mean that you had a hundred people in your company. It didn't mean that you had 50 people that you were directing. It didn't mean that you had 10 people over whom you had charge. It was simply a way of dividing them. So, when you get to the end of the Nephite wars, with "this and his 10,000" and "that and his 10,000" and "someone else and their 10,000" and they're all slain, it doesn't mean that you are reading about hundreds of thousands or millions who are dying. It means that someone in a position of rank and authority and all of those under his command were slain. What those numbers amounted to, we don't know. But the designation that Nephi gives to what would be going on in the last days before the coming of Christ, when the wicked are destroyed by the wrath of God,—meaning that the spirit withdraws, and as it withdraws, their level of cruelty and violence increases—is few, probably describing gatherings like we have here.

The Book of Mormon begins with a title page that was on the very last plate of the plates that Joseph Smith translated, and it appears as the first page of the Book of Mormon.

An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. Wherefore, it is an abridgement of the [records] of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites; written to the Lamanites [who] are a remnant of the house of Israel and also to Jew and gentile .

The Book of Mormon was written for three groups. Three targeted audiences are identified right at the outset: the Lamanites, the Jews, and the gentiles. That's who the Book of Mormon was sent to. In the Teachings and Commandments, section 158, there is a covenant offered to the gentiles, to the remnant of the Lamanites, and to the remnant of the Jews. These are the words of that covenant.

Do you have faith in these things and receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts and deeds? (vs 3)

It also goes on to say: *But if you do not honor me, nor seek to recover my people Israel... then you have no promise (vs 19).*

The people that the Book of Mormon established as the target audience are the Lamanites, the Jews, and the gentiles. We have an obligation to try and reach out to the Lamanites, the Jews, and the gentiles.

The title page goes on to say:

...written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation. Written, and sealed [up], and hid up unto the LORD, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof; sealed...by the hand of Moroni...hid up unto the LORD, to come forth in due time by..way of [the] gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift [and power] of God.

Did you get that? Almost in rapid succession, twice we're told *to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof* and *the interpretation thereof by the gift [and power] of God* . Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon. God translated the Book of Mormon and told Joseph Smith what He wanted that interpretation to say. I have read as many source documents as are currently available to review in print. There are some source materials I haven't looked at because they are in private collections, and you have to travel to see those. But we have this fanciful narrative about how the Book of Mormon was translated.

One of the things that went on in Kirtland was a "shouting Methodist" tradition. People would go into the woods, and they would shout praises to God in hopes that they obtained some kind of spiritual manifestation. The typical manifestation that they were able to create in this tradition was to be seized upon, bound up, and unable to move, which was considered a sign of God's grace and redemption because they were seized upon by some unseen power that had such marvelous power as to bind them up so they could not move. One of the other things that the "shouting Methodists" tradition in Kirtland, Ohio encountered was the idea that as you're out and shouting praises, often times standing on the stump of a tree that's been cut down, there would be a scroll or parchment that would flutter down from heaven, and when it arrived, on the parchment, there would be words written, and you would read the words, and after you had read the words, the parchment would disappear; it would disintegrate. These were the kinds of manifestations that were the "shouting Methodist" tradition which, when Mormonism came to Kirtland, some of the Kirtland Mormon converts had similar experiences.

Well, one of the stories which gets told about the translation of the Book of Mormon is that Joseph Smith would look in a hat, a parchment would appear, he would read the words off the parchment, and then the parchment would disintegrate as soon as the translation was written down, and then a new parchment would appear.

At a conference in Kirtland, Hyrum Smith introduced his brother, Joseph. And as Joseph was getting up to talk, Hyrum said, "And Joseph is going to tell us about how the translation of the Book of Mormon took place." Joseph got up in front of the people, and he said, "It's not appropriate; it was translated by the gift and power of God." And then he went on. He refused to describe the process. If you want to know how the Book of Mormon was translated, the Book of Mormon tells you how: by the gift and power of God.

When pressed, after Joseph is dead and gone, and you want to sound like you know something, and you think back about the experiences of the "shouting Methodist" tradition in the early days in Kirtland, well, why not say scrolls would appear, and then when he read them, they'd disintegrate. There is so much that has crept into the reconstruction of events that are accepted by the LDS church, that are accepted by historians, that are accepted by the scholars. There's only two people—I was gonna say one person—that knows how it was done—and that was Joseph—but there are two; the second one is God. How did God interpret the Book of Mormon? And, by the way, if you took only the etchings that are on the plates of the Book of Mormon, and you rendered a word for word translation of that set of inscriptions, would it read exactly like the Book of Mormon that we have? Or did God—in His mercy, understanding the weaknesses of our day—give us an interpretation that helps us to understand things in our language, maybe a little more clearly than if we had simply a word for word translation from the plates? These are things that Joseph may know, or he may not. But certainly God would know. When people pretend to know everything there is to know about the translation of the Book of Mormon, and then to mock the process, they're really inviting... they're putting their own foolishness on display, and they're inviting the ire of God. The fact is that the witness to how this process unfolded confined what he had to say to, "it was

translated by the gift and power of God." And the source of these other fanciful tales—Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris (two of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon)—they were commanded to bear testimony, and their testimony was to consist of "the interpretation thereof was by the gift and power of God." So when they go beyond that, to give details that they probably have no way of knowing a thing about, they're actually violating the restriction that God put upon it "for a wise purpose."

Joseph Smith was not the translator. It plainly states that God was the translator. It does not mean that what was composed by Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Omni, and others on the small plates, and by Mormon and Moroni on the rest—and their abridgement—is necessarily exactly what was composed by them, because God used the interpretation of the text that He provided to state what He intended by His gift and power to be the message that we receive today. It is literally Gods statement to us about the content He wants us to understand, adapted to our needs. It goes on to say, in this title page,

An abridgement taken from the book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, [who] were scattered at the time the LORD confounded the language... which is to shew unto the remnant of the house of Israel [what] great things the LORD hath done for their fathers...that they may know the covenants of the LORD, that they are not cast [out] for ever. And also to the convincing of the Jew and gentile that Jesus is the CHRIST, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations....now if there [are faults], [they are] the mistake[s] of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of CHRIST.

What are the covenants of the Lord that are supposed to be made known unto the remnant of the house of Israel that comes through the Book of Mormon? Well, the Book of Mormon tells you what they are: *It shall also be of worth unto the gentiles, ...not only unto the gentiles but [also] unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of Heaven unto Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed* (1 Nephi 7:3). So the purpose of the Book of Mormon is to alert the gentiles and the Jews of the covenants that were made, specifically the covenants that were made with Abraham.

One of the great things about the new set of scriptures is that the Teachings and Commandments are laid out chronologically. There's this tradition that the last great revelation that Joseph Smith received was in January of 1841, in which the Lord outlined the commandment to build the temple, and the signs that were to be given if the temple were completed in sufficient time, and how the church would be accepted with their kindred dead—or rejected with their kindred dead, depending on how they pursued this. That's supposedly his last great revelation. In the Teachings and Commandments, however, what you see in the layout of Joseph's revelations chronologically is that in 1842, the first installment of the Book of Abraham was published. And it appears in the Teachings and Commandments in its chronological layout, and then a few months later, the next installment of the Book of Abraham

appears. And so the last largest revelation given to Joseph, although there were others that are included in this same time frame, is the text of the Book of Abraham.

The Book of Mormon points to a recovery of knowledge and understanding about the covenants God made with Abraham. The Book of Abraham had to be revealed. It had to come forward. In order for us to understand the covenants that God made with Abraham, we had to get the Book of Abraham, which did not roll out until the 1842-and-beyond time period. Joseph's work culminated in attempting to get on the ground ordinances that would have reflected more fully the covenants made with Abraham, but the Book of Abraham is part of vindicating the promises that were made in the Book of Mormon. So, as you read the Teachings and Commandments, and you see it unfolding chronologically, you see where the Lectures on Faith fit in. You see where the book of Abraham fit in. You see how Joseph's ministry was taking on a trajectory that literally fits the pattern of what the Book of Mormon was promising would come forth and be vindicated.

In the Book of Abraham: *I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran... to make of thee a minister to bear my name [this is God's great gift to Abraham; He is going to make of him a minister to bear his name] in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession* (Abraham 3:1).

Ok. This is cumbersome language, but I want you to ask yourself, if the great gift that God gives to Abraham is to make of him a minister to bear His name, and then He mentions he is going to bear His name in a strange land, followed with, *which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession* .

Is the gift that He is giving to his descendants "the land" or "the ministry?" *I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice*. Does that sound like land, or does that sound like the ministry relating to hearkening to God's voice. As He goes on to explain what his descendants are going to inherit:

Thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and priesthood unto all nations. And I will bless them through thy name, for as many as receive this gospel shall be called after thy name and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as unto their Father. And I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee. And in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed, (that is, thy Priesthood)—for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee and in thy seed after thee. (ibid)

The seed of Abraham are the people that hearken to the same God that Abraham hearkened to. If you hearken to that same God, you're the seed of Abraham. And the ministry that you're supposed to bear is the testimony that that God lives! And that that God is THE God over the whole earth; that His work began with Adam and won't wrap up until the second coming of Christ in judgment on the world to save and redeem those that look for Him.

We have to have the record of Abraham in order to understand the covenant that God made with Abraham in order to vindicate the promise that's made in the Book of Mormon. One of the sharp edges of criticism of Mormonism is directed specifically at the Book of Abraham. There are a lot of intellectual arguments that are being made out there, a lot of challenges for why the Book of Abraham ought to be thrown out, and how the Joseph Smith papyrus that got recovered is really, simply, Egyptian *Book of Breathings* material that has very little to do with a record written by the hand of Abraham on papyrus, and so on. Well, if the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, the Book of Abraham was translated no differently, except by the gift and power of God. And it includes information that's vital for us to understand in order for us to know what the covenants were that were made with Abraham—in order for us to inherit the same gospel that was given to Abraham, so that we can lay hold upon the same blessings that were given to Abraham, so that the covenants that were made with the Fathers can be understood, activated, realized, and we can obtain the blessings of those here in the last days.

All this stuff fits together, and Joseph's work had to necessarily include recovery of the covenants made with Abraham. Now, you may regard yourself as a gentile, but the covenant that was made with Abraham makes you a descendant of Abraham if you hearken to that same God and receive that same gospel. And Nephi explains who the gentiles are in relation to the family of Father Abraham also. This is Nephi:

And it shall come to pass that if the gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks, and harden not their hearts against the Lamb...they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father. Yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land for ever. They shall be no more brought down into captivity. (1 Nephi 3:25)

Nephi is telling you, "If you are willing to receive what God has offered, then you're numbered among the house of Israel." Jacob, the brother of Nephi, wrote about the gentiles. He said:

He that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God, for he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish. For I the Lord [God], the King of Heaven, will be their king...I will be a light unto them for ever.... Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and gentile, both bond and free, both male and female shall perish.... the gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel. Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto [them and] thy seed. (2 Nephi 7:2-4)

So Jacob, likewise, says gentiles who are willing to receive this as their covenant are numbered among the house of Israel, no longer numbered among gentiles. They change identities, just like the promise that was made to Abraham. You receive it, you're his seed.

Christ picked up the same thing in 3rd Nephi: *That the gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel* (3 Nephi 9:11) .

The purpose of the Book of Mormon is to reveal that God made a covenant with Abraham in the beginning, and at the end, God intends to vindicate the covenant that God made with Abraham by changing gentiles into the house of Israel, by covenant. When the restoration began, the people from the first publication in 1830 until September of 2015 [2017] in Boise, Idaho, no one accepted the Book of Mormon as a covenant. It had not been done. The Lectures on Faith got accepted. The Doctrine & Covenants got accepted. The church leaders got accepted. A First Presidency, a high council—all kinds of things got accepted—but not the Book of Mormon as a covenant until September...was it...what year was that? 2017. (It was an odd year, but not 2015.)

September of 2017—it was the very first time in history that the Book of Mormon was received as a covenant. And in the words that I read you just a moment ago, Nephi mentions covenant people. You have to receive it as a covenant. God only works to bring people into His good graces by covenants. They have to be made. Without covenants, you cannot participate in what the Lord sets out.

Well, the Book of Mormon was intended as a record for our day to restore our knowledge to make it possible for us to enter back into a covenant relationship with God, in order for the promises that were made to the Fathers to be vindicated. Abraham looked forward to having seed that would be countless. He had one son. But God told him, "Don't worry about that." The time will come when everyone who receives this gospel—that is, the gospel that Abraham had in his possession; the gospel that is unfolding in front of your eyes today—that will continue to unfold until all of its covenants, rites, obligations, privileges, understandings will all roll out. The restoration will be completed. But the promise was made to Abraham that whenever that is on the earth, those who receive it will acknowledge him, Abraham, as their covenant father—the father of the righteous.

I want to comment about an issue that came up last night, both in remarks that got made by Jeff and comments that others made in the audience. During the early Kirtland era when there were a lot of false spirits that wound up creating a lot of mischief, the people were really wanting to have these miraculous signs to be given. Faith does not come from signs. It's actually impossible to for that, to have a sign, and that as a consequence of the sign, you now have faith. It doesn't work that way. That's one of the reasons why Christ, when He did something miraculous like healing someone who was a leper or healing someone who was lame, He would admonish them, "Don't tell anyone

about this." Because if the person who underwent this miraculous event went out and talked it up, then the people who heard that would be damaged in their ability to have faith. Because they now had a sign. And if what you do is run after signs, then you go from sign to sign, and you never develop the required faith.

By studying the scriptures and plumbing the depths of the message that we have in the scripture record that's in front of us, you can arrive at a point in your understanding in which it really doesn't matter if an angel appears to you or not. The angel's purpose is never going to be to produce faith in you. If the angel is going to produce faith in you because of their appearance, then the angel ought not appear. Because they'll turn you into a sign seeker. On the other hand, if you have developed faith by the careful study of what we've been given in the scriptures, and the presence or absence of an angel will have no effect on your faith—you will believe; you will have confidence; your understanding reaches the same depth with or without the angel's presence—then there is no reason for the angel to withhold. There is no reason for him not to appear.

When the brother of Jared went to the Lord with an interior lighting problem, and the Lord said, "What do you want as a solution?" The brother of Jared did not need to see the finger of the Lord in order for him to have faith that the Lord was going to solve the problem. He went out, he molten the stones, he took them back, he presented them to the Lord. He asked the Lord to take care of it. Is there any greater faith in saying, "Oh, as the Lord touched the stones I saw his finger," or, "Here are the stones that will light in the dark that the Lord has now taken care of." Because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil. Well, what was the knowledge that he had? It was the fact that his faith had grown to the point where he was taking what is behind the veil and unseen, and he's pulling into this world—a physical manifestation of God in this world—by the stones that he had molten and by the request that he had put to the Lord. And so the Lord makes that manifestation here. His knowledge parted the veil because he had done the labor to make something in this world that connected God to it, in order to bless the people. All of this was an act of service and sacrifice and faith for the blessing and the benefit of others. It was selfless. But it was selflessness in a way that drew into the physical world what lies beyond the veil.

And so he sees God's finger, and it startles him. It startles him, and the Lord puts a question to him. It's a question that is reflected earlier in Nephi's writing. Nephi says, God loveth all who will have him to be their God.

And the brother of Jared is asked, Did you see more than this. [Brother of Jared] No. [God] Will you believe me if I show myself to you? [Brother of Jared] Yea, I know you're a God of truth and cannot lie; I'll believe all your words.

Why do you think the Lord posed the question, If I show myself to you, will you believe in me? Why do you think that Mormon writes about how he's spoken face-to-face in plain humility, as one man speaks to another? We want the thundering and the lightning and the ground-shaking on Sinai, and when the Lord appeared to the brother of Jared, before appearing, He asked him, Now when you see me, are you going to believe me?

He loveth all who will have him to be their God... Well, I knew not that God was a man... You seem so much bigger and better when you were the burly thunderer from behind the curtain announcing that you are the great and powerful Oz. But now that the curtain's drawn aside and you're like— Man was created in your image, and it literally means that. It takes some of the varnish off it all.

God's greatness does not consist in striking awe in the eye of the beholder because of glory. It consists in the humility, the virtue, the goodness, the purity of the being. We worship God, not because He is powerful. We worship God because He represents everything that is pure and holy and good—everything that is desirable above all else. The purity of that fruit that was delicious that father Lehi talked about and Nephi wrote about, it is so because of its goodness. Because it is exactly what the highest and the best and the most noble should be. That's who God is.

People that are brought into God's presence are convicted of their own inadequacies because you see here, at last— now is a complete being, is a pure, just, and holy being. And in comparison, we all lack. We all lack. When Isaiah was caught up to the presence of the Lord, he is shouting, Woe is me; I'm undone; I am a man of unclean lips; I dwell among people of unclean lips. He recognizes the enormity of the gulf, the gap between him and God. And so God purges it. It's because of the faith and the confidence that he has in God that Isaiah afterwards says, Here am I, Lord, send me. It's not because Isaiah is suddenly a greater being than he was before. It's because Isaiah had faith that this Being can indeed make one as flawed as we are cleansed, holy, pure, confidence in him. If I were to make one recommendation about the process, I would say forget about asking for signs, study the depths of the scriptures, and you'll find yourself in company with angels who will come help you to understand what is in these scriptures—and in particular, above all, the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a giant urim and thummim; used in the correct way, you'll find yourself in company of angels—who are helping to tutor you—in a conversation, as you look into an understanding of what's written in the scriptures. And then there's no reason for them to withhold their presence from you. Adam, having conversed with the Lord through the veil, desires now to enter into His presence: There's no reason after you have conversed through the veil for that presence to be denied you. But it follows an order. It follows a pattern.

We have now arrived at that moment when there are going to be competing meetings going on. I did say that we'd do questions if people had any. So is there something someone wanted to have me talk about?

QUESTION: I wondered if you would expound upon the studying of the scriptures.... A christian pastor I am acquainted with, in the process of studying, he ended up losing his faith, instead of developing faith. There seems to be that risk, like with Jeremy Reynolds and the CES Letter... Sometimes people lose their faith instead of developing it....

DENVER: The question is, Do you run any risks by studying that you can just as easily study your way out of belief as you can study your way into belief.

The way that I think that works is... Everyone wants to understand, because of how proximate—how close—Joseph Smith is, everyone wants to understand how Joseph Smith did it. So, if we think we can figure out how Joseph Smith did it, then presumably that will equip us to understand or put it into context. But most people who are studying to figure out how Joseph Smith did it are only interested in debunking it. I want to know how he pulled this off because I'm a little skeptical that what he pulled off is actually genuine, and maybe if I can understand how Joseph Smith pulled that off, then I can understand how Jesus pulled it off. Then I can understand how Moses pulled it off. Then I can put it all to rest because I needn't worry about it. Or, I want to understand how Joseph Smith pulled it off so I can pull it off, and when I get that and I figure it out, and I try it, and it doesn't work for me, then I can say Joseph made it up because it didn't work for me. I mean, there are a lot of pitfalls along the course of study.

The first and primary question you have to ask is... Take a look around this world and, and ask yourself if—in this world—it makes sense to you that there is no Creator. Does it make sense to you that everything that's going on here simply is a haphazard accident? That there is no creation; there's no creator; there's no divine plan; there's nothing here that operates on any other basis than random chance? If you reach the conclusion that everything that's going on here could possibly be by random chance, then read *Darwin's Black Box*. There's a little over 200 different things that have to line up perfectly in order for your blood to clot. If any one of those 200 things don't happen simultaneously—it's a little over 200—if any one of those don't happen simultaneously, you will die. For some of those, if you get a cut and they're not present, you'll bleed out. You'll simply die because you will exsanguinate. For others of those, if you get a cut, your entire blood system will turn solid, and you will die because clotting knows no end. *Darwin's Black Box* makes the argument that it is evolutionarily impossible for trial and error to solve the problem of blood clotting because everyone of the steps that are required, if nature simply experiments with it, kills the organism. And that ends that. You don't know that you are going to succeed until you've lined them all up, and you've made them all work. It is an interesting book, *Darwin's Black Box*. In essence, it's saying that the evolutionists require more faith really than do people that believe in God because the theory upon which they base their notion requires far too many things to occur by trial and error than is conceivably possible.

Well, if there is a creation, then there is a Creator. If there is a Creator, then the question is... I assume all of you have had a father or a grandfather—someone that you respected—a mother or a grandmother, an aunt or an uncle that over the course of a lifetime developed skills and talents and humor and character—someone that you admire. And then they pass on. How profligate a venture is it to create someone that you—a creation that you view as noble, as worthy, as admirable, as interesting, as fascinating; some person that you love. Take that, and just obliterate it. God, who can make such a creation, surely doesn't waste a creation. He's not burning the library at Alexandria every day by those who pass on. God had to have a purpose behind it all. I

don't know how many of you have had a friend or a loved one or a family member who passed on who, subsequent to their death, appeared to you, had a conversation with you, in a dream, in a thought. I can recall going to my father's funeral, and his casket with his body was in the front of the little chapel we were in, but his presence was not there. That may have been the hull he occupied while he was living and breathing, but I had no sense at all that my father was there. I did have a sense that he was present, but he wasn't in the coffin. He was elsewhere in the room. I couldn't see him, but I could have pointed to him, and said, He's here. In fact, I made a few remarks at my father's funeral, and I largely directed them at him.

Nature testifies over and over again; it doesn't matter when the sun goes down, there's going to be another dawn. It doesn't matter when all the leaves fall off the deciduous trees in the fall, there's going to come a spring. There's going to be a renewal of life. There are all kinds of animals in nature that go through this really loathsome, disgusting, wretched existence, and then they transform. And where they were a pest before, now they are bright, and they're colorful, and they fly, and they pollinate. Butterflies help produce the very kinds of things that their larvae stage destroyed. These are signs. These are testimonies. Just like the transformation of the caterpillar into the butterfly—the pest into the thing of beauty; the thing that ate the vegetables that you were trying to grow into the thing that helps pollinate the things that you want to grow—that's the plan for all of us. So, when you study the scriptures, the objective should not be, "Can I trust the text? Can I evaluate the text? Can I use a form of criticism against the text in order to weigh, dismiss, belittle, judge?" Take all that you know about nature, take all that you know about this world and the majesty of it all. Take all that you know that informs you that there is hope, there is joy, there is love. Why do you love your children? Why do your children love you? These kinds of things exist. They're real. They're tangible, and they're important. And they are part of what God did when He created this world. Keep *that* in mind when you're studying and search the scriptures to try and help inform you how you can better appreciate, how you can better enjoy, how you can better love, how you can better have hope. What do they have to say that can bring you closer to God? Not, can I find a way to dismiss something that Joseph said or did? As soon as Joseph was gone off the scene, people that envied the position that he occupied took over custody of everything, including the documents, and what we got as a consequence of that is a legacy that allowed a trillion dollar empire to be constructed. Religion should require our sacrifice. It should not be here to benefit us. We should have to give, not get. And in the giving of ourselves, what we get is in the interior; it's in the heart. It's the things of enduring beauty and value. If your study takes you away from an appreciation of the love, the charity, the things that matter most, reorient your study.

QUESTION: Expound on the phrase, "the pavilion of thy hiding place?"

DENVER: At that time Joseph was in Liberty jail and he was longing for that earlier companionship that he had been involved with. Joseph made a remark one time about how the apostle Paul had seen the third heaven and that he, Joseph, had seen the seven heavens. There's a construct to the order of everything. And there are veils within veils within veils. I once analogized priesthood to fellowship, and there is more than one

kind of fellowship beyond the veil. And there are councils, and there are places in the heavens where some are invited, and others will get there eventually. The pavilion of God is another way of saying, You have located yourself in a place high and lifted up—is one way that it gets described, in which God appears to be inaccessible at that moment. God appears to be outside of the range. Joseph was writing that in Liberty jail because he felt like God had abandoned him.

In fact, one of the problems with the LDS version of the Doctrine and Covenants is that the language that appears right before God's answer to Joseph is gone. It's not in your D&C, but it's in the Teachings and Commandments. Joseph got a letter from friends. It was very consoling. He was complaining to God because now he'd heard from his loved ones, but it made him reflect upon all the misery that had gone on in their being driven out of the state of Missouri while he's locked up in a dungeon and unable to do or say anything to help them. And his mind—he describes how his mind is aflame with anxiety. His mind is jumping from point to point with—the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* says, "with the avidity of lightning." The real word that he used was with the *vivacity* of lightning, but his mind is simply jumping from place to place to place because of the circumstances. Then just before the answer comes...

*Oh God where art thou, and where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place.
How long shall thy hand be stayed. (D&C 121:1)*

That is part of the letter. Between verse 6 and verse 7, as it appears in the Doctrine and Covenants, is this long explanation that Joseph gives about how his mind is stirred up. He's jumping from subject to subject. His anxiety... He's worked up into a frenzy. And then he says, At last all the anxieties lie slain, and he reaches a state of peace and reconciliation, and when he is finally calm and his mind has settled down, the voice of inspiration comes along and whispers,

My son, peace be unto thy soul. Thy adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment. (vs 7)

The voice of God came to Joseph in Liberty jail when his mind came to peace.

He grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger, retrogrades from one thing to another until finally all enmity, malice, and hatred and past differences, misunderstandings, and mismanagements lie slain, victims at the feet of hope. And when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, my son, peace be unto your soul.

Finally, hope and peace, and then comes the answer. We have a lot of reasons to be anxious in every one of our lives. There is so much that troubles us, but the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, when we finally are calm enough: Be still, and know that I am God gets read as, Be Still!!! And know that I am God!! When what it's really saying is, If you would like to know that I am God, quiet it all down. Because whatever pavilion I may occupy, I also occupy part of you. You live and breathe and

move because God is sustaining you from moment to moment by lending you breath. He's in you, and He's with everyone of us.

QUESTION: So you spoke of the need to plumb the depths of the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, and how it becomes a urim and thummim to us. The Book of Mormon itself informs us that this is the lesser things. It is intentionally withholding much. And it specifically states the purpose is to try our faith. The faith having been so tried, those who plumb the depths can expect more to come forth at some point—in terms of scripture; in terms of record. I guess the question there is—and not to minimize what we have been given because it is clearly enough for our present state and more—does that sort of thing, are those sorts of records that are promised a millennial sort of thing, after the Lord returns? Or, is it a sort of thing that, if we finally take seriously enough what's been given now, can we expect more to come forth before the Lord comes?

DENVER: I believe that how we respond to what we are given will drive that entirely, and whether we get it before the millenium or after is dependant upon us. But I also think— Look, the people who prepared the summaries on the plates—the abridgement—and the Lord who provided the translation of that, both know what's being withheld. They abridged what they abridged with what was being withheld in front of their eyes. So they can't tell you the abridged story without the content of what's being withheld present in their mind. If you go through the text carefully, you'll begin to see that there are patterns that start fitting together. I don't think that when the rest of what has been withheld is suddenly brought out into the light— If you've carefully looked at what is in the scriptures already, you're not going to say, "Wow! That is shockingly different!" You're going say, "I always suspected that. And that fits in with this, and this fits in with that, and the picture begins to emerge a bit more clearly. Yeah, I've always sort of suspected that to be the case." When we read the scriptures, keep in mind that the people writing them have in their mind the rest of the picture, and it leaks through, a great deal leaks through because you can't— If you know the rest of the story, and you're telling the tale, but you're leaving out some of the big punch lines, but they are present in your mind, the punch lines are going to leak through. There is a lot that comes through in the Book of Mormon. The character and the nature of God is probably better understood by what we have in the Book of Mormon, and it is perfectly consistent with the testimony of the gospel writers who knew Christ in mortality. And if you take what we got in a fairly battered New Testament record and the Book of Mormon together and what happened in the life of Joseph Smith, and you weave them all together, you begin to understand that God is a very patient, loving, kindly being. And that the mysteries of God largely consist in developing the attributes of godliness in us. The things that matter the most are the things that make us more like Him—better people, more kindly. You want to know more of the mysteries of God, serve your fellow man, and be of more value to them. In the process of blessing the lives of others, you find out that you know more of the character of God as a consequence of that.

Let me end by bearing testimony that God really is up to a work right now. And the work that is underway can culminate in Zion. Covenants were made. Promises were given.

God has an obligation to the covenant fathers that He will vindicate. God's words will be fulfilled, all of them. None of them are going to fall to the ground unfulfilled. The question is not, Will God bring about the culmination of all His purposes? The question is, Are we willing to cooperate with Him to bring those purposes to pass in our day? The offer that God makes—this appears in scripture nearly as often as the promise in Malachi—God says, How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and ye would not. Could God have brought about His purposes and vindicated His promises in the days of Moses? Could He have done what He had promised to do when Christ was here on the earth? Could He have done it in the days of Peter? Could He have done it in the days of Joseph Smith? The question is never whether God *will* vindicate His promises. The question is, Will there ever come a people who will respond to the Lord's willingness to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and be gathered, and be content with being gathered and being at peace with one another. We have that opportunity, but so many generations before us have had the same opportunity, and they would not. The question isn't whether God *is* going to do it or whether God is *willing* to do it now. The question is, Are we willing to cooperate with Him in that process to do our part? We get really petty with one another, and we shouldn't be. We ought to value one another so highly that we will do anything we can to support one another and to assist in bringing about the purposes of God. At the end of the day, obedience to God is simply blessing one another by the way we conduct ourselves. I like the Lamanite king's prayer, "I will give away all my sins to know you." We tend not to be willing to give away our sins. We want to harbour them and cultivate them and celebrate them. We ought to be more— We ought to love God more and our sins less. God *can* fulfill His promises in our day, before we leave this stage of the action. It can happen. Whether it happens or not is up to us and how interested we are in doing as He bids us. Of that I bear testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Signs Follow Faith

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Centerville, Utah

The oldest, Old Testament scripture is the Book of Job. It's older than even the Pentateuch. There are three Old Testament texts in the King James Version of the Bible that are universally regarded as Wisdom texts: Job and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. A total of seven Old Testament texts have been regarded as Wisdom literature, some of which are not in the King James Version.

Wisdom literature is about mature faith, where disappointments and difficulties are accepted and anger against God for life's setbacks is exposed as foolishness. Wisdom literature teaches about enduring, patient, determined, and resilient faith. Job's friends mistook his suffering with divine disfavor. One of the major themes is faithfulness through adversity and trials.

The first verse of the Book of Mormon echoes with Wisdom. It contains a profound lesson learned over a lifetime. Nephi explained: *Having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days* (1 Nephi 1:1 RE). He saw many afflictions. He was highly favored of the Lord in **all** his days, including those in which the affliction was visited on him.

How can one suffer many afflictions and be highly favored of the Lord? Wisdom literature would suggest that perhaps they are related to one another. Do those who are highly favored need to encounter afflictions to understand God's grace and favor toward them? That is a Wisdom theme.

When we say life should be easier, we are foolish. We're not wise.

In his final blessing to his son Helaman, Alma says something similar: *I...know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions* (Alma 17:1 RE). Trusting God does not remove life's trials. Trusting God will not keep afflictions from you. Trusting God will not prevent troubles in your life.

The Book of Mormon explains a mature form of faith in God: resilient in the face of difficulty, enduring in the day of trouble, comforting in the moment of affliction. The faith of the Book of Mormon writers is not superficial, conditional, and weak. It bears up under trial; it is proven in troubles; it accompanies during afflictions.

The Book of Mormon is, among other things, a Wisdom text. What if trials, afflictions, and troubles are not negative? What if they are gifts provided as an opportunity to prove us therewith so that we and God may show what is in our heart?

Job asks: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* (Job 2:3 RE). Christ taught: *In this world there are difficult trials to be faced by my followers,*

but those who remain devoted will, like me, finish the path and experience the fullness of joy (Testimony of St. John 10:29 RE).

Each person experiences religion uniquely. No two persons have read exactly the same library of materials, which is why study of scriptures become a valuable common basis for understanding one another.

Reading scripture calls forth from each person all their background, education, and experience as they study and learn from the text. If a Christian reaches deeply into the New Testament canon, they'll eventually be lead to study New Testament Greek. Then they will discover New Testament Greek is commonly believed to have been Koine, a dead form of language about which today we must make assumptions. There's also a theory that the New Testament was translated into Koine from Aramaic, and that theory is called the Peshitta Primacy, also known as the Aramaic Primacy. If the original was in Aramaic and the Koine version a translation, then there will be unresolved questions about the quality of that translation that we can no longer answer.

Assumptions make hardline Christians insecure, and therefore, they insist nothing or very little has been lost in understanding Koine Greek. We do not know for certain the correct pronunciations for some Koine words. We also do not know the full definitions or meanings for many of the words.

If we're humble about the challenges we would admit we cannot fully know what the writers intended by what they wrote in the New Testament texts. We think we can get close, but we should be humble enough to acknowledge the imperfection we confront.

Scholars who delve deeply into the Old Testament find another challenge. The Old Testament was written in a form of ancient Hebrew that is a dead language. Although Hebrew has been revived, the Old Testament is written in a dead form. We do not know how many Old Testament words would be correctly pronounced. We do not know all the definitions for Old Testament language. If we're humble about the challenges, we would admit we can never fully know what the writers intended by what they wrote in the Old Testament texts. We think we can get close, but we should be humble enough to acknowledge the imperfection we confront.

The majority of Christians feel no need to read their scriptures in the original Koine Greek or ancient Hebrew. Whether they are right about that or not, the more deeply you venture into textual scholarship, the more humble you should become about what you actually are able to understand.

In contrast, if you accept the Book of Mormon as scripture, it presents none of these challenges. It was translated by the gift and power of God into English. The English spoken in 1830 is fully known and understood today, and dictionaries published in 1830 are still available today. Any slight shift in meaning between 1830 and 2019 can be fully determined.

In addition to varying forms of ignorance and study, diligence and sloth, interest and indifference that separates each of us in our religious beliefs, there are also false spirits that mislead and confuse.

The term "false spirit" is not limited to the idea of a devil, imp, or mischievous personage but includes the much broader attitude, outlook, or cultural assumptions that people superimpose atop religion. False spirits in the form of ignorant, incomplete, or incorrect ideas are easily conveyed from one person to another. People convey false spirits every time they teach a false idea, and the student accepts the idea.

False spirits infect every religious tradition on earth. This is not limited to eastern religions that deny Christ but also include Christianity and Mormonism. So long as there is anything false or any error, a false spirit prevails. Different religious structures lend themselves to be overtaken by false spirits through different means.

If you have a hierarchy, only the top needs to be taken captive by a false spirit. If it is a diffused religion, then all you have to do is take captive the theological seminaries in order to spread the false spirit. But if the religion is individual and each person is standing on their own—accountable for their relation to God, accountable to learn, to pray, to reach upward, and to have God connect with them individually—then the only way to corrupt a diffused [individual] religion is to corrupt every single believer, every single practitioner.

In the new scriptures there is a section in which Joseph Smith discusses at length the topic of false spirits. It's an editorial he published in the Times and Seasons on April the 1st of 1842. This new section 147 in the Teachings and Commandments is worth careful study—the Teachings and Commandments being the new volume of scripture recovering and restoring the text as it was originally; available (if you're interested) either for free online to read at www.scriptures.info, or if you want to purchase a copy, it's available through Amazon.

This new section of the Teachings and Commandments is worth careful study. Keep in mind the meaning of several words. Priesthood means a fellowship. You can have a priesthood that is a fellowship of men. You can have a priesthood that is a fellowship between men and angels. You can have a priesthood that is a fellowship between man and Christ; and you can have a priesthood that is a fellowship between man and God the Father.

In section 147, Joseph Smith ties discerning of false spirits to priesthood, and therefore, when a person has an association with heavenly angels, they are not apt to be misled by fallen false spirits.

Joseph Smith also uses the term "keys" in section 147. Joseph used the term to mean understanding—the greatest "key" being the ability to ask God and receive an answer.

In the Teachings and Commandments (Section 10 Verse 1), *I have given him [referring to Joseph] the keys of the mysteries of the revelations which are sealed.* In section 141, Joseph, speaking about his ordination of Hyrum and endowing and in blessing him: *Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive (vs 32),* and then a reference again in that same section to another servant, *Let my servant William...also receive the keys by which he may ask and receive blessings (vs 33).*

Joseph used the term, "keys of the kingdom" to mean: when a person can ask and receive an answer each time he asks, they hold the keys of the kingdom because the kingdom belongs to God, and God must direct its affairs for it to be His.

Here are some excerpts from Joseph's editorial, section 147: *One great evil is that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits: their power[s], laws, government, intelligence, [and so on], and imagine that when there is anything like power, revelation, or vision manifested, that **it must be of God** (vs 6; emphasis added).* That is a great evil.

After criticizing the experiences of Methodists, Presbyterians, and others, Joseph inquired about manifestations of false spirits: *They consider it to be the power of God and a glorious manifestation from God — a manifestation of what? (ibid).* He's just described what these people take as glorious manifestations, and he says, despite their supernatural appearance, it's a manifestation of what? ***Is there any intelligence communicated? Are the curtains of Heaven withdrawn or the purposes of God developed? Have they seen and conversed with an angel — [and] have the glories of futurity burst upon their view? No!*** (ibid; emphasis added). In other words, nothing has advanced that is of God—edifying, instructing, and providing greater intelligence. It's simply spiritual voyeurism, and its evil.

Nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God (ibid, vs 9). Then he extends this outward as he continued: The Turks, the Hindus, the Jews, the Christians, the Indian in fact all nations have been deceived, imposed upon, and injured through the mischievous effects of false spirits (ibid, vs 10).

Then he (close to the end) says,

*And we shall at last have to come to this conclusion, whatever we may think of revelation, that without it we can neither know nor understand anything of God, or the Devil; ...it is equally as plain that **without a divine communication** (emphasis added) they must remain in ignorance... The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God they considered to be the false prophets and hence they killed, stoned, punished, and imprisoned the true prophets, and these had to hide themselves "in deserts, and dens, and caves of the earth," and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, whilst they cherished, honored, and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men. (ibid, vs 11)*

Read that section. False spirits are actively involved whenever God begins a work. And there are many false spirits—vying for your acceptance—now at work among us.

That having been said, it's time to stop dividing and begin uniting. There are enough divisions in Christianity and in Mormonism. This does not need to continue. The restoration is intended to bring unity not division. Division needs to end.

In one of the accounts that Joseph Smith wrote (about what precipitated his calling by God)—that appears in the new Teachings and Commandments as T&C (Section) 146—Joseph wrote this about what provoked him to go out and to pray to get an answer from God about which church to join:

*I found that there was a great clash in religious sentiment: if I went to one society they referred me to one plan, and another to another, each one pointing to his own particular creed as the summum-bonum of perfection. Considering that **all could not be right and that God could not be the author of so much confusion**, I determined to investigate the subject more fully, believing that **if God had a church it would not be split up into factions**, and that if he taught one society to worship one way and administer in one set of ordinances, he would not teach [other] principles which were diametrically opposed. (vs 4; emphasis added)*

That's what precipitated the restoration, and there are those who say we have reached a point of stagnation; we have reached a point of corruption; or we have reached a point of apostasy in the various factions of the Mormon world. And people can agree something must be done; something needs to be done.

But people are crying as much *lo here, and... lo there* (Joseph Smith History 1:11 RE) in their current search to try and reconnect through the restoration as were the Presbyterians and the Methodists and the Baptists at the time that Joseph went into the woods to pray.

What has come of the restoration? It's reached exactly the point now that was a dead end at the beginning. What is wrong with us that we can't overlook—based upon the individual experiences, the individual study, the individual's comprehension, even the individual's prayerful reflection and guidance through that—and accept one another, when in sincerity all of us are trying to follow God?

Why have we now managed to produce (among ourselves) contention, division, disruption? What is wrong with us? Better yet, what's wrong with me? Because whatever it is, it's wrong with every one of us.

It's no different than the mess that Joseph Smith saw in the landscape of Christianity in 1820 when he went to the woods to pray.

We should be ashamed of ourselves. We should be ashamed of our division. It should repulse us so much that I should be readily willing to embrace you even if you have some idea with which I disagree. I don't have your background. I don't have your experience. I haven't lived your life. I have to assume that you've reached the conclusion that you have reached because of the life you've lived.

And perhaps if you and I were to take a long enough walk with one another, we could reach an agreement. But we don't do that, just like the Christian's didn't do that, because we're unwilling to suffer the slightest variation to pass by without commenting on it, criticizing it, and rejecting it without ever considering that there may be a wealth of information that underlies that proposition. And if we understood that well enough, we might say, "Now that I understand, I see where your point fits in to a larger gospel context, and I need to embrace it. I would like to embrace it, but to do so in this fashion, because let me give you what underlies my experience, my background, and my education. " Why do we do this?

The vineyard that the Lord began the restoration in was cumbered with all sorts of strange fruit. I mean—

(I've spent a lifetime referring to it as the Jacob chapter 5. In the new Book of Mormon layouts, it's one of the very few chapters that I can actually point you to from memory. It's Jacob chapter 3 in the new layout. So I'm becoming familiar with it.)

Talking about the condition of this vineyard, and its cumbered with all sorts of strange fruit—none of it worth harvesting; none of it work keeping; none of it worth laying up and preserving against the harvest—the allegory says:

*This is **the last time** that I shall nourish my vineyard, for the end is nigh at hand and the season speedily cometh. And if ye labor with your mights with me, ye shall have joy in the fruit with which I shall lay up unto myself against the time, which will soon come. And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights, and **the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them. And they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.*** (Jacob 3:26-27 RE; emphasis added)

Well, that's fairly critical. The Lord's going to labor with you, but He's going to expect you to obey His commandments in all things. Have you recently read the *Answer to the Prayer for Covenant*? Are you determined to obey the master of the vineyard and his commandments in all things? Maybe we ought to read that twice before we berate one another, belittle one another, argue with one another, dismiss one another. Otherwise, we're really not laboring with the Lord of the vineyard to help for the coming harvest. Instead, we're embracing a false spirit, and we're dividing one another, and we're trying

Our ambition, whether we're willing to acknowledge it or not, our ambition is to set this into the same sort of divisive factions as the Lord condemned to Joseph in 1820. They

have a *form of godliness but they [deny] the power thereof* (JSH 2:5 RE). *They teach for [commandments] the [doctrines] of men* (ibid). They're all corrupt.

*And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard. And the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly, and the **wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away*** (Jacob 3:27 RE; emphasis added).

Some of the plucking and some of the casting away is voluntarily done by those who submit to false spirits that stir them up to anger against one another, and they depart from fellowship thinking themselves justified before God, when in fact, all they're doing is being plucked and cast away.

And they did keep the root and the top thereof equal, according to the strength thereof (ibid). We are seeking to keep it equal. Everyone of us is on the same plain. No one's getting supported by tithing money. If they are, that's done by a local fellowship that has voluntarily determined that they have one among them in need. Because the tithes are gathered and used to help the poor. There's no general fund being accumulated, and there's no one who does anything that they get compensated for.

This is the only group of people whose religion requires, incessantly, sacrifice. No one gets paid. No one gets remunerated. Everything that is done is done at the price of sacrifice. If you are a person in need among a fellowship, the tithes are appropriately used because that's what they're for. They're for the poor. They're not for the leader.

You have to keep the root and you have to keep the top equal. If you allow inequality to creep in at the beginning, the end result is lavish palaces in which some fare sumptuously and others ask to eat the crumbs that fall from the table because they're treated so unequally, and their despair and their poverty and their need goes ignored.

Among us, it can't go ignored, because the money is gathered at a fellowship level, and if there is someone in need among you and you don't minister to their needs, you're cruel. You're...

*And thus **they labored with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away*** (ibid; emphasis added). If you can't tolerate equality; if you can't tolerate the top and the root being equal; if you can't tolerate peace among brethren, then go ahead, and be bad and cast yourself away. If you feel moved upon to do that, well, that's the Lord of the vineyard getting rid of you.

*Even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard and the Lord had preserved unto himself, that the trees had become again the natural fruit. And they became like unto one body, and **the fruit were equal*** (ibid; emphasis added).

That word "equal" shows up so often in the labor that the Lord of the vineyard is trying to accomplish with the people that you ought to take note. We ought to probably typeset it:

EQUAL

in double-sized font. We're not going to do that, so you have to underline the word, or circle the word, or pay attention to it. The purpose is to go and become equal with one another. As soon as you set out to create rank and position and hierarchy—

Admittedly, within the parable there is a top, and there is a root, admittedly; but the objective is to achieve equality. If you start out saying the one is greater or better than the other, you're never going to arrive at the point that is the purpose of the parable, the purpose of the labor of the Lord of the vineyard: *and the fruit were equal*.

The Book of Mormon has had libraries of material written, and almost every single volume in the libraries of Book of Mormon material are filled with debates between polemics and apologists. All the literature basically debates the pro and the con. I spent decades studying the back and forth of polemicists and apologists. One of the fellows that I admire greatly is Hugh Nibley, and Hugh Nibley was one of the very first serious-minded Mormons to take the Book of Mormon seriously. If you read what I wrote about the Book of Mormon history of scholarship in *Eighteen Verses*, you find that, literally, it was Hugh Nibley that ultimately persuaded the First Presidency that the Book of Mormon should be studied and taken seriously.

There were stake presidents and bishops in the LDS tradition who never read the book at the time, and when Hugh Nibley mounted a defense of the Book of Mormon, then-President David O. McKay essentially said, "You talk about it like you think it's true," and Hugh Nibley defended it. At the end of the day, however, Hugh Nibley is an apologist. He's defending the faith. The Book of Mormon itself, on the other hand, has this passage from Alma where he invites you to experiment upon the word. He says, You ought to plant it. Now think for a moment about what it means to plant something.

*Alma says: But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an **experiment** upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than **desire to believe**, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can **give place for a portion of my words**. Just think for yourself, for a moment, how you would do that. Now we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place [unto that seed] that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed — if ye **do not cast it out by your unbelief**, that ye will resist the spirit of the Lord — behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts. And when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within [yourself], It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to **enlarge my soul**; yea, it beginneth to **enlighten my understanding**; yea, and it beginneth to be **delicious (un)to me**. Now behold,*

would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, yea. (Alma 16:27-28 RE; emphasis added)

And he goes on to describe what happens after that and how it converts into knowledge once you gained experience with the process.

*For ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your **understanding doth begin to be enlightened** and your **mind doth begin to expand**. O then, is [not this][this not] real? I say unto you, yea, because **it is light**; and whatsoever is **light is good**, because it is discernible; therefore, ye must know that it is good. And now behold, after ye have tasted this light, is your knowledge perfect? Behold, I say unto you, nay; neither must ye lay aside your faith, for ye have only exercised your faith to plant the seed, that ye might try the experiment to know if the seed was good. And behold, as the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say, Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up and bring forth fruit unto us. And now behold, if ye **nourish it with [great] care**, it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit. But if ye neglect the tree and take no thought for its nourishment, behold, it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root, it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out. Now this is not because the seed was not good, neither is it because the fruit thereof would not be desirable, but it is because your ground is barren and ye will not nourish the tree; therefore, ye cannot have the fruit thereof. And thus it is: [and] if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life. But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith, with great **diligence**, and with **patience**, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold, it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life. And because of your **diligence**, and your faith, and your **patience** with the word, in nourishing it that it may take root [ye shall] by and by... pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, ... which is white above all that is white, yea, ... pure above all that is pure... And then you thirst not and you hunger not. (ibid, vs 29-30; emphasis added)*

Diligence, patience. Diligence, faith, patience.

We want a faith that will respond like Google. We don't want God to prepare a banquet! we want fast food and a short order cook and someone that will slap something on our plate fast, fast, fast! And the Book of Mormon is saying, "Slow down. Diligence isn't quick. Patience isn't fast." Planting the seed—

It's like the kids in elementary school that plant the pumpkin seed in the Styrofoam cup, and every day they go over and look at the Styrofoam cup, and nothing seems to be happening. And before long, a third of the class has killed the seed because they dug it up to see what's going on. Patience. Patience and diligence. Three times: diligence and patience. Diligence and patience.

I have had spiritual breakthroughs that are so profound and so sacred that when I described them one time I did so with only nine words. But I can tell you why it happened:

I taught the Book of Mormon in a Gospel Doctrine class for four different years on cycles while I was a Gospel Doctrine teacher, each time pushing the Book of Mormon deeper and deeper; always, for the first couple of decades, being a little reticent, being a little skeptical. I accepted the arguments of the apologist. I knew, I understood, and I had studied the arguments of the polemicists.

But Alma was asking that I do something different. Alma was saying, "Hey, why don't you just experiment with this thing, and plant it as if you believed it. Plant it as if you had faith in it. So forget about the pros and cons, accept the Book of Mormon at face value, and let the Book of Mormon define itself; let the Book of Mormon be the source from which you evaluate whether or not it enlightens you, whether or not it appeals to your heart, to your soul, and to your mind."

And so I experimented on the word, and I took the Book of Mormon as if it were actually a revelation from God translated by the gift and power of God and delivered to me through no human instrumentality. Joseph Smith may have dictated it, and Oliver Cowdery may have penned most of it, but it was translated by the gift and power of God. Therefore, the book was translated into English by the Lord.

And so I took the Book of Mormon seriously. I entertained no doubts. I employed no apologetics. I just accepted the book and tried to understand it. As I did so, going through the text of the Book of Mormon, there were moments when there were glints where something leapt off the page to me, as if someone had flashed the reflection of the sun off a windshield passing down the street, and it aligns with the right angle of the sun. The text itself seemed to spark to me.

As I took it seriously, I could breathe the spirit of the writers. I beheld more as I went through that text than the text will yield to the cautious and wary reader. The Book of Mormon, like the spirits I referred to earlier, the Book of Mormon also has a spirit, and that spirit is Christ. If you want to relate to the spirit of Christ and not a false spirit, drop all your apprehensions, lower your guard, and see if the Book of Mormon does not yield the spirit of Christ. It was a better text than any other I had encountered in conveying the spirit of Christ. It is, in fact, the most correct book, and a man can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book.

It can be trusted as a source of direct information in our language. We don't have to encounter uncertainties and hurdles in trying to manage the language and understand the vocabulary as is always the challenge when you're looking at a New Testament or an Old Testament text.

The New Testament text has a statement that was made by Christ:

*Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to **fulfill**; for truly I say unto you, heaven and Earth must pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass from the law **until** all shall be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments and shall teach men so to do, he shall by no means be saved in the kingdom of Heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach these commandments of the law until it shall be fulfilled, the same shall be called great and shall be saved in the kingdom of Heaven. For I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 3:17 RE; emphasis added)*

That's a text from Joseph Smith's translation or Joseph Smith's Inspired Version of the New Testament, and he's added a few words in there, including the word "until."

The English word that gets used in this text about "fulfilled" was translated from the Greek word *pleroo*. *Pleroo* can be interpreted: to make fully known, proclaim fully— instead of: to accomplish. In that sense a scholar might conclude from the Greek that Christ's statement has nothing to do with ending or with completing the law of Moses. And there are scholars who have taught that—Christians.

So there's an ambiguity about whether Christ intended for the law of Moses to come fully to an end. Or if he was simply establishing it firmly by fulfilling it or adhering to it. Any ambiguity about what Christ intended is removed when his declaration to the Nephites is added to your understanding:

*And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words, he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and **wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses, for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away** and that all things had become new. And he said unto them, Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that **the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law**, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel. Therefore, **the law in me is fulfilled**, for I have come to fulfill the law; **therefore, it hath an end...** the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled, **but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me.** (3 Nephi 7:2 RE; emphasis added)*

Those who teach the Law of Moses has not come to an end are led by a false spirit. That having been said, someone that has been misled by a false spirit does not necessarily mean that they are an evil person; it only means that they have been misled. Recall Christ rebuking Peter and calling Peter "Satan" because Peter was advising the Lord against the determined trip to Jerusalem where he would be crucified; and Peter told him, advised him, counseled him, and objected, *[Far] be it... from you Lord. [Don't do this thing]* (Matthew 9:2 RE). And the Lord, responding to Peter, called him "Satan."

There are many people who are only kept from the truth because they do not know where to find it. The obligation of those who can teach truth is to teach it. Overcoming most false spirits is to be done by gentleness, meekness, pure knowledge, and persuasion not by rebuking, condemning, and dismissing the honest seeker for truth. At some point every one of us has emerged from a cloud of falsehoods into acceptance of some truth. We're no better than others who remain under that cloud, but we have an obligation to invite them to join in receiving light and truth. Likewise, we have an obligation to continue to search for truth. Until you have an understanding of all things, you're still misled, at least in part.

The prophets are not all fulfilled and there will yet be many things returned and restored. This will include holy day(s)—when we have a holy place to observe in proper order the things practiced between the time of Adam until the time of Abraham.

Now I want to talk for a moment about signs that are in the New Testament canon involving Christ, in order to get to a principle that we need to understand. In Matthew:

*And when Jesus departed from there, **two blind men** following him, crying and saying, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on us. And when he [was] come into the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said unto them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, according to your faith, be it unto you. And their eyes were opened. **And sternly he charged them, saying, Keep my commandments and see you tell no man in this place, that no man know it.** (Matthew 4:13 RE; emphasis added)*

"You need to obey my commandments! You don't tell anyone! You don't tell anyone."

*And again departing from the borders of Tyre and Sidon [this is from Mark], he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the middle of the region of Decapolis. And they brought unto him one that was **deaf, and had an impediment in his speech**. And they petitioned him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude and put his finger into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue. And, looked up to Heaven, he sighed and said unto him, ... (that is, Be opened). And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was untied and he spoke plain. And **he charged them that they should tell no man**. But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published him, and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. (Mark 4:14 RE; emphasis added)*

This is from Mark returning from the Mount of Transfiguration: *And as they came down from the mountain, **he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen** until the Son of Man was risen from the dead (Mark 5:6 RE; emphasis added)*. In Luke, after raising a dead man's daughter, ***Her parents were astonished,***

but he charged them they should tell no man what was done (Luke 6:12 RE; emphasis added). In Luke, after healing a leper: **He charged him to tell no man** (Luke 4:10 RE; emphasis added).

Christ said to tell no one because it would attract the wrong kind of follower. It would attract the adulterers. It would attract the **sign seekers**. It would attract the wrong kind of people. Satan tempted Christ asking him for signs that were self-serving. Bread for the Lord to eat when the Lord was hungry. A show of angelic support when he would be cast off the Temple's pinnacle. At his death, the wicked demanded signs from him. Spare yourself from the crucifixion; heal yourself. Signs are by their very nature self-serving and attention grabbing, and it is just inevitable. They attract followers, and the Jews knew this and feared Christ's miracles would result in him becoming greatly popular.

*Then many of the Jews who came to Mary and had **seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.** But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and ... Pharisees a council, and said, What shall we do? For **this man does many miracles. If we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.** (John 7:7 RE; emphasis added)*

But these would be the wrong kind of follower. The gentiles crave that sort of thing. Gentiles who try to get a sign to follow do so because their hearts are wrong. Signs follow faith. Signs follow faith by the will of God, not of man. From the Teachings and Commandments: *And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name they shall do many wonderful works* (T&C 82:22). You want a sign that someone is a follower of Christ? Go ask the single mother with children who's being helped by the tithes of a fellowship that go directly to help her whether that is a wonderful work in her life and in her experience, and that's the first sign—perhaps the primary sign; perhaps the greatest sign. Because it's relieving the need of someone that needs it.

*In my name they shall cast out devils, [and] in my name they shall heal the sick, [and] in my name they shall open the eyes of the blind and un-stop the ears of the deaf, and the tongue of the dumb shall speak, and if any man shall administer poison unto them, it shall not hurt them, and the poison of a serpent shall not have power to harm them. But a commandment I give unto them that **they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak them before the world,** for these things are given unto you for your profit and for salvation. (Ibid; emphasis added)*

They are not given to you to boast about.

Melchizedek and the order of priesthood he obtained is described in the book of Genesis chapter 14, in the current set of scriptures, the Old Covenants: *For God... [swore] unto Enoch and unto his seed, with an oath by Himself, that everyone being*

ordained after this order and calling, should have power, by faith, to break mountains (Genesis 7:19 RE; emphasis added). We have no direct account of when the mountains have been broken by those after that order. We have one indirect reference in the book of Genesis referring to Enoch: *And he spoke the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled even according to his command, and the rivers of water turned out of their course* (Genesis 4:13 RE).

You need to be careful how you parse that scripture. Enoch spoke the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord is spoken. And in response to the word of the Lord having been spoken, the earth trembled, and the mountains fled even according to his—the Lord—his command. And the rivers of water turned out of their course. Enoch preached, earthquakes followed, mountains moved. In Jacob 3:2 RE, there is another reference: *We obtain a hope and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea.*

That's Jacob illustrating that the faith they have has this effect. He doesn't describe that effect having occurred, simply that it's there. Nephi explained this is the power that God entrusted him with in Helaman: *For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God. Yea, behold, at his voice doth the hills and the mountains tremble and quake, and by the power of his voice are broken up and become smooth, yea, even like unto a valley* (Helaman 4:10 RE).

He was given the sealing power. He was told that the earth will obey you—because he knew that he would not do anything with that power other than what God willed. And shortly after being entrusted by God to this, Nephi prays to God and asks God to send a famine to stop the people from killing one another. So here is someone who can speak the word of God, and the earth itself will obey him, and he uses that to get on his knees and pray and ask God. He doesn't command anything.

That kind of endowment of priestly authority is done because God expressed His faith in the man. Can God have faith in you? Can God trust you?

So the list goes on.

- The mountains is the first thing.
- **To divide the seas.** We have an example of that with Moses.
- **To dry up waters.** We have an example of that with Joshua when they reached the river Jordan.
- **To turn them out of their course,** which was done again at the time of Enoch.
- **To put at defiance the armies of nations**—Elijah.
- **To divide the earth, to break every band. To stand in the presence of God. To do all things according to His will, according to His command** (Genesis 7:19 RE; emphasis added).

When it comes to breaking every band, keep that in mind because we're going to return to that in a moment.

And then it says to **subdue principalities and powers** (ibid). These are in the spiritual realm. Commanding devils, subduing principalities and powers. These are rebellious spirits cast down from Heaven. These are those that pretend to be and often are false ministering spirits or angels.

And this by the will of the Son of God, who was from before the foundation of the world. And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into Heaven (ibid).

Not always the case. The only reason translation occurred is because a mission was assigned to them, but that's outside of this.

Any one of the foregoing signs is a confirming sign. It's not required for all these signs to be given before faith is confirmed. And because these are gifts from God, it is God who decides when the sign will be given. God determines if, when, what, and how often a sign will be given—not the will of men.

Notice that the Brother of Jared's moving of the Mount Zerihon is not recorded in his record or Moroni's abridgment of that record. It is only mentioned in passing as an illustration (see Ether 5:6 RE). Even if we have faith to participate, the signs are God's. We are only witnesses. God sent Moses to deliver signs to Egypt, but the signs were God's. There is only one way in which a mortal can have discretion to invoke God's power which involves one of the three kinds of sealing power I previously discussed. That third kind is described in the book of Helaman and involves Nephi, and I've previously talked about that.

The reason Nephi was granted this authority was explained by God when he said, *Thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will* (Helaman 3:19 RE). When Nephi used that authority shortly afterward, he deferred to God, prayed and asked God if he would cause a famine to stop the violence of the degenerate people of his generation.

One of the signs that someone has this authority is that they can break every band. An illustration of this is in Nephi. In the first book of Nephi, when Nephi, in the wilderness is bound by his brothers, left behind so that wild beasts would kill him:

And it came to pass that they did lay their hands upon me, for behold, they were exceeding wroth; and they did bind me with cords, for they sought to take away my life, that they might leave me in the wilderness to be devoured by wild beasts. But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren? Yea, even give me strength that I may burst these bands with which I am bound? And it came to pass that when I had said these words, behold, the bands were loosed

from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren and I spake unto them again. (1 Nephi 2:4 RE)

Nephi is evidencing one of the signs of a person who is entrusted with that ordination of priesthood or that order of priesthood to which Melchizedek had been previously ordained. So we have a sign, and we have a testimony, and he's broken the bands, and it confirms who he is. But later, on the boat, Nephi was bound again, and a tempest came up:

Nevertheless, they did not loose me. And on the fourth day which we had been driven back, the tempest began to be exceedingly sore. And it came to pass that we were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea. And after we had been driven back upon the waters for the space of four days, my brethren began to see that the judgments of God were upon them, and that they must perish save they should repent of their iniquities. Wherefore, they came unto me and [loosened] the bands which were upon my wrists, and behold, they had swollen exceedingly; and also mine ankles [which] were much swollen, and great was the soreness thereof. (1 Nephi 5:30 RE)

Nephi could not break the bands, and he suffered because of it. Why would that same God (who entrusted to Nephi the power and the authority to demonstrate one of the signs that he was beloved and trusted of God, ordained to the order of Melchizedek, and could break the bands) leave him in a bound condition for days, while his hands and (his) feet are swelling? Why would he do that? Why is God not Google? Why is God not fast food? Why is God not a short order cook that can be bossed around by those to whom he has entrusted this authority? Why does God leave them always subordinate to the will of God? Why does the conferral of the sealing power upon Nephi and Helaman state that it is only because he will obey God? Why must all men always remain subordinate to God?

Moroni explained this principle:

Wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness — not until after the trial of your faith. For it was by faith that Christ shewed himself unto our fathers and after he had risen from the dead, and he shewed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in him, for he shewed himself not unto the world but because of the faith of men... Behold, it was by faith that they of old were called after the Holy Order of God. Wherefore, by faith was the Law of Moses given. But in the gift of the Son hath God prepared a more excellent way, and it is by faith that it hath been fulfilled. For [there is] no faith among the children of men, God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he [showeth] not himself until after their faith. (Ether 5:2 RE)

I have witnessed many miracles. I have been ministered to by angles and have been both in the presence of and received instruction from Jesus Christ. I've been shown

unspeakable things, but I know that I am nothing. I fear God, and I pray continually and submit to his commandments even when it's difficult. I disagree with, I argue with, and I provide my best advice and counsel when I honestly believe something asked of me is unwise or when I believe I'm not the right person to be doing an assignment.

God is willing to speak plainly as one man speaks to another. God has been patient, faithful, and willing to reason with me as one man reasons with another. I can't tell you how often God's words to Isaiah have been vindicated: *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts* (Isaiah 20:2 RE).

God knows and understand every one of us. God knows and understands when healing would prove to be a curse and not a blessing. God knows and understands when some person of faith, like Job, is called upon to endure something. Christ in the garden begged that the cup be taken from him, and the Father refused that request.

Have any of you ever witnessed the miracle of healing? Because I have; I've participated in some of those. But there are people I know who I would love to have healed, who I begged God for the blessing that they be healed. I've gotten answers. I've been told why they will not be healed. But I don't have the ability to require God to heal at my insistence—nor do any of you; nor has any man ever, in all the account of scriptures. Christ could not heal some people in some instances, and he was the Son of God. In all of scripture, there is only one moment when it appears that anyone could be healed no matter what their condition was—only one time. And at that moment, Christ was resurrected, and he was appearing as a resurrected being, not still as a mortal. As a mortal, Christ could not heal some. As a mortal, Christ could not persuade the Father to change the Father's will.

Some of you, like the antagonists of Job, have said to others of you that you don't have enough faith to be healed. You're worm-tongue. You're a false spirit. You're an accuser of the brethren. You have absolutely no right to make that assertion. Would you tell Christ, when he could not perform a healing, "Jesus, your problem is you don't have enough faith." Because that's essential what you're saying. You're saying, Men ought to be sovereign; not God. You're saying, Signs—which surely are given; signs follow people of faith incessantly. I don't know how many times—

I'm looking at Rob over there taking notes. Hey, Rob, do you know I'm here? He hasn't looked up. I don't know how many times you and I, in company with one another, have witnessed signs. Signs are given. Signs exist. You know what? I've told a few family members; I assume Rob's told a few family members. It's never been on the Internet; it's never been advertised, never found its way into one of my talks; and you know why? Because people that are only interested in signs are corrupt, and if someone will go perform some great sign and boast about it and that's of interest to you, then take your gentile, adulterous predisposition, and go follow them. But you will not witness the

miracles of God unless you submit to the commandments of God, and if you do that, signs will follow.

Don't judge another because you think God can be turned into an obedient servant that must heal if you have faith. It doesn't work that way. It didn't work that way for Christ. It won't work that way for us. Go humbly to the throne of God, and petition him for intercession. If you have faith, He will either heal, or if you have faith, he will explain to you in an answer why it's denied. You will know. You will come away with intelligence. What you cannot do is ignore heaven and demand that you have your way. God has been patient, faithful, and willing to reason with me. And God will be patient, faithful, and willing to reason with you.

There's no institution for us, and none is planned. We are all on our own, accountable to individually accept the responsibilities of discipleship. We should help one another in that effort. But we are not powerless when strange fruit comes and cumpers our fellowships. If a teaching does not conform to the Book of Mormon, you are entitled to reject it, to correct it, to be done with it. The Book of Mormon is the standard for our faith, for our day. It is the rule for our beliefs and practices. It is a covenant for our day.

One of the greatest events that has occurred in history is that in our day—in your lifetime—new scriptures have become available. The extent to which that is a good work can hardly be put into words. Moses recovered scripture that had been lost. The Old Testament record originates beginning with Moses. Prior to Moses' day, the only volume of scripture that we can definitely say is preceding Moses' five books is the Book of Job.

In the Book of Mormon there is another prophet who may also have preceded Moses, and that's Zenos. The Book of Mormon quotes directly writings of Zenos. Somewhere over three thousand words of Zenos are quoted directly in the Book of Mormon. He may also be older than the five book of Moses. All of the scripture that was recovered through Moses was recovered again, a second time, through Ezra.

There had been a great deal lost as a consequence of the Babylonian captivity, and when a remnant returned, one of the things that a leader in that remnant did was to recover scripture. So the Old Testament cannon that we're familiar with is really a recovery by Ezra of what had been originally produced in part at the time of Moses. All these texts get corrupted over time.

We have a third attempt to recover the scripture that occurred through the prophet Joseph Smith. The prophet Joseph Smith was commanded to go through the Old and the New Testament and to make inspired corrections to it, and we have that. But the saints were condemned in [1832(1)] because they did not respect the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, not only to say but to do, and that condemnation rested upon all.

One of the things that has been discovered in the effort to recover the scriptures and to get them in a form that closely— At this point it's hopeless to make it exactly, but it is extremely close to what was here originally. One of the things we've learned is that the condemnation was for two things: failure to say, and the failure to do. Most people think that the problem was the failure to do—like, You're condemned because you say it, but you don't do it. That's not what it meant. God condemned them because they weren't saying it, and they weren't doing it. In other words, the Book of Mormon and the former commandments that had been entrusted to the saints: they failed to say it, and they failed to do it, because the text of the Book of Mormon had become "roughed up" in the process.

An extraordinary effort was required in order to try and get it back to the beginning. We know that we did not, because you cannot, at this point, fully recover the original—can't be done. We got as close as we could, and in the process of that recovery effort and praying about it, as a sign to us of divine approval, God made edit corrections to the text of the Book of Mormon, and those have been put into— Divinely, recently obtained corrections to the text have been put into the Book of Mormon, almost every one of which are quotes of Christ. He fixed what he said into a correct set of instructions for us.

The original revelations of Joseph Smith were mishandled, mistreated. They were interlineated by people that probably shouldn't have done that. A great deal of conscientious effort when into trying to get that recovered. We now have, for the first time—it didn't happen while Joseph Smith was alive—we now have as close and as accurate a set of scriptures as can be recovered at this late date that are remarkably faithful to the restoration that the Lord intended through Joseph Smith.

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible—the Old and New Testament—when the Latter-day Saints left and came out West, that manuscript remained in the possession of Emma Smith. Emma Smith handed it down to her son, Joseph Smith III; and ultimately, the church that he led—the Reorganized Church—published the Joseph Smith Translation or the Inspired Version of the Bible. But when they published it, the committee that did the publication left out a number of the changes and corrections that Joseph Smith had made. Likewise, they felt it their prerogative to insert some editorial changes of their own. And so the Inspired Version of the Bible that people purchase and look at today is actually not what Joseph Smith did. The new scriptures have what Joseph Smith did—all of his punctuation changes; all of his alterations. And Joseph never published it during his lifetime and continued to make changes to the text right through the sermons that he delivered in Nauvoo.

Several times in his sermons he would say/read a verse from the Bible or the New Testament, and he would say, "I could give a plainer translation," and then he says something about the verse that is plainer or more correct. For the first time, all of those Nauvoo-era alterations that he said "is plainer or more correct, or it should read," all of those have been gathered and put into the New Testament and Old Testament of the New Covenants and Old Covenants text that are published. This is a great work. This is

a sign. Whether you respect the effort that it took or the fact that it has finally rolled out or not, it is a remarkable, historical occurrence in your lifetime.

Now, I wrote a book— I wrote a book that got me into a lot of trouble. It was an intellectual exercise, it was a historical exercise. I was attempting to start from the theoretical standpoint that the Book of Mormon text and the prophecies of Joseph Smith foretell events that will occur when the gentiles obtain the restoration gospel. And so, as a matter of curiosity, investigation, study, and effort, I posed the question, "What would it look like if the things that are prophesied have occurred?"

Passing The Heavenly Gift is a text attempting to answer the question, "What if it's already happened? How would you tell the story of the restoration?" It is not put out as a dogmatic claim that [in Cronkite voice], "This is our history, and you better look at it and know it's the truth." (That's my best Walter Cronkite. He was the guy that everyone trusted, at one point.)

[In McConkie voice] "I did not regard it as my responsibility to declare the history, and your responsibility to accept what I declared," —as if I were some, you know, McConkie figure.

I did it as conjecture, to see: Does it fit? Would it work? Can the story be told that way? And I never reach a conclusion in the book. I simply say, Look at what might have happened. The fact that it fits hand-in-glove may be incredibly persuasive (alarming, distressing...), but it doesn't assert that its true, and that book took like 200,000 words to tell the story of the restoration.

Well, when the Kirtland Temple was dedicated (Joseph didn't live long enough for the Nauvoo Temple to be completed, much less dedicated), but when the Kirtland Temple was dedicated, Joseph Smith thought that that occasion required a formal prayer to be given. And so Joseph prepared a formal prayer for the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple, and he said that that prayer, that dedicatory prayer was actually a revelation. That the content—it's in the D&C; it's Section 109 of the Doctrine and Covenants—it was an inspired prayer.

I wrote a book that was 200,000 words. I thought that petitioning God for his approval of the new scriptures required a formality akin to the formality of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. And so, I knew that there needed to be a prayer presented.

I was prayerful about considering the content of the prayer, and one evening I sat down to compose a prayer for presenting the scriptures (which I intended to present to the scripture committee for their approval before presenting it to the Lord, and to get their input on the prayer). When I sat down, the prayer was revelation. It was what God wanted us to ask. Well that left me no choice to go the committee and say, "Hey, give me your input." Because I don't have the right to change what God wants the prayer to include.

It's part of the new scriptures. That prayer tells the same story, in an inspired way—with far fewer than 200,000 words, with footnotes and chapter divisions. It is God's view of what we have done with the restoration.

I do not assert that *Passing The Heavenly Gift* is good, true, and faithful history. But I testify to you that the *Prayer for Covenant* is, in fact, a revelation from God that tells you what the history of the restoration has consisted of. And if you want to know what has happened, read the *Prayer for the Covenant* that describes the project, and you'll know what God thinks we have done and what we have not done.

The new scriptures is a historical event that throughout the entirety of history, going back to the time of Moses, has only happened three times. It happened with Moses; it happened with Ezra; it happened through the prophet Joseph Smith and through the faithful diligence of a remnant of the people who sought to reconnect, in our day, and to honor that third restoration through Joseph Smith. It is beyond historic. It is something designed to alter the course of history.

But some people look upon signs like that as inconsequential and easy to dismiss. I can testify to you that the heavens themselves rejoice at what happened there. Even if you're dismissive; even if you're nonchalant about it. It is, nevertheless, one of the greatest developments to occur in history, and it happened in your lifetime. The saints were rejected in 1844. Nothing has been done to repair the condemnation in [1832(1)] or to reclaim people since the rejection in 1844. No one has attempted to repent and remember the former commandments—not only to say, but to do—until today.

Stop your damn squabbling! Don't go back and revert to pre-1820 Christian conduct that aroused God's ire. I use the word 'damned' in the scriptural sense because that's exactly what it is. Stop squabbling! Stop disagreeing! Surrender your pride! If you think you're right; if you think someone needs to be corrected; if you think you have a higher, holier better way—stay and persuade. Be meek. Be humble. Solicit other people, and appeal to their heart.

We should welcome everyone. We should welcome Latter-day Saints. We should welcome Community of Christ. We should welcome Catholics. We should welcome Presbyterians. We should welcome every kind of person and then treat them with respect and kindness and understanding. Let them bring their ideas, and let you teach them those truths that you presently understand. The religion of Joseph Smith which—it's in that video that was shown just before the opening prayer—the religion of Joseph Smith is to accept all truth.

Just because it hasn't entered into your hard heart and your closed mind yet, doesn't make it untrue. There are truths in rich abundance that hail from all quarters of the earth. As religions have discarded truths, many of them have sought and fought to retain the most important core. And the most important core of many faiths and the highest aspiration and the highest ideal—

It doesn't matter if you're talking the Cherokee tradition, the Hindu tradition, the Islamic tradition, the Polynesian, the Hawaiian tradition. It doesn't matter. The highest aspiration remains for the individual to connect to God and for God to recognize and connect with the individual. There's really no difference. If we welcome one another, and we treat each other kindly—

Someone that may have a religion that is very strange to us, if they bring with them the aspiration to know God, and we can persuade them that God has done a work among us through Joseph Smith—through the labor that has been done to recover that restoration—maybe they'll labor alongside us as the restoration wraps up.

There is a great deal left to be done. And there is no one seriously entertaining the possibility of constructing a city of holiness, a city of peace, a people that are fruit worthy to be laid up against the harvest. No one has made the effort until now. And while you may look at us and say, "You've done a crude job. You've done a rudimentary job. It needs improvement." Then help us improve it! Stop sitting back and throwing rocks! This is a time to gather, not to disperse. The same garbage that existed at the beginning (when Joseph looked around and saw confusion and disharmony) wants to creep in among us. Recognize that's a false spirit.

If you'll cast it out of yourself and if you'll look at the words of the covenant that was offered in September of 2017, what you'll find is that Christ wants us—like the Book of Mormon explains—to be meek, to be humble, and to be easily entreated. And therefore, entreat one another to honor God, and recognize that all of us aspire to be equal, whether you're at the top or at the root. The aspiration is the same: to be equal.

Well, the time is far spent, and we need to be out of here in less than an hour, and there's some work that has gone on behind the scenes that needs to continue. So, I'm going to wrap this up. Let me end by bearing testimony to you that what I've said has not been just me up here giving a talk. Guidance has been given and content has been provided from a higher source than myself, and I hope you take seriously the things that have been said today.

Because this is a Sunday, as an act of rebellion, I wore a tie; and because it's a Sunday, I had someone give an opening prayer, and we're going to have someone give a closing prayer. But if you want to know the history of the restoration from God's perspective, read the *Prayer for the Covenant*, that's in the Teachings and Commandments and you'll see what God thinks the history is. If you want to know my research project and how I parsed it together in a lot more words than that, you can read *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. I don't know how many footnotes are in there, but it's a research project. Thank you.

2019.04.10 Celebrating the Family of Joseph and Emma Smith

April 10, 2019

Lamoni University, Independence, Missouri

My name is Denver Snuffer. I'm an attorney from Sandy, in Salt Lake. It's a suburb of Salt Lake. I graduated from Brigham Young University's law school. And I'm an excommunicated Mormon, because one of the things they taught me to do in law school was to critically think. And as a result of critically thinking, I followed a number of historical issues through to their logical conclusion. I wrote an alternative history of the Restoration, explaining how I think it might better fit within the scriptural model that says the Gentiles were going to behave in a certain way. And I was told, "Either withdraw that book from publication or we're going to excommunicate you from the Church." And I had contracts in place that obligated me to leave it in publication, so I got the boot.

Now, I didn't come to Mormonism from birth. I was born to a Baptist mother. And I learned that Joseph Smith was a ne'er-do-well founder of a cult and someone to be feared, not admired. I grew up in Idaho. I was in the military during the Vietnam conflict, but I was stationed stateside. I was in New Hampshire and ran into a Mormon fellow who sicced Mormon missionaries on me, who proceeded to pamphleteer and filmstrip me. And over the course of a number of months, they finally persuaded me to actually take Joseph Smith seriously.

I was at the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont; spent a weekend there. It was Aaronic priesthood commemoration, and this was, more or less, a campout. While I was there, I went to a visitor's center, took a copy that they gave me (for free) of a triple combination, in which the fellow that was befriending me suggested I read Section 76: the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory. I read the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory, and it struck me that a **scoundrel** could not write this. A **fraud** could not write this—the loftiness of the content, the beauty, the symmetry, the light that came through. This shook me up because I'd been very dismissive of the whole Joseph Smith thing, and now here I have something (from the very scoundrel) that read like a transcript from heaven. It was disturbing. But I finally resolved to seriously investigate whether or not Joseph Smith amounted to much.

I was baptized into the LDS version of Mormonism when I was 19 years old. I was baptized on September the 10th of 1973. I was excommunicated from the LDS Church on September the 10th of 2013—40 years, to the day, from the time I came into the LDS Church to the time that I went out. But where I came in, reluctantly accepting Joseph Smith to be an actual messenger from God, I went out firm in the conviction that Joseph Smith was everything he purported to be and probably more. He probably understated it.

If you read the words of Joseph Smith—

One of the best --One of the best places to get your hands around Joseph is to get one of the Joseph Smith History versions (that you find in the LDS publication of the Joseph Smith History) and just read the account of the visit of John the Baptist when Aaronic

priesthood is bestowed. Then (in the LDS version) they give you a footnote, and the footnote is Oliver Cowdery's account of the very same thing. Joseph Smith's version is **remarkably understated**—simple words, small vocabulary, homespun, plain. It reeks of honesty and simplicity. And then you read Oliver's account of the very same thing—it's ornate, it's flowery, it's overstated, it's lawyered. I mean, to his discredit, after he left the Church, Oliver Cowdery wound up practicing law. And we all know what the scriptures have to say about lawyers. So Oliver certainly fell from grace [comment said sardonically].

Joseph Smith is an enigma. He is a blank screen onto which you project who **you** are, literally. I have read probably every document that Joseph Smith ever authored. I have studied every journal that was written for him. I've read all of what the critics and the anti-Mormons had to say about Joseph Smith. Anytime a new Joseph Smith biography rolls out, I'll get it, and I'll read it.

If you take the moment that Joseph Smith died (June the 27th of 1844), if you take that moment and you go backward in time, and you say, "How do I construct the history of Joseph Smith from the beginning of his birth in 1805 until June the 27th of 1844, using only materials that existed at or before the moment of his death?" you come away from that endeavor saying, "Joseph **could not possibly** be a polygamist."

You heard him say a moment ago that Joseph Smith III and David and Alexander—they came out to Utah. You know that when they came out to Utah, it so upset the apple cart that their first cousin, Joseph F. Smith—who would subsequently become president of the LDS Church—began, in the same 1860's when they came out, to go around to get affidavits, in an affidavit book, of women who would swear an oath that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy and/or was their plural husband and/or taught them about polygamy. All of these affidavits were created in the 1860s. Brigham Young had the notion of polygamy taught publically for the first time in 1853. Joseph Smith had been dead for nine years by the time it became public news. Well, the best way to get people who are loyal to Joseph Smith to accept a principle that you want to advance, is to pin it on Joseph Smith, whether it belongs there or not. But the people who knew Joseph best had a very different view of where that originated.

On that evening when the angel visited him in his home, Joseph Smith recorded—and this was in 1838, he recorded—*He called me by name...* (This is the angel Nephi—turned into Moroni, subsequently, but the angel Nephi:)

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was [in the original it said Nephi; in this version it now says] Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. (Joseph Smith History 1:33; see also JSH 3:3 RE)

First words out of his mouth. First words out of the angel's mouth: "Get used to it, Joseph. People are going to say things. They're going to say things that are good about you, and they are going to speak evil about you." And the angel goes on to describe a few other things. The light gathers around him; he departs. And then the light starts up again, and the angel shows up again. And when he shows up again, *He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at [the] first visit, without the least variations* (ibid. vs. 45; see also RE 3:7), which means that the second visit that occurs that night, the angel tells him the same thing about how people are going to talk about him, both good and evil.

Then he ascends, and he returns a third time. And the third time: *But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution* (ibid. vs. 46; see also RE 3:8)—not to try and get the plates to get wealthy. Three times that night, and it starts out the very same way all three times, "Joseph, your name is going to be had for both good and evil"—on the same night.

Then Joseph, the next morning—he's tired; he goes out to work. When he goes out to work, his father says, "You're unable." And he sends him home. On his way back home, he collapsed from exhaustion. When he wakes up from that collapse:

First thing...I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night. (ibid. vs. 49; see also RE 3:10)

So for the fourth time, he gets told the very same thing.

Audience Question: So why was it Nephi, when we've always thought it was Moroni, then?

Denver: The name got changed to Moroni **later**. In all of the early accounts, the name of the angel is Nephi. Joseph Smith wrote that the name of the angel was Nephi; he wrote that.

Audience Question continued: In his history?

Denver: Repeatedly. In multiple accounts of his history, the name was Nephi.

One of the little known facts about the visit of the angel is that before the three witnesses got their vision of the plates, the angel that would show those plates to the three witnesses appeared to the Whitmers' mother. Mother Whitmer saw the angel, and he identified himself to her also, and he identified himself by the same name—as Nephi.

Well, I have a supposition, and I'll give you my supposition, okay? Moroni was the last one to write in the book. He was the one to finish the record, and he was the one to bury

it. And therefore, someone got to thinking: if he was the one that buried it, and if Nephi had lived long ago and wasn't around when the book got finished—wasn't around when Mormon condensed it, wasn't dealing with the text at the end, and Moroni buried it up—maybe we should say it was Moroni, 'cause he was the one that put it in the ground. Makes more sense; he'd know where it was.

But there's a problem with that. Joseph Smith was very clear about the intangibility of a spirit. A spirit is not composed of the same stuff as are resurrected beings, who are composed of physical matter after the resurrection. Moroni lived 400 years **after** Christ's resurrection. There is only going to be a general resurrection, that will include him, at the Second Coming. Nephi, on the other hand, lived 600 years **before** Christ. And at the resurrection of Christ—it's recorded in Matthew—that many of the saints that slept, arose and went into the city and were seen by people. So, people in Jerusalem saw that there were resurrected beings.

And then in His discussion with the Nephites, Christ said, "Hey, Samuel prophesied that when I arose from the dead that there would be others who were resurrected. He prophesied of that; and it happened! And that's not in your record." And so, the Book of Mormon has that commentary by Christ. As He looks at the records, He says, "You have omitted the fact that there were those who would be resurrected." Well, Nephi would have died at a point that he would be one of the candidates for resurrection, which means that he could easily handle the plates.

The Three Witnesses saw the plates, and were shown them by an angel who took the plates and opened and turned the pages to show them each one of the pages that had been translated. And so, it makes sense that the name of the angel would have been Nephi. If you think that Nephi couldn't be told where to go and find the plates, I mean, that's just plain silly. You do not need the **last** guy who handled them and put them under the stone in the box to be the only guy who... "Shhhh, keep it a secret. I buried the plates there. No one knows." And so, I think the reason the name got changed was someone thought it through and concluded it makes more sense to have the fellow who buried the plates be the one who restores the plates, instead of thinking it through the rest of the way and saying, "Wait a minute; he would be a spirit being—in spirit prison and incapable of physicality."

Audience Question: So the Mormons have—don't they have Moroni at the top of the temple?

Denver: Yes, they do. It's silly. Yeah.

Audience Question: So, well, that should've been Nephi, then?

Denver: It should've been, yeah. It should've been.

Audience Question: I guess they could always say it's Nephi?

Denver: No, no, they are very clear: it's Moroni. Yeah, think he's got a name tag on, representative of—

I shouldn't be irreverent like that, actually. Okay, so, four times he appears to him.

By the way, John Whitmer was called to be the Historian for the Church. John Whitmer had all of the records that existed in the LDS Church (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—no hyphen, small 'd'—unlike what the LDS claim today). And he was excommunicated, disaffected, in the 1838 timeframe. So, the history of Joseph Smith that you read in the LDS version was Joseph Smith sitting down to re-write the missing history that they couldn't get back from John Whitmer, and it's a replacement history. It was written in 1838. And in 1838, he said it was Nephi. It was copied; he proofread the copy in 1839—it was again Nephi. He published his history in the *Times and Seasons*—it was Nephi. The first time that it shows up with the name Moroni, I believe, was in the *Messenger and Advocate*. I think that's where it first shows up, and that paper was edited by someone other than Joseph. So, it crept in there.

So, Joseph composes a replacement history in 1838. The Missouri conflict breaks out, later, in 1838. And Joseph winds up arrested and confined—ultimately confined in the Liberty Jail. While he's in the Liberty Jail, he writes a very lengthy letter—it's written in two parts, but it's a single letter, portions of which have been added to the LDS version of the scriptures. And in one portion, after Joseph has been pouring his heart out about the circumstances and asking God why he's being put through this gosh-awful mess, and why his people have been put through what the people have been put through, and why isn't God answering him and doing something and pouring out His anger on the people?— Joseph gets a letter from home. It excites his mind. The letter is brilliantly written about how his mind, it's going from one offense to the next to the next like lightning; he just, he cannot keep his mind composed; until finally, he says, he sits down exhausted from the mental anguish of it all. And then, **then**, the still small voice creeps in, and he hears God in it, and God says:

The ends of the earth shall enquire after thy name and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee while the pure in heart and the wise and the noble and the virtuous shall seek counsel and authority and blessings constantly from under thy hand. And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors. (D&C 122:1-3; see also T&C 139:7)

Why would the wise, the noble, the virtuous—why would they want blessings from under the hand of Joseph Smith if Joseph Smith is not himself a wise and noble and virtuous man? It makes no sense.

Well, I have read histories that have attacked Joseph Smith as one of the vilest characters that has ever lived, and they make a plausible case for that. And I have read histories that make Joseph out to be noble and virtuous (although in my estimation none of those adequately capture who he really was), and they make a plausible case. The problem is not that there isn't source material from which to write a positive or a

negative history of Joseph Smith. The problem is that you can't reconcile them; they can't be the same man. You literally are forced to choose. When it comes to Joseph Smith, the blank canvas that Joseph Smith is that's standing in front of you, you have to pick up and color it. And whatever you color it with is more a reflection of **you** than it is of him.

I've reached the conclusion to color in Joseph Smith using the most wise, the most noble, and the most virtuous version that I can construct of the man—the man who helped write the denunciations of John C. Bennett, the man who removed the authority of Sampson Averd in order to prevent Sampson Averd from going out and extracting vengeance that led to the Missouri conflict.

I choose to view Joseph as someone who **was** noble, who **was** a peacemaker, who, when the Missouri militia showed up, chose to have his people surrender their arms rather than to have open conflict. I choose to view Joseph as the one who surrendered the muskets and surrendered the cannons of the Nauvoo Legion, even though they outnumbered the United States Army at the time, rather than to have armed conflict. I choose to view Joseph as the one who said, "*I go as a lamb to the slaughter with a conscience void of any offense against my fellow man or of God*" (see D&C 135:4). I don't think an adulterer and a liar and a thief could have made such a statement. I choose to color the picture in of Joseph as what I believe him honestly to be: a man of extraordinary virtue.

Well, in that Joseph Smith History, he begins his account by talking about the religious conflict that existed at the time, that provoked him to go out and pray and try to get an answer about which church to join. And he makes this point after talking about the 'Lo here, Lo there, some going to the Methodists, some going to Presbyterian,' and he says:

It was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued; priest contending against priest and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions. (JSH 1:5-6; see also JSH 1:11)

Look, the legacy of Joseph Smith has been turned into over 80 different denominations that claim Joseph Smith as their founder. And if you don't think that Mormonism today—in the landscape, taking them all into account—aren't engaged in a strife of opinions with all of the seeming-good feelings one towards another entirely gone, then you aren't paying any attention to what these various sects are saying, claiming, and doing. The headquarters in Salt Lake City is a multi—multi—billion dollar organization. They have enough resources that they're about to develop a community in Florida that will have everything necessary for a half-a-million people to live in the community. It's a commercial development. They're not building it for members; they're building it as a real estate developer to sell to the public—a half-a-million-population community that will include streets and water tanks and utilities and schools; that will include business

districts; that will include gas stations; that will include everything you need in order to have a community of half-a-million people living.

Audience Question: Where is that in Florida?

Denver: It's just outside Orlando. It's on a former cattle farm that they're now converting over to commercial development. It will pencil in, over the course of the development, in excess of a trillion dollar investment. A **trillion** dollar investment, 'kay?

Mormonism—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is a small subsidiary (admittedly, it's a tax-free subsidiary, but it's a small subsidiary) venture of the Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They own Bonneville Communications. They own universities. They own banking interests. They own a **lot** of real estate interests. And they have this tax-free subsidiary called the "Church"—and the only thing that's required for them to do to maintain that is every six months provide some meaningful, uplifting talks in their general conferences and get the sustaining vote. And they get it automatically. But they're becoming increasingly more vacuous.

Yes?

Audience: Sorry.

Denver: No, it's fine.

Audience Question: A couple things: first, with Joseph Smith, you know, at Liberty Jail he says, I, Joseph Smith, Jr., you know—young Joseph, you'll be the next prophet. Okay, so when I see that and know that he is a member, you know, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, wouldn't you say that if you resolved already about Joseph Smith, wouldn't you say that this is the true church then, because Joseph Smith, Jr., you know, brought it up?

Denver: I think--I think all of us fall into the institutional trap. It's that old game: Button, Button, Who's Got the Button? Are you trying to determine who is it that has the prerogative? Who is it that has the right?

The Book of Mormon has a message about Christ. And the revelations through Joseph define the church—not in a corporate sense but in a believing sense. All who will repent and come unto Him are His church. Does that church necessarily have to have a hierarchy? Does it have to have structure? Does it have to have offices? Well, each one of the denominations contend and say, "You **have** to have... and **we're it.**" The Book of Mormon and the revelations through Joseph Smith dial that back to: If you belong and support and fellowship in the Community of Christ (and I used to belong and can't fellowship within the LDS Church), but you and I can agree on the fundamentals of the religion and agree on who Christ is and that salvation is through Christ alone—there's

no reason why you and I can't have fellowship with one another. There's no reason why we ought to be dividing ourselves.

Eighty different denominations. The most wealthy one has fairly little regard for the substance of the religion anymore. **All** of them have their pet causes, their hooks, what they claim: "This is why we are the best version of that." But what if the best version of that doesn't exist in an institutional way, with someone presiding over someone else? What if the best version of that consists of you and me viewing each other with equal dignity, equal care, equal concern, and that we can fellowship across any boundaries?

What if--What if I can offer baptism that reflects all of the Restoration, but the person that comes to me is Catholic, and their family's Catholic, and their friends are Catholic; and they would like to continue to fellowship with the Catholics but they believe in the Restoration, and they believe in Joseph Smith, and they accept the Book of Mormon? Why can't I baptize him or her, and let them fellowship with who they want to fellowship with, and rejoice that both of us have found in each other a brother or sister in which we accept Joseph, we accept the Restoration, we accept the work of God?

Why does denominational differences occupy the center (instead of just the outer) periphery? Why isn't denominational affiliation largely superfluous? And what matters is understanding that God did a work through Joseph Smith, and it didn't get completed? It **did not** get completed. Much of what we argue over are the beginning stages of something that's supposed to develop into, ultimately, one heart, one mind, no poor among us. What if our denominations don't want there to be no poor among us? What if our denominations are interfering with our ability to be of one heart? What if they **purposefully** do not want us to be of one mind?

If you are the adversary, if you're the enemy, if what you fear above all else is the coming of Zion, what's the best way to hedge up the way and to prevent the coming of Zion? It's to make sure that all of the good feelings that people have towards one another are entirely lost in a contest of opinions and a strife of words, in which what separates us is far more important than accepting the things that matter, that are eternal, that are divine. How are we going to become of one heart and one mind if the only thing that's on our mind is our differences? How are we going to become of one heart if our hearts can never become united because, well, you accept that brand, and I don't, and there's something wrong with that brand?

Audience Question: So what is the attraction of the Mormon Church that brings so many of them in?

Denver: They have some bundle of truth. All of these Restoration groups, even—

You can take the most odious version of Restoration Mormonism Sectarianists, take the worst of the group—that's probably that "Warren Jeffs thing" that went on in Colorado City with the giving and taking of child brides. It's odious; it's repulsive. And yet, the Book of Mormon is a better teaching document to understanding Christ, and the

universal nature of Christ, and the fact that Christ's post-resurrection ministered globally, than anything that we've got in the New Testament. The revelations through Joseph give us more information. I mentioned a while ago the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory; it supplies greater answers. You take someone from out of that odious cult headed by Warren Jeffs and you let them sit through a Presbyterian meeting, and they're going to say, "My religion holds more, it gives me more truth, there's more substance to it." Even though there's a darkness to that cult, it still appeals. All of the Restoration denominations offer something that has value, and it's value above what you get merely from a New Testament church.

But the plan of the adversary is to stop the culmination of what the Restoration's intended to accomplish: unity. The Community of Christ does a far better job of giving lip service to unity than do probably any other of the various sects. But it's still the same problem; it's still exactly the same thing. You put a brand on you, and that brand is "I belong to this denomination," and you instantly feel like you need to be competitive.

Right now, the only church that I ever joined I got thrown out of. I was too candid, I was too honest, and they couldn't tolerate that. And the man who is the president of that organization, Russell Nelson, is the one that came to my stake with my membership records and gave them to a new stake president. He released my old one, and he called a new one. My old stake president defended me and refused to kick me out. He called a new one, handed him my membership records, and said, "The committee thinks this guy has to be disciplined."

And so, I'm un-churched. I am as committed a believer in the **Restoration**. I think I know as much or more than many of the Mormon historians that are regarded as **authorities** on Mormonism. I read every volume of the *Joseph Smith Papers* as they come into publication, and I make notes all over the margins. They are inconsistent in their storytelling. I pick out the problems. My notes and my version of the Joseph Smith volumes are flooded with notes that are correcting the problems that the Church historian's office makes as they put these things into print.

But, at the end of the day, what matters is not **who** can make the better argument. What matters isn't who can make the better historical claim. At the end of the day, what matters is **who** among **us** accepts the Restoration through Joseph Smith, accepts the Book of Mormon, accepts the teachings, and are willing to live them. And who among us is willing to fellowship with anyone else that they have a common belief in God's work currently underway. Because **that's** what matters. I went to Lamoni and talked, and I was happy to do that. I've come here during the general conference of the Community of Christ, and I'm happy to do that. I've been to Dallas to talk to Baptists. I've been to Atlanta.

Audience Question: So have you heard of the Baptist preacher that read the Book of Mormon, yes?

Denver: Yes.

Audience Comment: I think he's started a movement of where it's every sect, you know, come together with the Book of Mormon.

[crosstalk]

Denver: That's Lynn Ridenhour, yeah.

Audience Comment: Sidney Rigdon did that type of conversion; brought his whole church on.

Denver: Yeah, he did.

Well, look, one of the problems with the history writing of Joseph Smith that happened is that there are villains in the story of Joseph. There are a number of villains. Some of those villains figured out that they could take the villainy that they were accused of and they could ascribe it to Joseph and to make **him** the responsible party for what they were up to. When Joseph was confined in jail and they were going through the preliminary hearing— the preliminary hearing's purpose is only to determine if there's a plausible case that can be made against him for treason. Witness after witness after witness failed to make out a plausible case, and Joseph Smith was likely to be released because there wasn't a good enough case to hold him on the charge of treason in Missouri—until one of the disaffected Mormons not only stepped forward, but came to the courthouse to testify. And it was because of the villainy that that man had been up to (that he said Joseph Smith was the author of) that Joseph was ultimately able to be held to stand trial on the charge of treason. Well, the state of Missouri lost their stomach for that, and they let Joseph escape, and he never was tried. But that allowed them later to make trumped up charges that said he evaded prosecution, and so they tried to get him back in Missouri in the 1842/3/4 time frame.

The same thing happened with John C. Bennett, the mayor of Nauvoo. When he got caught with his philandering, John Bennett did exactly the same thing. He attributed his villainy, his sexual improprieties, to Joseph Smith. He said, "Joseph. I learned this from Joseph." And so you get people who themselves are guilty of wrongdoing, improprieties, and villainy saying that it's not their sins; they learned this from Joseph—and Joseph is the sinner.

Again, it's the same thing—Joseph would be both good and evil spoken of. And you can find villains that say, "No, no, I'm not the real villain; he is. Blame him for what I've done."

Audience Comment: The Laws and the Higbees did that when the *Expositor* was...

Denver: In fact, one of the reasons why Law was not sealed to his wife by Joseph was because he was an adulterer. And so, when Law got his ambition (to have the sealing)

turned down, Law accused Joseph of what Law was up to. It's the same thing over and over again.

I left my cell phone at home. I was planning to do and bring some things with me including—

I have written a book, and I was going to bring copies to hand out to anyone that said they'd read it. I've written a book about Joseph Smith called *A Man Without Doubt*. In *A Man Without Doubt*, I take three things—three of the longest things that Joseph Smith ever wrote—and I lay out a background, a history, a context for why the document got written, and then simply give you Joseph's document to read: the Joseph Smith History, the Lectures on Faith, and the letter from Liberty Jail. But I give you a context beforehand so that you can see the history. What were all the circumstances that were going on? What was happening at the moment that led to Joseph writing the document? And then I get out of the way, and I let Joseph speak. Joseph writes things of surpassing, heavenly value. You can't take a corrupt heart and produce the beauty and the light that Joseph Smith produced, that he called down from heaven; can't be done.

Audience Question: Last question. So then what is your purpose in having these meetings, like you've been to Lamoni, you're here, so what...?

Denver: Well one of the observations that— I've been kicked out, and I'm un-churched. The couple who have spoken before me, the Bartells, are actually now affiliated with the Community of Christ. One of the things that I have seen and learned from them and from others—I have seen it in the LDS Church; I've heard about it in the Community of Christ—is that Joseph Smith is occupying an increasingly lower estimation in the eyes of **all** the Restoration people.

Audience Question: So that's what you share, your belief of Joseph Smith, and that he was the man that...

Denver: Joseph Smith was everything that he said he was, and he was probably much more; his tendency to understate when he described things, his tendency to be hesitant to step out of that role of the meek teacher, his hesitancy to call down glory on himself.

One of the things that has become apparent to me is that Emma Smith was a stronger personality than Joseph Smith, and Joseph deferred to her. Joseph viewed her advice and counsel with extraordinary respect and seriousness. The caricature that some people turn Joseph Smith into is mirrored by the caricature that they turn Emma Smith into. Emma's not even recognizable in the stories that you get from the Utah community; it's a distortion.

I would like to see everyone who believes in the Restoration say, "Let's stop picking fights. Let's try to get down to the highest, the most noble, the most virtuous, the most wise view of what the Restoration was, and where it was headed, so that we, perhaps, stand a chance of, at some point, having one heart, one mind, and coming together in a

way that would allow us to have no poor among us." Because if we're waiting on the denominations to do that, it will never happen. It will **never** happen. The institutional self-interests will not permit it.

I see within the Community of Christ a drift that is trying to accommodate and obtain popularity from the world. They want to fit in, within the current cultural and political climate. That same thing is taking place in the Salt Lake church. The ones that are trying hardest to hold the line against accommodating the world are the most virulent forms of Mormonism—they're militant; they're isolated; they're polygamist. They're an aberrant form of the Restoration, and they're ugly. The ones that are succeeding are destroying the Restoration because they want to hold on and to grab more success.

If you and I don't rise up above this clamor, if you and I don't find common fellowship and value—in the words of the Book of Mormon, in the revelations through Joseph, in the things that we were bequeathed as our common inheritance—and forget about what separates us and try to find unity, if we don't do that, it's not going to happen. **Won't.**

Yes?

Audience Comment: The Community of Christ sponsors the John Whitmer Historical Association. And a few decades back there was the Community of Christ, there was the RLDS version of it, and then there was the LDS version of it—and different groups have their version of history. But over the last few decades, I guess, there has been an intentional effort to...

Denver: Bridge the gap.

Audience Comment continues: We accept everyone, from wherever you are coming from—whether you came from here and moved over there, or came from there and moved over here. We accept all who want to study this history together, and let's find out what we can, warts and all.

Denver: That's true, but the needle...

Audience Comment continues: There has been an effort to...

Denver: The needle on polygamy has moved to the version Brigham Young and his affiants gave. And the Community of Christ is now more or less conceding that Joseph Smith was the author of some things that, **I still believe**, there's not an adequate historical record to pin upon Joseph.

[crosstalk]

Audience Comment continues: We need to get involved in that...

Audience Comment: Not everybody is following this.

Audience Comment continues: Well, I felt like Joseph Smith was a true, divine prophet. He came along... But with the rise of power and prestige, I mean, Nauvoo was bigger than Chicago in its day. [Denver: Yeah, it was.] And so, all of these people that were clamoring to make a fortune, and that type of thing, and had their own villainy—as you put it —kind of led us a little bit off the track in that really short, whatever, fourteen years' time. [Denver: Yeah, it was. Yeah.] And so, when Brigham Young, who actually, when they had trouble in Missouri, he organized all of the people to move over to Nauvoo. So, he was already seen as an apostle that was an organizer/leader and took them over there. So, when Joseph was killed, he took the role again of taking us out of danger and moving everybody out to Utah. So, that's why he had the rise and popularity when Joseph was in jail and other places.

Denver: But he also didn't—he didn't claim that he was going to run the show. He was saying that he would be a caretaker, and that Joseph Smith III would ultimately (or sons of Joseph would ultimately) come and assume their position. He was an incremental grabber of power. He was not an abrupt one.

Audience Comment continues: Why did Brigham Young or one of his top people... I think one of them gave Joseph Smith III a knife that missed, like a switchblade that didn't work right. Another one gave him a gun that didn't fire right—I hope there's no bad thing that happened to the young boy. But when he went out to Utah, there may have been that intention, that he was a caretaker, but it translated into them just taking over. Whereas the majority of the church, I heard 115 splinters, you know, people claiming leadership when Joseph died...

[crosstalk]

Audience Question: Wasn't Brigham Young the president of the Twelve, council...?

Audience Comment: He was at the time, and that's why he had his club.

Audience Comment: He wasn't such a peacemaker out there in Utah, either.

Denver: Oh, no, no, no. He wasn't.

[Crosstalk]

Audience Comment: They went out there thinking that they would find the true church —whatever you want to determine that to be—the true church, and had to leave during the night on their own, however you want to say it. It was dangerous.

Denver: Just one point that I want to clarify. At the time that Joseph Smith died, you had Sidney Rigdon (who was back in Philadelphia) who was one claimant. You had James Strang (who was up in the timber mission in Wisconsin) who was one claimant. You had William McClellan (who was down in Texas)—Joseph had sent him down to Texas,

presumably, to find a place to go to, and he just never left; and he was a member of the Twelve, and he stayed a member of the Twelve for quite some time, until they finally got around to throwing him out. And there was Brigham Young. And Emma Smith was solicited by all of the various claimants to come. But those were the five main at the time; and Emma stayed behind, refusing to fall in line with any of them.

Audience Comment continues: And maybe they moved away to be a little bit safe for a little while, because her husband was killed. But they all wanted, ultimately, the seed of Joseph to lead them forward. That was the thing. And they all came back when young Joseph was a little older, and solicited for him to be **their** leader because that would give them the ultimate...

Denver: During the, what was called the Mormon Reformation at the—

Brigham Young and the leadership of the Church were running out of time. Brigham Young and the leadership of the Church took the position that the reason they were having droughts, the reason why all the cattle got killed in the hard winter and they were starving, the reason why the elements were treating them so poorly was because God was mad. And God was mad because the members weren't faithful. And so, he began a program called the Home Missionary Program, in which there was a list of questions that home missionaries were supposed to go around and interview people. The purpose of that list of questions was to find out if you were doing something that was unforgivable, that required your blood to be spilled on the ground through blood atonement, because Brigham Young instituted, literally, a reign of terror.

When Johnston's Army came out to Utah, the people who were resident in Utah viewed that, among some quarters, as liberation. The spring following Johnston's Army's arrival in Utah, there were over 3,400 people that left to go back east. They have records of that because the—or they know the numbers on that because the migration to the east occurred in wagon trains and other supervised exits that they kept numbers on. But there was likely an even larger number than that, that evacuated out to California, going west to escape the kingdom of Brigham Young.

I wrote a paper called "*Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom*," that I presented at the Sunstone Symposium. I've got a website. It's on a page called "Downloads"—there's a bunch of papers I've written. One of them is "*Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom*." denversnuffer.com.

Audience Question: Do you have a business card?

Denver: I don't have it.

Audience Question: Well, is there something on the bottom of your flier?

Denver: Is it?

[crosstalk about the information]

Audience Comment: Brigham Young was not so very nice to Emma either.

Denver: Oh, no, no, no! He called her a wicked, wicked, wicked woman! He said that Joseph once said he'd go to hell to be with Emma, and if he wants to be with Emma, that's exactly where he's going to have to go. Brigham Young and Emma Smith...

Audience Comment: He was not nice to her.

Audience Comment: They didn't get along.

Denver: They did not get along. If Brigham had persuaded her to go west, he would've required her to marry him.

Audience Comment: Well, anything that had Joseph Smith's name on it, Brigham tried to take from the, you know, he tried to take back. Well, there was some things that I think Emma got out of all of that because she had kids to support.

Denver: Yes, she was able to get **some** property transfers. Joseph Smith had a pending petition for bankruptcy when he died because of all of the losses that they'd suffered in Missouri. Emma Smith got a number of assets transferred to her before Joseph filed for bankruptcy—to engage in some asset protection before that. And Emma was able, because of the transfers to her, to hold onto some of the property; which is why she was able to relocate back to Nauvoo. She owned a lot of property in Nauvoo.

Audience Comment: She didn't give up the Mansion House.

Denver: She did not. Listen, thank you for coming out. It was wonderful to spend some time with ya, and I hope it was useful. Thank you.

2019.04.21 Civilization
General Conference Address
April 21, 2019
Grand Junction, Colorado

Because everything we do is voluntary, and because no one gets paid to do any of the things that are done as part of the endeavor that we share together, in order to host a conference like this, those that choose to do so, do so at their own expense, with volunteers doing everything that gets accomplished—arranging for the use of all the facilities that get used (including this one today) and sacrifice in order to be able to host an event like this. This was a remarkable conference for the last three days now. And everything that has been done, and everything that got organized, and all of the facilities that were made available were done by the local group here that chose to sacrifice in order to make it possible. I wanted to start out by expressing my appreciation for all those who have worked to make this possible and all of the events and participants. I think it's been a marvelous conference, and I appreciate the opportunity to be invited.

We study the Old Testament to learn about individual salvation from God. We study the New Testament to learn about individual salvation through Christ. We read the Book of Mormon to reassure ourselves that, like those who lived before us, we can be individually saved in our day. We study the revelations of Joseph Smith to learn about individual salvation.

Historic Christianity and the various Mormon traditions have all focused on individual salvation. Christians have been "born again" and found salvation through God. Mormons have had their "calling and election made sure" and claim God has saved them. Throughout the Judeo-Christian landscape, individual salvation is the great quest, the overarching yearning, and the religious end to be obtained.

Salvation is individual. There is only individual salvation and no such thing as collective salvation. While I accept this as true, there is something else that is equally true: God wants "people" to collectively be His.

In the revelations of July 14, 2017 and October 4, 2018 received from God (those are in the Teachings and Commandments as sections 157 and 176), the emphasis has been on "people." Both responses by the Lord have gone beyond individual salvation to focus on people, Zion, and the New Jerusalem. Consider these words from the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, addressing the importance of God's people:

*I, the Lord say to you: You have asked of me concerning the scriptures prepared on [your] behalf of all those who seek to become **my covenant people**, and therefore I answer you **on behalf of all the people**, and **not** as to any individual. For there are those who are humble, patient and easily persuaded. Nevertheless, people who are quarrelsome and proud are also among you, and since you seek to **unite to become one people**, I answer you **as one**. I covenanted with Adam at the beginning, which covenant was broken by mankind. Since the days of*

*Adam I have always sought to reestablish people of covenant among the living, and therefore have desired that man should love one another, not begrudgingly, but as brothers and sisters indeed, that I may establish my covenant and provide **them** with light and truth...*

*For the sake of the promises to the fathers [I will] labor with you **as a people**, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to **live together in peace**. If you will hearken [unto] my words, **I will make you my people** and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger **can destroy the peace of all my people**. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess...*

*There are many things yet to be restored **unto my people**. It is ordained that some things are **only to be given to people who are mine** and cannot otherwise be given to mankind on Earth. You do not yet understand the glory to be revealed **unto my covenant people**...*

*It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine,...I will watch over **them** and protect **them** in the day of harvest, and gather **them**...as a hen gather[eth] her **chicks** under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be **my people** and I will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And unto **those** who will receive will more be given, until **they** know the mysteries of God in full...*

*You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge **to my people**. If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord, and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace, and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety...*

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word and in very deed. For I will come unto you if you will come unto me. Study

*to learn how to **respect your brothers and sisters and to come together** by precept, reason and persuasion rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me I will tell you my part. (T&C 157:1-2,19,44,48,51,53-54, emphasis added)*

These are God's words in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant. The focus is on the community and not on the individual. It's taken me years to notice that. This focus is different for a reason. Our traditions have not and cannot bring Zion; that will require viewing God's work in a new way. Individuals may be saved individually and have been throughout history. But Zion is not about individual salvation. Zion is about covenant people of God, individually saved as a prerequisite, then gathered together to live in peace.

As part of the same revelation there is a covenant that contains language that also moves the focus to community instead of individual:

Do you covenant with [the Lord] to cease to do evil and to seek to continually do good?

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

*Third: Do you agree to assist **all others— who covenant to [do] likewise accept this standard to govern their lives—** to keep the Lord's will, to succor **those** who stand in need, to **lighten the burdens of your brothers and sisters** whenever you are able, and to...**care for the poor among you?***

*Fourth: ...do you covenant to **seek to become of one heart with those who seek the Lord to establish His righteousness?** (T&C 158:2-5, emphasis added)*

After those questions are answered:

Now, hear the words of the Lord to those who receive this covenant this day:

***All you** who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings, of lying and deceiving, and of all whoredoms, and of secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts, envying, and strife, and from all wickedness and abominations, and have come unto me, and been baptized in my name, and have received a remission of your sins, and received the Holy*

*Ghost, are **now numbered with my people** who are of the house of Israel. I say to you:*

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

*And I, the Lord your God, will be **with you** and will **never forsake you**, and I will **lead you** in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.*

*I will **raise you up** and **protect you**, **abide with you**, and **gather you** in due time, and this shall be **a land of promise to you as your inheritance** from me.*

*The Earth will yield its increase, and **you will flourish** upon the mountains and upon the hills, and **the wicked will not come against you** because the **fear of the Lord will be with you**.*

*I will visit my house, which **the remnant of my people shall build**, and I will dwell therein, to be **among** you, and no one will need...say, "Know ye the Lord," for **you all shall know me**, from the least to the greatest.*

*I will **teach you** things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and **your understanding** will reach unto Heaven.*

*And you shall be called **the children of the Most High God**, and I will **preserve you** against the harvest.*

*And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will **pass over you** as **my peculiar treasure**.*

*But if **you do not honor me**, nor seek to recover my people Israel, nor teach your children to honor me, **nor care for the poor among you**, nor help **lighten one another's burdens**, then you have no promise from me and I will raise up **other people** who will honor and serve me, and give unto them this land, and if **they repent**, I will abide with **them**. (T&C 158:9-19, emphasis added)*

People claim they have kept the covenant, but such claims cannot possibly be true. God's covenant is for and about "people"—His people. It is not possible for *an individual* to keep the covenant. Everybody rises together, or everybody falls together. The covenant can only be kept as a community. Individuals acting alone can never accomplish what is required of the group.

The October 4, 2018 revelation (T&C 176) also focuses on community. It begins by addressing "people" and not the individual. The Lord's voice to "people" begins and ends with two questions. After asking the questions a second time, He gives an answer to what ought to have been learned. Here are the Lord's words to the people:

*You ask on behalf of **my people** and therefore I answer **my people**. Hear, therefore, my words: What have you learned? What ought you to have learned?*

And then at the end:

*...I ask again, What have you learned? What ought you to have learned? I say to you...there is need for but one house, and I accept the statement you have adopted and approve it as your statement to be added. But I say again, there was honor in the labor of others. Whereas I look upon the heart and see faithful service, **many among you** do not look at, nor see, nor value what I the Lord love in **the hearts of my people**. As I have said before, I say again, **Love one another**, labor willingly **alongside each other**. Learn what you ought, and when I ask you to labor, do so wisely even if you know not beforehand what you will find. I do not ask what you cannot do. Trust my words and proceed always in faith, believing that with me all things are possible. **All who have been faithful are mine**. (T&C 176:1-2,12-13, emphasis added)*

(Just as an aside, when the sacrament was passed and the group of brethren who came up here to perform that came up on stage in flannel and shorts and motley-colored shirts—to look upon that, to me, was a delight. It was a statement of the fact that righteousness holds no costume up to pretend to be something it isn't. Righteousness comes in divergent forms and manifests itself in unexpected ways. Had any one of those individuals come up to pass the sacrament, among some congregations, dressed as they were today, they would have excited the judgment, the censure, the horror of someone observing them in that garb. But to us it's accepted, and it's acceptable. I would hope that if one among us chose to wear a white shirt and a tie to come up to pass the sacrament while standing among them, that none of us would look upon that judgmentally and with disfavor, but that everyone would be welcomed, everyone would be accepted, and that we would be just as tolerant of others and their idiosyncrasies as we are of what we expect to be among us.)

God mentions His "people" in order to get our attention. The prophecies of God's last-days work and the fulfillment of God's covenants with the Fathers are not merely for individual salvation. The covenants are about "people" or a divinely organized community. Righteous individuals isolated and scattered throughout the world are incapable of vindicating the promises made to the Fathers. There must be people gathered together and living the correct pattern before the Lord returns.

Enoch saw the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ into heaven. He wanted to know if Christ would return again from heaven to save the earth. In response to Enoch's inquiry, the Lord gave a promise and covenant that is still unfulfilled. Here is the account. Enoch asks:

Wherefore, I ask you if you will not come again on the Earth? And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you

*concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the Earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth, and the heavens shall shake and also the Earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people will I preserve**. And righteousness will I send down out of heaven. Truth will I send forth out of the earth to bear testimony of [mine] Only Begotten, His resurrection from the dead, yea, and also the resurrection of all men. And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, **to gather out [mine] own elect** from the four quarters of the earth, **unto a place which I shall prepare, a holy city, that my people** may gird up their loins and be looking forth for the time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and all your city meet **them** there, and we will receive **them** into our bosom. And **they shall see us**, and we will fall [on] **their** necks, and **they** shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other, and there shall be my abode. And it shall be Zion which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made and for the space of a thousand years shall the Earth rest. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)*

The Lord has every intention of keeping His promise to Enoch. There will be those who are gathered. There must be people gathered to a place, a holy city that meets the description and fulfills the promises God made. The people must gird up their loins or, in other words, must be living the godly religion that declares things as they really are—a religion founded on truth. Truth requires us to know things as they were, as they are, and as they are to come. Many past things that are hidden from the world must be revealed. God's people must know ancient truths so their hearts can turn to the Fathers. But it will be to covenant *people*, not individuals, to whom this outpouring will be given. A covenant body will belong in a New Jerusalem. The City of Enoch will *meet them there*, and then they and the Lord *will receive them [unto] our bosom*. This is something more than individual salvation. Those involved will be individually saved, but the community itself must exist as something greater than individuals. There must be a "body" or a "bride" for the Bridegroom to embrace.

The focus on community or people in these last two revelations is similar to that throughout the Old and New Testaments. It's everywhere. It is particularly clear that the prophecies about the last-day's Zion require a people to belong to God and to be regarded by Him as His.

In Isaiah, foretelling the future Zion, we learn:

*And then shall they say, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings unto them, that publishes peace, that brings good tidings unto them of good, that publishes salvation, that says [to] Zion, Your God reigns. Your watchmen shall lift up the voice; [and] with the voice together shall they sing, for **they shall see eye to eye** when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has*

*comforted **his people**, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out of the midst of her; be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. For you shall not go...with haste, nor go by flight, for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rear guard. (Isaiah 18:8 RE, emphasis added)*

John also revealed how a group must depart from Babylon to be saved: *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, **my people**, that you be not partakers of her sins, ...that you [may] receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities (John 7:2 RE, emphasis added).*

This theme is also throughout the Book of Mormon and revelations through Joseph Smith. Christ describes the end-times' Zion and its accompanying sign in 3 Nephi:

*And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place, that I shall gather in from their long dispersion **my people**, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among **them** my Zion. And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign: for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you...shall be made known unto the gentiles, that they may know concerning this **people** who are a remnant of the house of Jacob,...concerning this **my people** who shall be scattered by them, ...that the gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, that **they** [the gentiles] [that they] **may be numbered among my people**, O house of Israel — and when these things come to pass, that thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto **them** that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto **[all] the people** who are of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 9:11 RE, emphasis added)*

"[All] of [them] of the house of Israel" in Christ's prophecy includes the gentiles who have accepted a covenant with Him.

In a prophecy from Joseph about those who will be in Zion, he states:

*The Lord hath brought again Zion. The Lord hath redeemed **his people** Israel according to the election of grace, which was brought to pass by the faith and covenant of their Fathers. The Lord hath redeemed **his people**, and Satan is bound, and time is no longer. The Lord hath gathered all things in one. The Lord hath brought down Zion from above, the Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath. The Earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength, and truth is established in her bowels, and...Heavens have smiled upon her, and she is clothed with the glory of her God, for he standeth in the midst of **his people**. Glory, and Honor,*

and Power, and Might be ascribed to our God, for he is full of Mercy, Justice, Grace, and Truth, and Peace, for ever and ever. Amen. (T&C 82:28, emphasis added)

These are just examples. The scriptures foretelling a return of God's people are in all passages of prophecy describing the latter-day Zion. *You* cannot keep the covenant. *I* cannot keep the covenant. Only *we* can keep the covenant. The covenant was apparently designed by God to require *all* to labor together. This is a long way off, but God is working to bring His people along so they may be able to keep the covenant together.

Creating unified people who qualify to worship God in truth (that is, knowing accurately the past, present, and future) is an extraordinary challenge. Only God can do it, and He must have willing people. It will require a new civilization. Prophecy likens that civilization to a stone carved out of a mountain that will roll out to destroy all the corruptions of Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greeks, Romans, and modern societies.

Anciently, civilizations were founded around the temple. Hugh Nibley studied ancient temples because of the LDS temples. He saw the effects temples had in the ancient world. In *Temple & Cosmos*, he explained their role. All of what I'm about to read comes from *Temple & Cosmos*:

It is the hierocentric point around which all things are organized. It is the *omphalos* ("navel") around which the earth was organized. The temple is a scale model of the universe, boxed to the compass, a very important feature of every town in our contemporary civilization, as in the ancient world. (Years ago, Sir James George Frazer noticed a definite pattern among ancient religious cult practices: they all followed the same patterns throughout the whole world. He explained that as representing certain stages of evolution in which the mind naturally expressed itself in those forms. But since then the gaps between these various cultures have been filled in, to show that civilization was far more connected.) Civilization is hierocentric, centered around the holy point of the temple. The temple was certainly the center of things in [Babylon], in Egypt, in Greece—wherever you go....

It is the scale model of the universe, for teaching purposes and for the purpose of taking our bearings on the universe and in the eternities, both in time and in space...

The temple is the great teaching institution of the human race; universities are much older than we might...expect. A university began as a Greek *Mouseion*, a temple of the Muses, who represented all departments of knowledge. The Egyptian called it the "house of Life." It was an observatory, a great megalithic complex of standing stones (later columns and pylons), with amazingly sophisticated devices for observing and recording the motions of the heavens...

The creation hymn was part of the great dramatic presentation that took place yearly at the temple; it dealt with the fall and redemption of man...

In short, there is no part of our civilization which doesn't have its rise in the temple. Thanks to the power of the written word, records were kept. And in the all-embracing relationship to the divine book, everything is relevant; nothing is really dead or forgotten. In the time of gathering of all things together, we gather everything good that ever was—not just people—that nothing be lost but everything be restored in this last dispensation. In an all-embracing relationship nothing is ever really dead or forgotten. Every detail belongs in the picture. ...Where the temple that gave us birth is missing, civilization itself becomes a hollow shell.

The temple must be there. It is not just a myth, it is the core of all...our civilization. (*Temple and Cosmos*, Hugh Nibley, 1992)

I read that from *Temple and Cosmos* because I agree with those words.

The Lord is equal to the challenge. He will establish a new civilization. It will be founded on the fullness of His gospel. Lost truths will be restored; the path of righteousness will be returned.

Society is broken. Everywhere we see corrupt cultures based on corrupt laws, corrupt religions, corrupt values, and ultimately, corrupt thought. Beginning again requires re-civilizing people. To be free from corruption requires a change in thinking. If the Lord is to accomplish this, there will need to be a new temple at the center of that new civilization.

The Lord talked with Enoch regarding His return and started with a description of His temple: *For there shall be **my tabernacle**, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem* (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added). It can only become Zion and a New Jerusalem if the Lord's tabernacle is there. His temple will be where He teaches all that must be understood to please God. Then, when people rise up to become what the Lord expects, His risen Tabernacle of glory, and the Lord Himself, will come to dwell there.

There is a great deal of work to be done to establish a foundation. And an even greater work thereafter. When God has His people, they are always commanded to build a temple. Joseph Smith explained:

What was the object of gathering the...people of God in any age of the world? ...The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be

done in a place or house built for that purpose. (*Joseph Smith Papers, History, 1838–1856, Vol. D-1, p. 1572*)

Joseph Smith taught the Relief Society that "the church is not now organized into its proper order, and cannot be until the temple is completed" (*Joseph Smith Papers, Relief Society Minute Book, p. 36*). Some believe that meant temple rites would fit inside the existing church organization. However, it is possible, if the temple had been completed, the people might have been organized in a new and different order, resembling the order in the age of the patriarchs. Joseph never had the opportunity to participate in that advancement. Before the temple was finished, Joseph was dead; and those who were leading had no intention or ability to reorganize the church into the "proper order."

The need for covenant people to cooperate in building a temple has been the same in any age. Temple builders founded the earliest civilizations. They did this to imitate the antediluvians. The Book of Abraham account suggests there was something in Egypt below the floodwaters worth waiting for the waters to recede. Some observers claim there is physical evidence that the earliest temple-complex structures in Egypt were built prior to the flood. They use archeological evidence at the Giza site to conclude the place was once under water, consistent with the description in the Book of Abraham.

When the first temples were built, or inherited by ancient civilizations, the center of life, government, education, culture, and art was at the temple. This was handed down from the first generations. The temple was founded before and will be needed to be the foundation again. When there has been an apostasy, temple building has been part of restoring. A new civilization will only become possible through teachings learned in the future House of God. The necessary ordinances can only be restored in that setting. There you will receive an uncorrupted restoration of the original faith taught to Adam and the patriarchs.

Joseph Smith was told that God intended to restore what was lost (meaning the fullness of the priesthood), but it was only to be accomplished through a temple. These were the Lord's words to Joseph:

For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before [the foundation of] the world... Therefore, verily I say unto you that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory and honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (T&C 141:12)

Joseph was martyred before there was a place where God could come to restore what had been lost. Joseph began to roll out a portion of temple ceremonial worship, but it was never completed. Uninspired men who have changed, deleted, and added to what remained from Joseph have corrupted those incomplete ceremonies.

The gospel is for redemption. Redemption from the fall returns man to God's presence. Ascending the heavenly mount is always taught in a properly-organized-temple's ceremonies. Ascending to heaven, redemption, and becoming part of the Family of God are all part of the ancient temple rites and must also be part of future temple rites.

The concept of "adoption" is widely recognized as part of Christianity. The term is employed loosely to mean that a person believes in Christ and recognizes Him as their Savior. The language of Paul is often cited and understood to claim believers are adopted into God's family.

For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 1:34 RE)

Language in the Book of Mormon has also been used to support a loose understanding of the term "adoption." *Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women—all nations, kindreds, tongues and people—must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters (Mosiah 11:28 RE).*

The loose understanding of "adoption" was considerably tightened around October 1843 when Joseph Smith expanded his use of sealing authority. It grew from establishing marriages to include, also, man-to-man sealing through adoption. The last eight months of his life, Joseph sealed or "adopted" other men to himself. There was no settled, formal ordinance that has been preserved, and the proof of Joseph's practice is mostly post-mortem, as those who were exposed to the practice only vaguely recalled what he had done.

Nearly a decade after Joseph died, when temple ceremonial work resumed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake, Brigham Young declared that adoption was the crowning ordinance. It was *more* important than the other temple rites, including washing, anointing, endowment, and marriage sealing:

This Chain must not [be] broken for mankind Cannot be saved any other way. This Priesthood must be linked together so that all the Children may be linked to Father Adam. ...we will seal men to men by the keys of the Holy Priesthood. This is the highest ordinance. It is the last ordinance of the kingdom of God on the earth and above all the endowments that can be given [to] you. It is a final sealing an Eternal Principle and when once made cannot be broken by the Devil.

(*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Vol. 5, 13 January 1856, Vol. 2, p. 1033-1034)

In that talk, Brigham Young taught that the "turning of hearts to the fathers" foretold by Malachi was only to be fulfilled through adoption. He also taught the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham regarding "his seed" would only be fulfilled through the temple ordinance of adoption. LDS Church leaders unsuccessfully tried to sort out how to practice adoption.

In a meeting of the reorganized School of Prophets in Salt Lake City on January 20, 1868, attended by the church presidency Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel Wells, along with Elders John Taylor, Orson Hyde, George A. Smith, Erastus Snow, George Q. Cannon, Phineas Young, and Joseph Young, the topic of adoption was discussed. President Wells conjectured: "On Adoption he supposed it had reference to the linking together of the Priesthood...that it might reach back to the link that had long since been broken, that it might present one unbroken chain" (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets: 1867-1883*, pp. 11-12; entry of 20 January 1868). In response Orson Hyde said: "The Doctrine of Adoption he knew but little about and should decline touching it until the line is chalked out" (*ibid*, p. 12). Scholars struggle to make sense of what Joseph was doing. And the attempts to reconstruct Joseph's later adoption innovation are insufficient to give any firm understanding of what took place, how, or why.

Thirty years before he would become church president, Wilford Woodruff concluded that adoptions would be something a resurrected Joseph Smith would return to sort out during the millennium: "Man also will have to be sealed to man until the chain is united from Father Adam down to the last Saint. This will be the work of the Millenium and Joseph Smith will be the man to attend...it or dictate it" (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets: 1867-1883*, p. 42; December 11, 1869).

A half-century after Joseph's death, the apostles struggled to know how it ought to work or who should be sealed to whom—how and what effect it would have in the afterlife. In a meeting on June 1, 1893, attended by Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, John Taylor, Marriner Merrill, Abraham Cannon, George F. Gibbs, John D. McAllister, Nephi Cannon [Clayton] and James Jack, they "had some talk about the ordinance of adoption in the temple. Joseph F. Smith said Pres. [Brigham] Young had told him to follow in ordinance work for the dead the rules which [would] ordinarily govern similar work for the living" (*Candid Insights of a Mormon Apostle: The Diaries of Abraham H. Cannon, 1889-1895*, p. 388). The practice was to seal faithful children to parents, and faithful parents to Joseph Smith. Woodruff explained: "I was sealed to my father, and then had him sealed to the Prophet Joseph" (*ibid*, p.488).

The concept of adoption affected how people understood the afterlife. This led some people to view adoption as a chance to pursue their self-interests. People began to aspire to improve their post-mortality by recruiting and acquiring descendants using adoption. The Logan Temple president was told to end his practice of recruiting

adoptees. Eventually president Wilford W. Woodruff announced a final adoption practice on April 8, 1894: "Pres. Woodruff announced the doctrine of the sealing of children to parents as far back as...possible to trace the genealogy, and then seal the last member to the Prophet Joseph [Smith]" (ibid, p. 496).

Family relationships were reckoned by sealing, not biology. For example, Heber J. Grant was the biological son of Jedediah Grant, but because his mother was sealed to Joseph Smith, he was regarded as Joseph Smith's son.

What Joseph Smith understood about adoption did not get passed to subsequent church leaders clearly enough to preserve the practice intact. In September 1887, two months after John Taylor died, his son-in-law, John Whitaker, wrote in his diary:

I went back to the office where I found [Apostle] Brother Lorenzo Snow and [First Council of the Seventy member] Jacob Gates. They conversed a long time. He finally entered into a deep subject on "The Law of Adoption." Brother Gates said he didn't believe in it as did also Brother Snow. He [?] referenced back to the time that Brigham Young was in Kirtland[;] he had a person asked him about it and he said "I know nothing about it." President Taylor on one different occasion had a letter written to him for the following reason: it was [two undecipherable words followed by] of ... J[oseph] Smith or rather Sister Eliza R. Snow Smith (Brother Gates didn't know which)...about 70 persons were adopted into President J[oseph] Smith's [family;] Sister Snow Smith said "she didn't understand the law" but had no objections to them being sealed to her husband. And this led Brother Gates to write to President Taylor asking him if he knew anything about it. He never answered the letter. But on another occasion Brother Gates saw him and asked him plainly. President Taylor said he knew nothing about it. And also just lately when asked by Brother Snow, President...Woodruff knew nothing about it. ["]It hadn't been revealed to him." I know this at this time to say [or show] a prevailing feeling among the Twelve that they don't understand it. George...Cannon also said he didn't understand it. ("Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2011, p. 3; pp. 101-102)

As John Taylor's health was declining in the last month of his life, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal on June 8, 1887: "I wrote 4 Letters to Jaques Emma Clara & Roskelly. I did not rest well. To much deep thinking to Sleep" (*Wilford Woodruff's Journals*, Vol. 8: 1 January 1881 to 31 December 1888, p. 441). Roskelly was employed as the recorder in the Logan Utah temple. That letter included the following mention of adoption:

I have adopted this rule in Sealing and Adoptions: to take such as the Lord has given me, and leave the result[s] in His hands....Paul talked a good deal about Adoptions, but we did not understand much about it, until the Lord revealed it to Joseph Smith, and we may not, perhaps, understand it now as fully as we should. Still the Sealings and Adoptions are true principles, or our Prophets have

been badly deceived. ("Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2011, p. 3; p. 103)

Adoption became progressively more controversial as time passed. Since the idea was not well understood by church leaders, they could provide no answers to questions on the subject. While bishop, Edward Bunker denounced the idea altogether, resulting in an 1892 church court that the church president and one of his counselors attended. The former bishop was charged with teaching false doctrine, and in his defense, he wrote a letter to the high council stating:

The adoption of one man to another out of the lineage, I do not understand and for that reason I would not enter into it. And adopting the dead to the living is as adopting the father to the son. I don't believe there is a man on earth that thoroughly understands the principle. If there is, I have never heard it taught as I could understand it. I believe it is permited [sic] more to satisfy the minds of the people for the present until the Lord reveals more fully the principle. (Edward Bunker, Letter to the Bunkerville High Council, April 25, 1891, *Edward Bunker Autobiography* (1894) 37, microfilm of holograph, MS 1581, LDS Church History Library)

In his summary of the court proceeding, Wilford Woodruff relegated the subject of adoption to one of the "mysteries" which church members ought to avoid discussing because they cause difficulties. He wrote: "June 11, 1892 We Met in the Tabernacle at 10 oclock on the trial of Bishop Bunker on Doctrin [sic]. We talked to them Plainly of the impropriety of indulging in Misteries [sic] to Create difficulties among the Saints. They professed to be Satisfied" (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, supra, 9:203).

Although John Taylor perpetuated the practice, over time it diminished and then disappeared beginning with Wilford Woodruff's presidency. Woodruff changed the policy in April 1894 to seal within biological families as far back as were known and *then* to seal and adopt the last parents to Joseph Smith. This made adoption less of an issue and the genealogical search for ancestors of greater concern. But by 1922 the de-emphasis on adoption allowed it to be ignored altogether. The practice Woodruff announced in 1894 was *deleted* in the published account by the Utah Genealogical Society *and* from Clark's *Messages of The First Presidency*. Today adoption has vanished from the LDS church and was never practiced by the RLDS church or other branches of the Restoration.

Joseph Smith did not leave the Christian practice of "adoption" a loose idea, with believers becoming sons of God by conversion, belief, or baptism. He tied it to both authority to seal and an authoritative ordinance. Both of those were lost when Joseph and Hyrum were killed.

If adoption is (as Brigham Young thought in 1856) the highest ordinance above all the endowments that can be given, if it is needed for the gospel (as taught to Abraham) to be restored, then the loss of adoption rites is indeed a sign of apostasy. Brigham Young

taught adoption would bind a person beyond the devil's power to break. But adoption was abandoned before the end of the 1800s. Adoption will need to be restored as a rite (with an accompanying authoritative ordinance and sealing) in order for the things Joseph Smith alone understood and taught to be renewed.

The LDS church has attempted to preserve other ordinances Joseph Smith began. Unfortunately, those ordinances have also been poorly preserved, changed, and compromised.

Joseph did not live to see the complete Nauvoo temple, and he never finished the temple ceremonies. Thirty-three years after Joseph died, Brigham Young explained that *he* was the one who finished the ceremony, using what he could recall from Joseph's initiation:

[W]hen we got our washings and anointings under the hands of the Prophet Joseph at Nauvoo, we had only one room to work in with the exception of a little side room, or office, where we were washed and anointed, had our garments placed [on] us, and received our new name. And after he had performed these ceremonies, he gave the key words, signs, tokens and penalties. Then, after we went into the large room over the store in Nauvoo, Joseph divided up the room the best that he could, hung up the veil, marked it. Gave us our instructions as we passed along from one department to another, giving us signs, tokens, penalties, with...key words pertaining to those signs.

After we had got through Bro. Joseph turned to me and said, "Bro. Brigham this is not arranged right but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed, and I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all these ceremonies with the signs, tokens, penalties and key words." I did so, and each time I got something more, so that when we went through the temple at Nauvoo I understood and knew how to place them there. We had our ceremonies pretty correct. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, supra, 5:3104)

"Pretty correct." "Approximately good."

About a year and a half after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, Brigham began to introduce the endowment to the general church membership. This was done in the attic of the unfinished Nauvoo Temple using canvas partitions. As these endowments proceeded, Brigham continued to make additions, changes, and alterations to the ceremony Joseph had introduced. By the time of the exodus from Nauvoo in February of 1846, over 5,000 members had been endowed. Endowment ordinances resumed in 1852 in the Council House in Utah and then in the Endowment House, which was completed in 1855.

When there was a large number of ordinances being performed, Brigham Young admitted the ceremony was the best he could do but would be fixed when Christ returned and Joseph was resurrected. He explained:

After Joseph comes to us in his resurrected body He will more fully instruct us concerning the Baptism for the dead and the sealing ordinances. He will say be baptized for this man and that man [for] that man [and] be sealed to that man and such a man to such a man, and connect the Priesthood together. I tell you their [sic] will not be much of this done until Joseph comes. He is our spiritual Father. Our hearts are already turned to him and his to us. (*The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, supra, 13 January 1856, 2:1034)

From May 1842 until 1877, the temple rites were transmitted orally. Wilford Woodruff recorded on January 14, 1877: "Spent the Evening with Presidet [sic] Young. He requested Brigham jr & W Woodruff to write out the Ceremony of the Endowments from Beginning to End" (*Wilford Woodruff's Journals*, supra, 7:322). Putting the ceremony down in writing in 1877 was necessary to standardize the variations between sessions. Those variations concerned Brigham Young. Once there was a manuscript, Brigham Young introduced a 30-minute lecture that was delivered before the veil as the endowment concluded. Because he added his Adam-God teaching as part of this lecture, it was subsequently removed. Also, because some who participated in killing Joseph and Hyrum Smith were still alive, he added an oath of vengeance. This was also subsequently removed when it became public knowledge during the Reed Smoot Senate Confirmation Hearings before the US Senate.

Because Brigham Young was only able to get "our ceremonies pretty correct" (as he described it), it is clear he did not preserve exactly what Joseph Smith introduced. He said that he expected the rites to be fixed by a resurrected Joseph Smith for the millennium.

Brigham Young's successor, John Taylor, also saw the temple rites in a somewhat disorganized and incomplete state. Forty years after Joseph's death he explained to the School of the Prophets:

The reason why things are in the shape [that] they are is because Joseph felt called upon to confer all [the] ordinances connected with the Priesthood. He felt in a hurry on account of certain premonition that he had concerning his death, and was very desirous to emparrt the endowments and all the ordinances thereof to the Priesthood during his life time.... (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets: 1867-1883*, supra, p. 527; entry of 12 October 1883)

His remarks concluded with: "Had Joseph Smith lived he would have had much more to say on many of those points which he was prevented from doing by his death"(ibid). Though survivors made a sincere effort to copy what Joseph had begun, they admitted it was not altogether correct and would need further help from a resurrected Joseph

Smith before it could be recovered. Had Joseph Smith survived, he may have been able to provide a ceremonial tour back through the seven heavens to the throne of God.

Succeeding generations of LDS leaders who were not taught by Joseph Smith have likewise taken advantage of the idea that the ceremonies were not perfectly preserved and could be "corrected" from time to time. The result has been numerous alterations of the temple endowment, washings, anointings, and sealings—the most recent of which were adopted four months ago.

Although the ceremony was first put into writing in 1877, portions of it were not written down because it was initially considered taboo to include the descriptions of specific signs and penalties. Those remained unwritten through at least 1923. Changes in the written form of the ceremony began during the Reed Smoot Confirmation Hearings, when the oath of vengeance was removed. Changes have continued to be made by the LDS church, the latest implemented in January 2019.

Christ taught parables that included invited guests being barred from attending the wedding feast. In one, the guests are called "virgins" to suggest that they possess moral purity and would be welcomed to the event. In another, there are strangers on the highway invited because others refused to come. Both parables, however, have some who are ultimately excluded from the wedding, a symbol of Christ's return. These parables raise an important issue about the Lord's return. There is a reason why five of the ten virgins could not enter into the wedding celebration. Likewise, those invited to attend the wedding feast that arrive without a wedding garment will be excluded. In both cases, those excluded were not welcome as they were unprepared.

There have been only two societies in recorded history that became Zion. Because of the age of the world at the time, both were taken up into heaven. We have very little to help us understand why these two succeeded. Apart from describing them as of "one heart, one mind, and no poor among them," we know little else. But perhaps that is one of the most important things we *can* know about them. Maybe the point is that *nothing* and *no-one* stood out as remarkable or different within the community. There were no heroes and no villains; no rich and no poor; no Shakespearian plot lines of betrayal, intrigue, ambition, conflict, and envy. There was no adultery, theft, robbery, murder, immorality, and drunkenness—in other words, nothing to entertain us. Because all our stories, movies, music, novels, television plots, and social media are based upon and captivated by everything that is missing from these societies.

The centuries-long period of peace described in the Book of Mormon occupies only a few short pages in 4 Nephi. Their society was marked by the presence of peace, the absence of conflict, and abiding stability. This is what they attained: *There were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore, there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free and partakers of the Heavenly gift* (4 Nephi 1:1 RE). Because there was no future ministry for them to perform, their Zion

society was not taken up to heaven. Because the world was not yet ready for the Lord to return in judgment, neither Enoch nor Melchizedek returned with their people to fall on their necks and kiss them.

These people were most remarkable for what they *lacked*. How they grew to lack these divisions, contentions, and disputes is described in very few, simple words: *They did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. And it came to pass...there was no contention among all the people in all the land* (4 Nephi 1:2 RE).

What were the names of their leaders? We don't know because, apparently, there were none. Who were their great teachers? Again, we don't know because they were not identified. Who governed? Apparently no one. They had things in common, obeyed God's commandments, and spent time praying and hearing the word of the Lord. They were so very unlike us.

To make the point clear for us, the record of these people explains: *There was no contention in the land because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people; and there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness* (4 Nephi 1:3 RE). All the negatives were missing because the love of God dwelt in their hearts.

Something else describes them: *And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God* (ibid). Consider those words carefully. You cannot be happier than by allowing the love of God to dwell in you. The happiest people who have ever lived did so by the profound peace they displayed, equality they shared, fairness they showed one another, and love of God in their hearts.

This is a description of our social opposites. Reviewing the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, the Covenant, and the recent parable of the Master's House shows that the Lord is pleading for *us* to become *this*. It's not easy; it will require civilizing the uncivilized. However, it is necessary to become the wise virgins and the invited guests wearing the wedding garment.

Five of the virtuous virgins who were expecting the wedding party to arrive were, nevertheless, excluded. They were virgins like the others; but the others were allowed to enter, and they were not. They did not lack virginity. They did not lack notice. They were not surprised by an unexpected wedding party arriving. But they lacked "oil," which is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. They failed to acquire the necessary spirit with which to avoid conflict, envy, strife, tumult, and contention. To grow into the kind of people God will want us to welcome into His dwelling requires practice, experience, and effort. People have not done it. Devout religious people are not prepared to live in peace, with all things in common, with no poor among them. God is trying to create a civilization that does not yet exist.

It is a privilege for God to give guidance to help prepare His people. There has always been a promise from the Lord that those who inherit Zion will be given commandments from Him to follow. He declared:

Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel, for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth [it's] strength. And they...shall [also] be crowned with blessings from above, yea...with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time, [that] they...are faithful and diligent[ly] before me. (T&C 46:1)

Those who mock or criticize efforts to complete the Restoration are defining themselves as unworthy by their own words. No matter how good they may otherwise be, when they embrace conflict, envy, strife, tumult, and contention, they cannot be invited to the wedding of the Lamb.

We need more commandments from God to prepare for what is coming. The example in 4 Nephi commends those people who walk after the commandments received from our Lord and God. There should be fasting and prayer. People should meet together, pray, and review the words of the Lord. Every step taken will make us more like those virgins who have oil in their lamps and less like the foolish virgins who took no effort to make the required preparation.

It's not enough to avoid outright evil. We have to be good. Being "good" means to be separate from the world, united in charity towards each other, and to have united hearts. If we are ready when the wedding party arrives, we must follow the Lord's commandments to *us*. They are for our good. He wants us to awaken and arise from an awful slumber.

The third such society will not be taken into heaven. Instead, it will welcome the return of the first two to the earth. Why would ancient, righteous societies caught up to heaven want to leave there to come and meet with a city of people on earth? Why would they fall on their necks and kiss that gathered body of believers? And above all else, why would Christ want to occupy a tabernacle and dwell with such a community? Obviously, because there will be people living on earth whose civilization is like the society in heaven.

The Ten Commandments outline basic social norms needed for peace and stability. Christ's Sermon on the Mount was His exposition on the Ten Commandments. He expounded on the need to align the intent of the heart with God's standard to love your fellow man, do good to those who abuse you, and hold no anger. He took us deeper. Where the Ten Commandments allowed reluctant, resentful, and hard-hearted conformity, the Sermon on the Mount requires a willing readiness to obey. Christ wants us to act with alacrity to follow Him. He taught us to treat others as you would want to be treated.

The answer to these questions is easy to conceptualize and easy to verbalize. But living the answer is beyond mankind's ability to endure. We do not want to lay down our pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and lusts to become that community.

Enoch prophesied about the last-days Zion. He saw the earth was pained by the wickedness upon her. He wrote this account:

Enoch looked upon the earth and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying, Woe, woe is me, the mother of men. I am pained; I am weary because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest and be cleansed from the filthiness which has gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face? And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying, O Lord will you not have compassion upon the earth? (Genesis 4:20 RE)

The answer describes things that have not happened—but may happen in our day, if we choose to follow the Lord. The opportunity has been offered. The Lord's answer to Enoch was in the form of a covenant. That covenant will be vindicated, but only by those who will rise up to obey Him. God's words will not fail, and this will happen:

*And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people** will I preserve. And righteousness will I send down out of Heaven...[I will] gather out [mine] own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I [have] prepare[d], a holy city, that **my people** may gird up their loins and be looking forth for [a] time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle...it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and...your city meet **them** there, and we will receive **them** into our bosom. And they shall see us, and we will fall [on] **their** necks, and **they** shall fall [on] our necks, and we will kiss each other, and there shall be my abode. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)*

The last-days Zion and her people were planned, foretold, and chosen thousands of years ago to live on earth when righteousness would come down out of heaven. They will be here when truth is sent forth out of the earth to bear testimony of Christ. And, like a flood, righteousness and truth will sweep the earth. Any who have witnessed a flood know floodwaters carry a great deal of debris, dirt, and detritus. Today there is a flood of information, recordings, and teachings sweeping the earth. The Internet has made it possible for an individual sitting at a keyboard to speak to the entire world. Righteousness is sweeping the earth, while floodwaters are disturbing the whole world.

In Joseph Smith's day it was required for an army of messengers to be sent. There was a practical limit on how many people Joseph could personally teach. Outside the direct

sound of his voice only printed words could carry the message. He and those who followed him invested in a press to publish newspapers and books to carry the truth. But that still was not enough— It required an organized body of missionaries to take the publications, repeat the message, and convey the new truths came through revelation to Joseph Smith. Even with the enormous investment of time and resources made while Joseph was alive, there were places and people who never heard a thing about the Restoration while Joseph lived.

Today we must still warn others. However, we have much more greater means available to us. We can use a keyboard to reach the whole world. There are people in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and South America, and across North America who participate in our conferences. I want to send greetings to our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere who cannot travel to be with us. The flood of overflowing the world today includes the promised righteousness and truth, but it requires the Lord's elect to distinguish between the filth, folly, and foolishness to find freedom from sin through Christ, who is the foundation of righteousness and truth.

Prophets have described how this will happen. Isaiah described a coming age of peace when righteousness and truth have their opportunity to bear fruit. He spoke of Christ and of the power in Christ's teachings to transform the world itself. That same world that Enoch heard lamenting, pained by the violence on her face, will find rest. Isaiah foretells what will happen just prior to the Lord's return:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and [the] little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of [an] asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse [which] shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 5:4 RE)

How will Christ smite the earth with the rod of His mouth? By teaching peace to people who are willing to obey and live at peace. What will it take to see the wolf dwell with the

lamb? Why does the wolf kill the lamb today? The wolf kills because it's hungry. If the same shepherd who feeds the lamb also fed the wolf, then the wolf would not need to kill.

Wolves can be domesticated. I once owned a mixed Wolf-Malamute we named Cicely, after the fictitious town in Alaska that was the setting for the TV show *Northern Exposure*. Cicely looked entirely like a wolf, and her behavior was lupine. She was very gentle with her clan—our immediate family and friends. My children were still young then, and our neighborhood had other young children who came over. Cicely recognized them and accepted them as "belonging." However, an adult man trying to read an electrical meter once entered our backyard, and Cicely regarded this as a threat to her clan. The man scarcely escaped through the gate. Wolves are intelligent animals and, inside their clans, are capable of treating young children with gentle, protective care. They are also capable defenders against threats.

Under the peaceful guidance of a kindly shepherd, the wolf and the lamb could learn to lie down together. Lions have been domesticated, as have bears. When Adam was given dominion over the earth, all the animals that came to him for naming dwelt together peacefully. Why do we assume that nature is violent? Why regard it as "red of tooth and claw?"

The scriptures speak of an idyllic time, in the beginning, when man and nature were entirely at peace with one another. The scriptures also foretell of a coming idyllic age when that peace is restored again. Why do we accept these bookends as true without ever considering the role of man in destroying the original peace? Why do we assume we have no obligation imposed upon us to reform creation back to the original? The prophecy of Isaiah is not magic imposed by God on a reluctant creation. It will require shepherds to care for creation.

Who are "they" in this passage? — *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*

And why is the passage, *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain*, followed by the statement: *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*? These are connected thoughts. It should be obvious to you that this can only be fulfilled by a different civilization than one in which we live. Ours can never produce such results.

Isaiah also describes what it will be like after the Lord's return. After He comes to dwell with those prepared to welcome His return, events will unfold in this way:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. In those days, there shall be no more

from there an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his day; for the child shall not die, but shall live to be a hundred years old. But the sinner living to be a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and [mine] elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord. (Isaiah 24:9 RE)

The same words are used to describe the prepared people before the return of the Lord and those with whom He will dwell after His return. Neither of these *shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord*. What will they be like who do not hurt nor destroy? Can you imagine such a society? Isaiah's description reflects this incident involving Joseph Smith and Zion's Camp:

In pitching my tent we found three massasaugas or prairie rattlesnakes, which the brethren were about to kill, but I said, "Let them alone—don't hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose his venom, while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war upon it? Men must become harmless, before the brute creation; and when men lose their vicious disposition and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play with the serpent in safety." The brethren took the serpents carefully on sticks and carried them across the creek. I exhorted the brethren not to kill a serpent, [a] bird, or an animal of any kind during our journey unless it became necessary in order to preserve ourselves from hunger. (*Documentary History of the Church 2:71–72*)

Last year while my wife and I were hiking the Bonneville Shoreline Trail in Draper, Utah, she was in the lead. We were going at a rapid pace. (She always does that—that's why she's in the lead, because she wants to set the pace). We were going at a rapid pace, and she passed a rattlesnake so quickly that when it began to rattle its warning, she'd already passed. But I heard it before I reached it, lying only inches off the trail when I stopped to look. (I grew up in Idaho, and rattlesnakes are very common there.) After watching it for a few moments, I started to talk to it in a calm voice and made no menacing movement towards it. As I took the time to talk calmly, without advancing toward it, its nervous rattle began to slow and eventually stopped. Then it uncoiled—which only happens when the snake is not defensive. I suppose the calm of my voice and my non-threatening demeanor relieved the little animal's fear. It began to slowly move away, and I encouraged it to stay off the trail because another passing hiker or bicyclist would probably try to kill it.

I thought of Joseph Smith's words when I encountered that snake: "How will the serpent ever lose his venom? ...Men must become harmless....Men [must] lose their vicious disposition[s] and cease to destroy."

I know however well I may treat an animal, another will soon come by and mistreat the same animal. Nature will refuse to be at peace with mankind while mankind continues to slay, abuse, and misuse the animal kingdom.

But the prophecy is about God's "holy mountain." It raises the question, if there were a place occupied by people who do not hurt or destroy in that holy mountain, could nature reach peace with the people in that place?

Cicely acted to protect the children in my yard from what she regarded as an intruding threat. It was her nature to do so. She wanted her clan to be safe. Toward her clan, she showed affection, played, and gave us all companionship. But to the threat, she was menacing.

In the first Zion, the people were at peace with nature. But that place was apparently protected *by* nature. What scripture describes is not magic or "fairy dust," but a perfectly natural process. This creation has been ordained by God and framed with intelligence to follow certain principles established before the foundation of the world. Any people in any age who follow the same pattern will receive the same result. What is described in this passage about Enoch and his city?

And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them, and he spoke the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled—even according to his command—and the rivers of water were turned out of their course, and the roar of...lions were heard out of the wilderness. And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. (Genesis 4:13 RE)

Would a lion that had been befriended by Enoch and his people be inclined, by its nature, to protect the people it viewed as part of its clan? Would a bear protect its shepherd and guardian? Would a wolf? Is it possible for a civilization to exist that does not hurt nor destroy in all their land? If they would not hurt nor destroy in all their land, would it be a holy place?

We live in a very different civilization from the one described in prophecy. But the one described prophetically will not just one day appear. It will require effort, learning, obedience, and sacrifice to change.

The earth rejoiced at Enoch's people. The earth protected those people. Earthquakes, landslides, and floods stopped the wicked—and the animal kingdom, including predators like the lion, rose up to protect the City of Enoch. For those who are prepared to receive the people of Enoch and Melchizedek, and those who will welcome the Lord to dwell among them, that can and will happen.

Everybody will have to make changes. The most important changes have been provided in a blueprint revealed in the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, including the terms of the Covenant. We are expected to remember and obey these words:

My will is to have you love one another. As people, you lack the ability to respectfully disagree among one another....

Wisdom counsels mankind to align their words with their hearts, but mankind refuses to take counsel from Wisdom....

There have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided. I speak these words to reprove you that you may learn, not to upbraid you so that you mourn. I want my people to have understanding....

Satan is a title and means accuser, opponent and adversary; hence once he fell, Lucifer became, or in other words was called, Satan, because he accuses others and opposes the Father. I rebuked Peter and called him Satan because he was wrong in opposing the Father's will for me, and Peter understood and repented.

In the work you have performed there are those who have been Satan, accusing one another, wounding hearts and causing jarring, contention, and strife by their accusations. Rather than loving one another, even among you who desire a good thing, some have dealt unkindly as if they were...opponents, accusers and adversaries. In this they were wrong...

For you are like a man who seeks for good fruit from a neglected vineyard—unwatered, undunged, unpruned and unattended. How shall it produce good fruit if you fail to tend it? What reward does the unfaithful husbandman obtain from his neglected vineyard? How can saying you are a faithful husbandman ever produce good fruit in the vineyard without doing the work of the husbandman? For you seek my words to recover them even as you forsake to do them. You have heretofore produced wild fruit, bitter and ill-formed, because you neglect to do my words...

You have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace. If you will hearken to my words, I will make you my people and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess.

The Book of Mormon was given as my covenant for this day and contains my gospel, which came forth to allow people to understand my work and [to] obtain my salvation. Yet many of you are like those who reject the Book of Mormon, because you say, but you do not do. As a people you honor with your lips, but your hearts are corrupt, filled with envy and malice, returning evil for good,

sparing none— even those with pure hearts among you— from your unjustified accusations and unkind backbiting. You have not obtained the fullness of my salvation because you do not draw near to me...

Hear therefore my words: Repent and bring forth fruit showing repentance, and I will establish my covenant with you and claim you as mine....

It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine, and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given, until they know the mysteries of God in full...

You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord, and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace, and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety....

Be of one heart, ...regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them...

There remains [a] great work yet to be done. Receive my covenant and abide in it, not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention and backbiting caused anger, broke hearts and hardened the souls of those claiming to be my saints. But receive it in spirit, in meekness and in truth. I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught [you] that if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. How do I act toward mankind? If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget. You cannot be at peace with one another if you take offense when none is intended. But again I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself....

(One of the questions that someone asked is, why we are admonished to pursue judgement? The answer are those words I just read to you: *I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself.* Pursue judgement whenever the

opportunity presents itself. Use judgement to evaluate based upon the standard you want applied to yourself, and pursue judgement).

The Earth groans under the wickedness of mankind upon her face, and she longs for peace to come. She withholds the abundance of her bounty because of the offenses of men against me, against one another, and against her. But if righteousness returns and my people prove by their actions, words and thoughts to yield to my Spirit and hearken to my commandments, then will the earth rejoice, for the feet of those who cry peace upon her mountains are beautiful indeed, and I, the Lord, will bring again Zion, and the earth will rejoice.

In the world, tares are ripening. And so I ask you, What of the wheat?...

Cry peace. Proclaim my words. Invite those who will repent to be baptized and forgiven, and they shall obtain my Spirit to guide them. (T&C 157)

That excerpt contains nearly 2,000 words of instruction. There is no basis to claim ignorance. Is it possible for people to change their civilization and go from strident, quarrelsome, and pugnaciousness to loving one another?

Perhaps the Book of Mormon contains one account to give us hope. Following conversion, one group of Lamanites were led by a king who encouraged them to lay down their un-bloodied weapons rather than ever shed blood again. This meant they could not defend themselves. After their king finished his proposal this took place:

And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords and all [their] weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth. And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood. And this they did vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren, they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother, they would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness, they would labor abundantly with their hands. And thus we see that when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth, [that] they were firm and would suffer, even unto death, rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried the weapons of peace, or they buried [their] weapons of war for peace. (Alma 14:9 RE)

When their resolve was tested, they passed. Rather than take up arms they laid down their lives:

Now when the people saw that they were coming against them, they went out to meet them and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord; and thus they were in [the] attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them and began to slay them with the sword... Thus without

meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them; and we know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God. Now when the Lamanites saw that their brethren would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside to the right...or...the left, but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword—now when the Lamanites saw this, they did forbear from slaying them; and there were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the thing which they had done.

And it came to pass that they threw down their weapons of war, and they would not take them again, for they were stung for the murders which they had committed. And they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies of those whose arms were lifted [up] to slay them.

And it came to pass that the people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain.... (Alma 14:10-12 RE)

This event is astonishing and many have been shocked by the extreme behavior of these believers. We are not being asked to lay down our weapons and be killed. We are only being asked to lay down our hostility, slander, and abuse of one another to become peaceful and loving. This is a good thing that benefits everybody. Despite this, we keep our pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and lusts. These destructive desires are preferred over forgiving offenses in meekness, love, and kindness. None of us are asked to die for a covenant, but are only asked to be more like Christ and forgive and love one another. This seems so difficult a challenge that we quarrel and dispute among ourselves. We remain haughty and self-righteous and fail to realize self-righteousness is a lie, a mirage, utterly untrue. We must trade our pride for humility, or we will never be able to keep the covenant. Remember, it is a group who must keep the covenant, not individuals. Together we must act consistent with the obligation we agreed to perform before God.

Now, I want to be clear about what I am NOT saying: Nothing in what has been said implies that people must be vegan. In the age of the first patriarchs, we learn this about the second generation: *And Abel listened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep...And Abel, he also brought [forth] the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering...(Genesis 3:6-7).* There are animals whose lives are given them for the benefit of mankind. Abel raised sheep for the benefit their lives offered in food, clothing, and even company.

I am also NOT suggesting we attempt to domesticate wild animals. Until there is a community that has tamed the wild hearts of human residents and has a land to occupy, animals will remain justifiably fearful of man. Nature will not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, the hostile and the benign, the people of peace and the people at war with the animal kingdom *until* there is a "holy mountain." That will be the place made holy by the actions of the people who dwell there. When the earth sees that

righteousness has returned to her face, she will yield her abundance for those whose feet walk in the way that is beautiful.

If we obey the commandments that have been given, we can qualify to inherit a land on which to build a temple. The objective of the covenant was to confer the right to live on the land, surviving the judgments coming upon the wicked. *We* need to live up to our end of the covenant. It is clear the Lord is willing to bear with, guide, give commandments to help prepare, and reprove His people when needed. We should not rely on the Lord's patience, but should be eager to obey His guiding instruction. His commandments are not to limit us, but to increase light and truth. Some intelligence is only gained by obedience to His commandments.

Joseph Smith tried to teach the people. They failed to do as they were commanded. They lost the opportunity to have the fullness of the priesthood restored to them. As a result of their failure, for nearly two centuries, institutions have pretended the fullness was restored and they inherited it. Until now, no people have acknowledged the failure, repented, and asked the Lord to restore the fullness of the priesthood.

Salem was a land filled with abominations. Melchizedek, by faith, obtained the Holy Order, taught repentance, and persuaded them to reform. Nauvoo was a viper's den. It was a place with widespread adultery and conspirators who precipitated the murders of Joseph and Hyrum.

Why, during His mortal ministry, did Jesus Christ not establish a place of peace, a city of Zion? Was not Christ the greatest teacher of all?

Reflect on this and consider whether the people who were taught by Melchizedek lived with and were taught by Joseph Smith, would they have repented, obeyed and obtained the fullness?

If Enoch's people lived in Nauvoo, would they have repented? If Joseph, instead of Enoch, taught the people of Enoch, would there have been Zion? Had Joseph, instead of Melchizedek, taught the people of Salem, would they have forsaken their abominations?

Is Zion the result of the teacher or the people?

The people matter more than the teacher. As long as the gospel is taught, including the need for repentance and obedience, any faithful teacher may be enough. But nobody can bring Zion with people who refuse to repent and obey God's commandments. The teacher is necessary, but only a community of people willing to heed the gospel can fulfill the prophecies.

I have to temper the foregoing by the lesson Alma preserved (I think perhaps quoted from the writings of Zenos) about Melchizedek:

Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem, and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations—yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness. But Melchizedek, having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the High Priesthood according to the Holy Order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent. And Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore, he was called the Prince of Peace, for he was the King of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now there were many before him, and...there were [also] many afterwards, but none were greater. (Alma 10:2 RE)

If people who had all gone astray and were filled with iniquity and abominations were moved by his message of repentance, could Melchizedek have persuaded Nauvoo to abandon their wickedness, strife, ambition, jealousy, and adultery? There is no answer because of Christ's inability to bring Zion. Christ was greater than Melchizedek, and He could not accomplish with His contemporaries what Melchizedek did with his.

None of us is spared from mutual failure. We are not Zion. We will never be Zion if we do not repent. All of us must repent, turn to face God with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy, or we will not establish godly peace among us.

The Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and the Covenant are the beginning blueprint. That blueprint teaches the need to be better people. Following it is more challenging than reciting it. No one can learn what is required *without doing*. Working together is the only way a society can grow together. No isolated spiritual mystic is going to be prepared for Zion through his solitary personal devotions. Personal devotion is necessary, of course, but the most pious hermit will collide with the next pious hermit when they are required to share and work together in a society of equals having all things in common. Do not pretend it will be otherwise. Failing to do the hard work outlined in the covenant is failing to prepare for Zion. It's failing to have oil in the lamp. It's failing to put upon you the wedding garment.

If you think you are one of the five virgins who will be invited in when the bridegroom arrives and have never attempted to obey the Lord's commandments, you will find yourself left outside when the door is shut. If you come from the highways and byways without a wedding garment because you failed to keep the covenant, you'll be excluded.

As aggravating and trying as people are on one another, we need to go through this. There is no magic path to loving one another. Some people refuse and must be left outside. When it comes to loving others, some things must be abandoned, some things must be added, some things must be forgotten, and some things must be ignored. But learning what to abandon, add, forget, or ignore is only through the doing. We chip away at ourselves and others by interacting and sharing.

We will learn things about one another that will distress us. And we may well wish we didn't know some things about others. How will the socially-offensive become socially-

acceptable without help from a loving society? And how can a society become loving if people are not broad-minded enough to figure out that some things just don't matter? Few things really are important. If a man is honest, just, virtuous, and true, should you care if he swears? If a man has a heart of gold and would give you assistance if he thought it was needed, should you care if he is rough and uncouth?

The adulterous and predatory will rarely reform and must often be excluded. They will victimize and destroy. We are commanded to cast out those who steal, love and make a lie, commit adultery, and refuse to repent. The instructions we have been given state:

*You shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal...he that steals and will not repent **shall be cast out**. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent **shall be cast out**. You shall love your wife with all your heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else...he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repent not...**shall be cast out**. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not **shall be cast out**; and he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes [it] and does it no more, you shall forgive him; but if he does it again, he **shall not be forgiven, [and] shall be cast out**. You shall not speak evil of your neighbor [nor] or do him any harm. You know my laws, they are given in my scriptures. **He that sins and repents not shall be cast out**. If you love me, you shall serve me and **keep all my commandments**. (T&C 26:6, emphasis added)*

This teaching is still binding. If your fellowship includes those who ought to be "cast out" you have the obligation to do so rather than encouraging evil. Be patient, but be firm. If a person refuses to repent and forsake sins, you may end fellowship with them and include those who are interested in practicing obedience and love.

There is work to be done. Almost all of it is internal to us. The five prepared virgins and the strangers who brought a wedding garment will be those who keep the covenant. It is designed to give birth to a new society, new culture, and permit a new civilization to be founded.

The Lord's civilization will require His tabernacle at the center. Through it, a recovered religion will be fully developed. God's house will include a higher law—an education about the universe—and a divine university will be established. It will be an ensign in the mountains, and people from all over the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us; we will learn of his paths, to walk in them (see Isaiah 1:5; 2 Nephi 8:4 RE). That place will house a new civilization. There will be no hermit gurus proud of their enlightenment.

No one will offer himself or herself up as some great idol to follow. It will be a place of equality, where people are meek and lowly, serving one another without any attempt to compete for "chief seats."

Christ's apostles competed to be greater than one another. In the New Covenants, Luke 13:6, Christ's reaction is recorded:

There was also a strife among them: who of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they who exercise authority upon them are called benefactors, but it ought not...be so with you. But he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who is chief, as he who does serve. For whether is he greater who sits at [the] meal, or he who serves? I am not as he who sits at a meal, but I am among you as he who serves.

Christ is the great example. Christ would have fit into Enoch's city, would have been welcomed among Melchizedek's people, and could have dwelt in peace with the Nephites of Fourth Nephi. Has He, as once before between Jerusalem and Emmaus, walked among them unnoticed to enjoy their peaceful company?

I cannot keep the covenant. You cannot keep the covenant. Only we can keep the covenant.

But if we do, God's work will continue and will include the fullness previously offered to the gentiles and rejected by them. It is impossible to understand the promises that Elijah will "turn the hearts of the children to the Fathers" unless the fullness is recovered. Joseph Smith cannot fix or finish the Restoration by returning as a resurrected being in the Millennium, as conjectured by Wilford Woodruff. If the necessary rites are not returned before the Lord's return, *the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming* (JSH 3:4 RE). There will be a new civilization built around God's tabernacle where He will dwell. We know the purpose of that house will be for the God of Jacob to teach those people to walk in His ways. We know Joseph Smith began adoption sealing as the highest ordinance and is now been lost.

We have been given a new revelation that explains resurrection and adoption to the Fathers in heaven are linked together:

I was shown that the spirits that rose were limited to a direct line back to Adam, requiring the hearts of the fathers and the hearts of the children to be bound together by sealing, confirmed by covenant and [by] the Holy Spirit of Promise. This is the reason that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and sit upon thrones and are not angels but are gods. (T&C 157:42-43)

The fullness can only be returned through a temple accepted by God as His House. He must return to restore that which has been lost. But ungodly people cannot build an acceptable house for God. There is no commandment to build a temple because people are not yet qualified to do so. So far we have been spared the experience in Nauvoo, where an abortive attempt to build a temple in which the fullness could be restored

resulted in the Lord not performing His oath. Nor did the Lord fulfill the promise they expected to receive. Instead of blessings, the people in Nauvoo brought upon themselves cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments by their follies and abominations. If we are going to receive that same condemnation, it would be better to not begin to build a House of God.

Only *we* can keep the covenant. Only those who keep the covenant *together* can establish a new civilization with God's holy House at its center.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2019.04.21 Conference Q&A Session

April 21, 2019

Grand Junction, Colorado

Denver Snuffer: Apparently our ten minutes are up. And I hate to take away from the 1:00-5:00 lunch hour. I mean, you must be planning on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter dinner all combined for a 1-5 lunch. And I hate to disappoint you, but I've been told that that's a misprint on the schedule and that you will not be given a 1:00-5 p.m. lunch break, that things will resume at 2:30 with Rob Adolpho and his wife, Quintina. We call her "Q." It's spelled "Quintina." [Inaudible audience comments.] "That's right," says a voice out of the dark that I assume is Q's. We call her Q,; Rob calls her, "Yes, ma'am."

Ten minutes for a bathroom break seems utterly unreasonable; so when they get back and they ask you what they missed, tell 'em, "The most amazing stuff ever! And we've been sworn to not repeat it! And he told the folks to delete it from the recording." [Audience laughter.]

But I guarantee you, you can't warm coffee with a pillar of fire. And by the way, that is true.

Okay, so, [reading off the program] "Q&A with...me." I guess I could ask myself questions that I really wanted to answer. I'm not obligated to follow any—

Look, one matter that should not come and go without observation is this date, this day, and this commemoration which, based upon all of our reckoning, is the Eastern Easter Sabbath. It also coincides with the Passover. In one of the groups that we were attending yesterday, the subject of the Passover and the various observances under the Law of Moses were discussed—the Holy Days.

And one observation that I made yesterday (and I want to repeat and maybe expand on) is that there are actually two Passovers. The one occurred anciently in Egypt—when the blood of the lamb was put on the lintel and posts, and the Destroying Angel passed over those who had been marked by that and preserved all of the firstborn in those households.

There will be a **second** Passover. This one is more expansive and will involve the destruction of all the wicked. It is referred to, as part of the covenant that we received (now in the Teachings and Commandments section 158, in verses paragraphs 16-18), it says:

*I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven. And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest. And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will **pass over you** (emphasis added) as my peculiar treasure.*

So the Passover, which was instituted as a symbol prior to the Law of Moses, will be one of those observances that will be fully restored in due time, because Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses and brought it to an end. But all those things that had been instituted by God as an observance prior to the Law of Moses—which includes the Passover—that will be preserved, even though the Law of Moses was brought to an end and a completion.

So the Passover, which was instituted before the Law of Moses was established, is one of those observances that was not only relevant at the moment that the children of Israel were saved and freed from their slavery in Egypt anciently, but it is an observance that has relevance also to a **second** promised Passover in which, at some point in the future, the wicked will be gathered into bundles—as the scriptures describe it—and burned; and the covenant people of the Lord will be passed over, preserved, and allowed to continue safely. Therefore, Passover is relevant to our day as much as it is to them anciently.

All of the things that are most important in scripture relate to two (and only two) moments in time—largely two (and only two) generations of people. The first was that that was here at the time the Lord came into mortality, and the second is the time when the Lord will return again in glory to judge the world.

(I was asked also to announce that one of the organizers of this event, Brian Bowler, and another fellow, Jared Walter, are both celebrating their birthdays today. [Audience applause.] So happy birthday to both of them, and I'm sorry to impose on you to be here, instead of somewhere eating cake.)

The events that occurred on the morning of Easter occurred so early in the morning that the place was still dark when the Lord rose from the tomb.

You have to be on a place where you can see the horizon into the distance (and along the Wasatch Front in Utah, you don't get a chance to see the sun or the moon rise on the horizon until it's up, you know, 30 degrees above the horizon of the earth because the mountains obstruct your view, and you can't see into that distance). But if you're on the ocean, if you're on a shoreline, if you're in the plains and you can see the horizon (the curvature of the horizon), there's a moment that occurs—and it can be anything from a split second to perhaps as long as a minute—when it arises. It's the same atmospheric phenomenon as you witness at the poles in the Northern Lights. The Northern Lights are happening because of magnetic and curvature of the atmosphere, trapping of particles, and it sets off these dancing lights that you can see in the Northern Hemisphere.

On the horizon, there comes a moment each day, as the sun and the earth are moving, that the very first bit of light emerges as this brief, dancing, green light—green flash—on the distant horizon. That moment marks the "new day" anciently. So when you saw that, it would designate that now the day has arrived. It's dark out. It will remain dark, but that instant, that flash, that atmospheric—

So if you're charged with being a watchman to designate when a religious observance is going to occur and it is relevant to mark the moment at which the new day arises or arrives, you're watching the horizon, and you're looking for that instant when it occurs. That instant—which is long before the daylight surrounds you and you have something other than the darkness of night on you—that instant is actually memorialized in one of the titles that's given both to the Lord and to his chief adversary, Lucifer; that's *a Son of the Morning*—because that moment marks the instant that the morning arises.

Christ's resurrection occurred **then**—on whatever the moment was that that occurred, on that morning, on the day of the resurrection—**that** was when the events were set in motion to honor that observance. And so, when they came to the tomb early that morning, it would be based upon **that** appreciation for how holy days (or days themselves) were reckoned and not based upon what we do with our clock and our reckoning. It was—it's tied to nature. It's tied to those circumstances that are built in as part of this creation.

And so, when the resurrection occurred, there's only one gospel writer that observes that it was still dark, and that's John; he points it out. It's been in the Bible all along. But in all honesty, to me, "morning" meant "sun's up," daylight; we could see about.

The account that appears in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* (now will appear as one of the sections in the Teachings and Commandments) was something shown to me that I recorded in my journal—and in fact, the content of that is quoted directly out of my journal. I do not like the idea that any story, any account, is to be trusted to recollection weeks/months/years after the fact. In one of the criticisms that we have about some history involving Joseph Smith is that they're later stories/later developments that got inserted into the narrative, and they weren't contemporaneous with him. So I don't trust anyone to record anything—or to preserve anything that I consider to be significant—other than myself, and I record it on the date in which it happened, at the moment that it occurred. And then if I, as was done with the book *Come, Let Us Adore Him* (or what is now part of the Teachings and Commandments), is later publicly disclosed ('cause those things were not publicly disclosed for years), then when they are, the only account that gets disclosed publicly are word-for-word, exactly what got written at the time in which the event took place. So you're getting the narrative and verbatim—exactly what was recorded **by the witness** on the day in which that occurred.

Now, when the stuff that just got added was shown to me as something that was proposed to be included, it lifted out a bunch of ellipses—you know, three dots (...). It lifted out a bunch of ellipses from the account that appears in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. And I said, For purposes of putting it out there as something to be looked at, reviewed, and respected in the future, just drop all the ellipses out. And so all the ellipses were dropped out. That's because there's a bunch of stuff that went on that's recorded in my journal (that is not in that account), that draws more attention and distracts away from what was important. What **is** important is in that account. The ellipses represent another moment of profound stupidity—ignorance on my part—that is in the journal account. But

I thought, There's no reason at all to focus on that. But I'll tell you about it so that you know what got lifted out. (I'm past the point of being embarrassed about my own stupidity. I acknowledge that all the time—including my wife just a day or so ago, which she reminded me of a couple of times this weekend.) What happened was—

As I was recording the account, at the point in which I'm trying to put into words the joy, the exultation, of our Lord—because He had finished the course; He had actually arrived at the point that culminates everything that had been expected of Him, and He'd done it perfectly—at that moment, in the journal, I wrote the words that "the joy that He experienced on that morning made the sufferings in Gethsemane pale in comparison." And as soon as I wrote those words, I felt instantly condemned. In fact, I had an angry God on my hands because that was not appropriate for me to have recorded. So it was so abrupt—it was so immediate—that I stopped writing altogether. I just drew a line in the journal, and I left, and I went to work.

I was haunted by that all day. And when I got back home, I got the journal out, and I wrote in there that what I wrote before was completely inappropriate because there is nothing that can make the suffering in Gethsemane pale by comparison. There simply is no joy, there is no triumph, that can make the obliteration of that thing that He endured on our behalf *pale*. It cannot pale. And so, once I confessed that I'd screwed up, then the condemnation lifted, and the account then continued and finished up. In between the ellipsis is my foolishness, and I saw no reason—in being required to bear testimony of the resurrection of the Lord—to insert into that me running around, ya know, marring the furniture and spilling Coke on the floor. I thought the best thing to do was to keep it focused exclusively—

The Lord did not make me a witness of His resurrection to have you focus any attention on me. It is all about Him and only Him; and therefore, the narrative needed to be excised to get the idiot-witness out of view and to put the Lord front and center and squarely within view.

It's another example, in my view, of just how ill-fitted I am to what's been asked of me. If I could lay hands on someone else's head and say, "There you are; now go get 'em," and drift off into the background and not occupy any public attention again, it would relieve me of an extraordinary amount of anxiety and self-questioning at every turn.

It's not enough to me to pray and get an answer. For me to pray and get an answer is an easy thing, but any answer that I get, I take it and I scrutinize it for motive, for desire, for my personal potential involvement with the content. I scrutinize it for any weakness of my own that may appear there. Then I take it to the scriptures, and I look for anything in there that could challenge, contradict, or raise an issue about what is recorded. And then when I'm satisfied that it is actually pure enough to be regarded as something that I can trust, then I take it back to the Lord to get re-confirmation before I'm willing to do or say anything regarding it. And there are many, many things that I've learned and been exposed to that I don't talk about. It's just not appropriate, and I assume that, at some

point, it will be the kind of material that the Lord reveals to each person individually as His (and His prerogative alone) and not something that belongs to us.

I also don't think that rapid-fire inquiries to God are appropriate. It's a fearful thing to approach the Lord, but it's also a fearful thing to then be entrusted with an answer from the Lord and to be accountable to Him for what you do (or you fail to do) with what He has provided. No one of us deserves the kind of responsibility that He alone can impose. No one deserves it. And anyone that feels the burden of it should fear their own weakness above anything and everything else. It's not cause for celebration. It's cause for questioning yourself, questioning your motives, and questioning whether or not—in the wisdom of the Lord—work can and should be done.

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Now there were some questions that were provided to me, and some of them were actually answered in the talk, and so they don't need to be answered again here. But there's one question:

Question: In your opinion are the people ready to have the commandment to build the temple in our day? Are we ready to have the commandment? If not, could you offer suggestions on what more we could do to prepare more completely?

Answer: Well, my opinion on that really doesn't matter because, unlike some other things, my view on that is that when you go to D&C section 124 (I don't know what it is in the T&C; I need that set of leather scriptures so I can learn my new layout—these things are too heavy and bulky to carry around), it's apparent—

They had decided on building a temple. They had chosen a location for the temple. They had begun digging at the spot for the temple **before** there was the inquiry and the commandment given in [section] 124, the January 1841 revelation. And the wording of the revelation says that "the spot that you have selected is acceptable" (see D&C 124:43-44). K?

If you think carefully about that language from the Lord, what it means is the Lord was willing to permit or entertain the ambition of the people, which doesn't necessarily mean that the people should have been doing what they were doing. It doesn't mean that the place was the right place, and it doesn't mean that God was going to protect it. It means that He will allow them to do that. And then He warns them that if they want Him to come and restore, and they want Him to come and vindicate, and if they want Him to protect them so that they cannot be moved out of their place, then they need to **do** things. And the things that they needed to **do** were a list of fairly specific things that they failed, subsequently, to do.

So, I think (I'm fairly certain) that I could pray and get permission to build a temple today. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to inquire. I'm not going to suggest one thing to the Lord about either a **location** for the temple to be built or **when** a temple

ought to be commenced in its construction. In my view, "asking and getting permission" are not the same thing as the angel Gabriel appearing next to the altar to respond to Zacharias and say, "The Lord is now going to redeem His people Israel, and you shall have a son, and he shall go before Him." It must—must—be at Heaven's initiative. It must be at Heaven's timing. It must be at the place chosen by the Lord.

Why is it reasonable to expect the Lord to defend—and the earth to defend—the spot that is **our** choosing? All of these things are a matter of covenant and a matter of prophecy—and their prophecies will be vindicated. The covenants will be fulfilled. God fully intends to do exactly what He has foretold will be done. But for us to push the envelope when this is **the** great temple on this hemisphere, this is **the** building to which **His** tabernacle (meaning His person) will come and occupy **that** tabernacle (meaning the temple built for the establishment of Zion)—it needs to be entirely entrusted to the care of the Lord and only to the care of the Lord. And so, the issue of what my opinion is, is—

My opinion was, No, of course not; we're not ready. I sat in on those meetings yesterday and took in things, and I was impressed. I was—we are—we **are** learning how to get along. In the scripture committee that I participated in, there are **very strong** personalities holding **very strong** opinions on a variety of **very important** topics, in which it's expected that people with strong personalities and strong opinions would dig their heels in. And I have to tell you, there were **lots** of discussions. There were **lots** of exchanges of points of view. I don't think there was ever a single dispute. There was **never** a fight. There was never an argument, even when it took time to come together. The process— I think everyone involved grew in ways that were extraordinary over the course of the whole thing.

And there were some people who came very late to the project and who came late after having spent years doing work that explored, more deeply, details that the other people who had been working on it for a couple of years had not plunged to that depth. And so when he came, you would think people that had spent a couple of years plunging into one level of understanding would sort of resent the newcomer who comes late to the party— and he was one of the younger fellows to participate—and yet, he was openly and warmly accepted, and all of his corrections and additions were welcomed. No one was egotistically involved in trying to get it their way. The only objective was to try to get it right. Everyone was keenly aware of how badly things had gone in the handling of the scriptures in 1833 and 1835, in 1840. Everyone was keenly aware of how mangled the text—in places, of all the volumes of scripture—had become and of how neglected the fullness of the scriptures, as defined by Joseph Smith, had been treated.

Literally, what is coming out in print is a historical marker, a milestone event in which, for the first time, what God intended to hand to people at the beginning of the restoration is finally capable of being handed to you. It is an historic moment that literally marks the beginning of a fulsome restoration. We now have scriptures upon which everything else will be possible to be built. That hasn't existed until now. It is a new beginning, and I'm not sure that what was said made it clear enough, but we're accustomed to the print on

demand publishing industry. You do not make this quality of a publication by printing it on demand. You have to order exactly the number of books that you want printed, and you have to pay for every one of them before you receive the delivery of any one of them.

Right now the price break is 1,400 copies. The cost of that many books being paid for before we get delivery of any one of them is so great that we're probably going to order 1,000 copies in order to eliminate the cost of paying in advance for an extra 400 of them, but it will cost more per copy for the 1,000. But in aggregate, it will cost less money to place that order than it will to get to the next price break. And so, the plan right now is to order 1,000 copies, and the mechanism for being able to do that is going to be to create a site at which you can purchase and pay for the scriptures in advance, so that you place the order for whatever volume you want (or volumes you want)printed. There'll be a set of three: a Old Covenants, a New Covenants, and a Teachings and Commandments—an order will be for all three volumes. If you want one copy, you buy one. If you want ten, you buy ten. If you want twenty, you buy twenty, but you pay for them in advance, and then it will be months later that they will be delivered.

Unlike what happens with typical book publishing, there's no markup on any of these. They have volunteers that are going to handle them. They'll have volunteers that will drive copies down to some cities where distribution will be made. All of the costs of handling are gonna be borne by voluntary work. Now if you're at a location where it has to be mailed, then the price to you will include the price of shipping to you as a direct cost. If these were handled the way books normally are handled in a scripture setting, the price of these to you would be probably double whatever the price is going to be as the order gets placed.

One of the things that we do not know right now is if there is enough demand to take advantage of the price break at 1400 copies so that we order and pay for 1400 copies to be made, or whether we're going to pay a little more per volume but only incur the total cost for getting a 1000 of them printed. But whatever it is in terms of that number, when those are printed and when those are sold, that's the end of printing the leather-bound version of the scriptures. There will be no plans for ever producing them again.

Undoubtedly there will be a second printing but that might be five years from now, that might be ten years from now. We don't know when there may be a second printing of the scriptures. So the first printing will be an ordered, funded, paid for, complete, first printing, and that's the only one that will exist—at least for some period of time, until demand drives a second printing. In the meantime, the way in which the scriptures will be available will be electronically (in your handheld), electronically (online on your computer), or a print-on- demand source that you can purchase through Amazon.

Yesterday, those who were present heard the report that the print-on-demand at Amazon has been taken down temporarily because all of the layout for the leather-bound scriptures are now completed. And those are being loaded into the Amazon print-on-demand version so that if you buy a paperback version from Amazon—the page, the

layout, the page number, everything about that will be identical with the leather-bound version because the same layout is going to be used for both of them. I don't know how you are with your scriptures, but for me, if I want to quote from D&C section 76, beginning with the description of the telestial—it's on right side, lower; it's about, beginning verse 99; and it's in your book; it's right there. Well, the utility of having the same layout for your paperback and for your leather-bound version is the ability to recall the page and the layout on the page from book to book to book, so that there's no mistaking what you're trying to find and where you're trying to find it. This version (the print version that I've used), I have not invested the effort to try and know the page number, know the approximate location, know the—where it's going to be on the page, because I've known that we're going to get a new layout. But when the leather-bound ones come out, I intend to pore over those to find/to discover the new material that's there and to find the old familiar stuff and relocate it. So when it becomes available for ordering, keep in mind that if you don't get one of these, it may be many years before it'll be possible to order them again.

Question: Okay, there was a question that was posed by Tim Malone about Layton Conference where I said:

God demands...our hearts turn to the fathers or we will be wasted at His return. This requirement is not to turn to them in just a figurative way, where we do genealogical work to connect ourselves with our recently deceased forbearers. That work is a wrong-headed effort to seal people to those kept in prison. The return of our hearts will require us to have the same religion, and the same beliefs in our hearts that the original fathers had beginning with Adam. Only in that way will our hearts turn to the fullness [fathers].

Then he says, Given the fact that the LDS church has spent hundreds of millions of dollars building temples specifically for the purpose of sealing individuals to their deceased ancestors, are you advocating that we cease family history research as a waste of time? If so can you provide some specific counsel how we could better utilize the time?

Answer: Okay, the answer is: I'm not saying you cease doing genealogical work. When work— Originally, umm...originally—[Denver chuckles.] How to put this—

The way in which temple work for the dead was intended to be done was that work of baptism for the dead was confined to only those ancestors you personally knew who you believed would have accepted the gospel with all their heart (had they been permitted to tarry) and were only kept from accepting the gospel because they died at a time before it was available for them to embrace. That's one category.

A second category was those ancestors about whom you have enough information from their diaries, their letters, their journals, or accounts of their life so that you believe them to be the kind of people that would have embraced the gospel had they lived at a time when the gospel in its fullness was on the earth. So that is a second category.

And then the third category was those ancestors who appear to you and asked that their temple work be done.

Those were the only ones for whom temple work was supposed to be done, according to the criteria that was established by Joseph Smith at the beginning. It was not a, "If you know a name, go get a baptism for 'em." That was never the criteria. The criteria was limited to those three specific categories of people.

The place in which genealogical research for your ancestors becomes most important is that second category, in which—through genealogical research—you may be able to locate an ancestor about whom there is enough that you can recover (as information or biography) to know that they were the kind of people who would've embraced the gospel had they been permitted to tarry long enough to have accepted the gospel in its fullness while it was on the earth. You can't figure that out unless you have genealogical research and something more than just a name on a name-extraction-program. It's gotta be someone about whom you've dug long and hard and deep—to find out about them and their lives—to make some kind of an evaluation about them, to make a judgment call. Otherwise, what you're left with are a bunch of names, and the only way to get those names in a position to do work is the third category—in which you know about their existence, but you have no way of telling whether they're suitable for the ordinance; and therefore, they must come and request it. They must appear, and they must make the request—and so they slide into that third category.

The second category can only be achieved through a lot of hard work and genealogical study. The first category you should know from your ancestors that you were familiar with. That probably goes back no further than perhaps a great-grandfather or, more likely, a grandfather or a grandmother. It may go to a great-uncle, a great-aunt. It may go to a deceased aunt. But the criteria was as was outlined, and the second category is where the genealogical work the Church invests money is apt, suitable, just fine.

Question: What words of encouragement can you give to someone whose spouse is not on board with what is happening now?

Answer: Look—first of all, unlike the scriptures that other groups of people accept, we actually have an answer to this in our scriptures. It's in the Teachings and Commandments, [section] 149, verse 3—it's paragraph 3:

Suffer no man to leave his wife because she is an unbeliever, nor no woman to leave her husband because he is an unbeliever. These things are evil, and must be forbidden by the authorities of the church, or they will come under condemnation, for the gathering is not in haste, nor by flight, but to prepare all things before you, and you know not but that the unbeliever may be converted and the Lord heal him. But let the believers exercise faith in God, and the unbelieving husband shall be sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving

wife by the believing husband, and families are preserved and saved from a great evil, which we have seen verified before our eyes.

That's one of the sections of the Teachings and Commandments that was from Hyrum Smith (who was, at the time, a president of the church—co-president, in fact—the prophet to whom Joseph said the church should give heed). That's the instruction.

And I mentioned Tim Malone; he's a great example of this. Tim and Carol Malone are separated, and he talks openly about that in the things he publishes, and he's true and faithful to her. He's doing the right thing. He's the right example. He's doing what Hyrum advised and what the Teachings and Commandments recommend that we do—and continue without haste.

Question: And then—oh, some guy named Adrian Larsen. I don't know. Shoot—you really wanna go *there*?

Question: This is decidedly limited in what is appropriate to be said, but the question is about: Since Christ came to fulfill the law, and the practice of animal sacrifice was done away with, and what we're to offer is a contrite broken heart and a contrite spirit as a sacrifice, and animal sacrifice was a type to teach the people of the coming Messiah—He fulfilled that. Why would animal sacrifice be reinstated?

Answer: OK, as— I don't want to get out ahead of where we are at this point, but let me say, it will be done for entirely appropriate purposes that will be perfectly satisfactory to the understanding of those that are involved. It's not gonna be some kind of temple-turned- slaughterhouse. It's not gonna be a production line in which the hems of your garments (and the blood shaking from the hems of your garment) becomes a cliché because of the abundance of the flowing of blood in the courtyards of the temple of Solomon and later the temple of Herod. It will be decidedly confined, limited, for purposes that will be adequately understood by those who, on the rare occasions when that practice is reinstated, participate, witness. But I think that's all that can be said. You won't be disappointed.

Question: We're separated from the first Fathers—to whom our hearts must turn—by a vast expanse of time, language, and culture. How can we best reach out in our hearts and our minds to these successful mortals?

Answer: You know, that's a great question. There is an enormous advantage that you'll find in reading the new scriptures and all of the things that have been added that focus upon that, both in the Old Covenants and in the Teachings and Commandments, in particular those two, where our knowledge of what the Fathers were up to is enormously expanded; and then in parts of the New Covenants that have been added through the Joseph Smith translation. I think the scriptures equip us to accomplish something that—

Study them; look there.

Question: In the "Elijah" talk, you made reference to the fact that Adam and Eve partook of the fruit out of order—that they were to wait until after the Sabbath; that partaking prior to the Sabbath caused work to be done on the Sabbath. Can you explain expand on this subject, please?

Answer: The problem was not that they were never going to be told—they were never gonna be told to partake to not to ever partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it's that they were forbidden to partake so that there could be a day of rest—a Sabbath. Everything was supposed to stand down. And then, after they stood down for the day of rest, on the first day of the next week, they were then to introduce the knowledge of good and evil in a way that would've been benign, in a way that would've transitioned from the original paradisiacal state into a state in which knowledge of good and evil and mortality itself could enter the world, much as it will be present during the Millennium among the righteous.

But instead, in an act of defiance (that resulted in them being kicked out of the Garden because of transgression)—and an act that caused labor then to occur on the Sabbath — they partook out of season in **obedience** to the one who seeks to **always** counsel people to rebel against the order of Heaven, to disobey and to set at naught the commandments and instructions of the Father, even when doing so means harm to yourself or to others—because the adversary is only interested in the destruction of people, even those who trust and rely upon him. He has no good end in mind for them. And so they partook out of the ordinary course. As a consequence, there was a fall.

The Fall introduced, on the Sabbath day, the mortal experience. And so, the seventh day—the day of rest—would then require six days of labor to precede their next day of rest, which always put the Sabbath out of sync because of the original rebellion—which is why the Lord was resurrected on what they thought was the first day of the week. It was, in fact, the first day of the week—according to **their** reckoning—and the seventh day of the week—according to the **original creation**—had everything been honored in the original commandment and instruction. And so the worshipers moved the Sabbath day from Saturday to Sunday, to that first day of the week(which was, in reality, simply restoring back the original violated time frame). And the early Christians observed, as the seventh day of the week, the correct day of worship, the day that we worship on, which is Sunday and not Saturday, although the tradition of following, in a number of places remains to do so on Saturday.

It's more important that you keep a day holy, that you set it aside as a day of worship, than it is to figure out the chronology of everything that's gone on. If it was so important for us to get exactly the right day of the week aligned with everything, then we'd all be John Pratt. [Audience laughter.]

Question: [This question was not read aloud; Denver read it silently and then answered it: "We are obligated to teach our children that God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman and that chastity is important. As the LDS church has employed various strategies to promote these values in recent years, suicide rates

among the young have climbed in Utah. Do you think this has to do with the way the LDS church has handled these issues, and if so, do you have any insights into what we might do differently to better help youth who struggle?"]

Answer: Oh, man. OK. Wow. Marriage. One man, one woman. Chastity is important, and there's accommodation going on everywhere to try and allow divergent forms of marriage to be acceptable or tolerated. And some of that is being done as a **desperate** measure to try and reduce suicide rates among young people, where suicide rates in Utah have climbed.

Let me, as clearly as I can put it: Wickedness never was and never will be happiness. There is—embedded into each of us [inaudible comment], as deeply as our DNA itself—a course in life which, if pursued in the proper way, will result in the bearing of children and a fullness of joy, experienced as a consequence of introducing offspring into the world for whom you are granted the challenge, the privilege, and the opportunity of nurturing and caring and teaching. These are things that stretch you beyond your comfort zone. These are things that will tear at your heart. These are challenges that will befuddle you, that will make you question and reevaluate and reconsider—time and time again—who you are and what you're saying and how you're treating these, your children.

The institution of marriage was designed—by its very nature, by that God who created us—to allow us to engage in that god-like process. It can be experienced in the way that God intended in one, and only one, way—that is, through the marriage of the man and the woman together; through their union that is intended to produce offspring; through **her** struggle to bear and bring forth the child; through **his** protection and providing for **her** during **her** period of inability and **her** period of nursing and caring for the infant (that is utterly dependent upon the body of the mother for its existence). All of these things are god-like. They are instructions; they are experiences that are intended to convey—through the mortal body and the mortal experience—things that replicate and reflect a divine perspective about life itself, about who God is. Because God is a male and a female, and they are productive; their love results in the creation of more life. They experience a fullness of joy, and when you have all joy in its fullness, the only way in which it is possible to make more joy is to create others in which they, too, can experience a fullness of joy. And so that increases through offspring, through family, through progeny.

You will not reduce suicide rates by pursuing a course that says wickedness can be entertained, the purposes of God can be frustrated, the experiences that God intended for us to go through and to have in this life can be set at naught, and you can approach the whole thing in a different mechanism in a different pretense. Because however deeply you may feel about that structure, at its core it is defective. It is desolation. It is a practice that if it were universally engaged in, then all who are here today will be the last generation that will ever live, because it produces desolation. And if, at the core of the relationship what you have is a desolate future, there is no amount of psychological treatment, anti-depressive medication, or lies you can tell to yourself that will make you

say, "What I'm engaged in is not, in the eyes of God, abominable." You cannot destroy that truth. If you want happiness—because of the way we were created by the Creator Himself—it is to be obtained by following the path ordained by the Creator to realize the results that He established in your heart, in your soul, in your spirit, in your body, even in your DNA. [Audience applause.]

Question: Did Emma know the same things that Joseph did? Was she taught from on high as he was? Was he allowed to share everything with her?

Answer: I would be shocked if Joseph Smith did not share everything with Emma. I would be shocked.

Question: [Reading] ...I think I've already covered that.

Question: I noticed a phrase—*pursue judgment*—in both the "Answer and Covenant" and in our Heavenly Mother's words, quoted in "Our Divine Parents."

Answer: *Pursue judgment* is that you pursue the treatment of others as you would have yourself be treated. You treat them in the same standard.

Question: Oh, I love this question: Share some more of the ways that nature testifies of Christ.

Answer: I hope you garden. If you don't, you should garden in order to experience all the plagues of Egypt [audience laughter], because that's what happens whenever I attempt to garden. There are these loathsome pests that will come along and consume and destroy and invade your garden. They'll eat everything except zucchini, as it turns out. And zucchini produces in such abundance and so quickly—and ripens so quickly—that all you're left with is a bag of seeds, and they're dreadful.

But there is a pest that invades the garden that will eat everything and destroy and wreak havoc that eventually entombs itself in a chrysalis. And the pest, while it's inside this apparent self-made tomb, has died, and gone away, but eventually, it will arise from that cocoon, from that tomb, and it will come out, and it has assumed a wholly different form. Unlike that loathsome creature—that crawled around, ugly and haltingly, across your garden, consuming and destroying—once it emerges from the tomb, it now takes flight. It's joined with the sky, with the heavens itself. And it goes about, thereafter, taking pollen and fertilizing the garden and becoming productive. Where before it had destroyed, now it helps create; now it becomes an agent that produces fruit, that produces vegetables. This little insect is a powerful sermon embedded in nature to testify of who Christ was and, more importantly, to testify of what Christ **did** that will affect **you**, that will turn **you** from what we are now into something glorious, heavenly, and capable of ascending in flight up on high.

Question: Oh, how does equality work when we're all given different gifts, abilities, and levels of understanding, some of which may be more outwardly manifest? Should we

encourage one another to use our gifts to benefit all, even though this makes us appear unequal?

Answer: Equal means that you do what you can do, to the best of your ability to do, for the benefit of all that can receive. Not everyone can do what someone with a gift or a talent can accomplish, but all can appreciate the benefits of that gift or talent. We're supposed to find joy, worship God, and bless our fellow man through the gifts that are given. In fact—I don't know what section it is now; I know what the old number was—but the gifts that are given, the Lord says, specifically, are given as a benefit for the church (the definition of the church being all those who repent and are baptized, not some institution). So the blessing that is given to one has been given in order to bless and benefit the lives of all others. And as a consequence of that, you're depriving the community of faith—of the gifts—when you don't do the best you can with the gifts you've been given. They are intended by you, to be a sacrifice by you, for the benefit of others. And if others look on and say, "Gee, I wish I could do that, but I'm not double-jointed, and I'm not interested in riding on one of those things," then, you know, you can admire the X-Games, but you don't have to join 'em.

We are going to break for lunch, and lunch will end at 2:30, at which time, Rob and Quintina Adolpho will be giving a presentation on recovering the lost sheep. This is something that both of them are earnestly engaged in and they addressed at a conference over in Hawaii a little while ago. I don't know how much background you have on the two of them, but Quintina is, among other things, a PhD and counselor and Blackfoot (and providing counseling services and care for the Blackfoot people on a reservation). So it will be more than worth your time, given the fact that the covenant requires that, among other things, we must reach out to recover the lost remnant of people on **this** land. And we have Q from this land and Rob from Hawaii, both of whom identify with native peoples in a way that would be helpful to any who care to come and attend and for **all** who watch the recording of this at a later time.

Thank you.

2019.05.18 8th Address to Christians

May 18, 2019

Montgomery, Alabama

I want to talk about religion—but I don't want this topic to be what it usually is, and that's a source of unease and friction and conflict and debate and discomfort and—I mean, religion is one of those things where we find it really easy to do two completely contradictory things: love religion—because we want to be close with God—and take offense at our neighbor—because their religious views differ somewhat from our own when, in fact, the Author of the religion is telling us all to love one another. If we've got Christ in common, we ought to be able to de-emphasize our dissimilarities and emphasize our similarities to find peace in Him.

If you study the events that occurred following the New Testament—that immediate generation following the New Testament; you can see it in the book of Acts; you can see in in the letters of the New Testament—Christ commissioned twelve apostles, and He sent them out with a message to bear about Him. But Christianity, in the immediate aftermath of Christ's life, had various kinds of Christianity. We had a Matthean Christianity that was based upon the teachings of Matthew. We had a Pauline Christianity that was based upon the teachings of Paul. We had a Petrine Christianity, and it was based upon the teachings of Peter. (It was the Petrine version of Christianity that ultimately got the broadest sweep that resulted in the formation of the Catholic Church.) But Christianity did not start out centralized. It started out "diffused." It's almost as if what Christ wanted to do was to get the word out and let everyone have in common some very basic things, in which we could find peace and love and harmony with one another—but outside of that, to explore, perhaps, the depths of what the message could be and not to have it insular, rigid, and one-size-fits-all.

We had during that very earliest period—

You had obviously-commissioned companions that had walked with Jesus, had been witnesses of His teachings. He had brought them aboard; they had heard the Sermon on the Mount; they had witnessed miracles. John (in his gospel) makes it clear that they weren't really up-to-speed with what Christ was doing and what He was about, because He would say things, and they wouldn't understand Him. From John's gospel, what happened was: it was retrospective; it was post-resurrection. When they knew—now—that Christ was going to come, He was gonna die, and He was gonna be resurrected, and then He was gonna ascend into heaven to be in a position of glory—that they looked back retrospectively and they say, "Ok, now I get it. Now I understand what He was talking about. Now those statements about the necessity that He suffer come full circle, and we get it." But walking with Him during this time period, they were really not tuned in to comprehending what the Savior was intending to do and ultimately would do.

Then after all that, we've got this guy who is a persecutor of the Christians and an opponent of Christianity who—on his way with a commission to try and bring Christians to justice— on the road to Damascus, gets interrupted in what he's doing:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [Now it's] hard for [you] to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:4-5; see also Acts 5:8 RE). The pricks were what you'd use to drive the donkey—if it kicked, it impaled itself, and it could be a fairly nasty wound; they didn't kick without suffering. And Christ is telling him, "That's what you're— You're like a mule; you're so mule-headed about what you're doing, and you're actually doing something that is, ultimately, going to be to your harm." So Paul comes aboard—he's told to go to *Cornelius* [Ananias]; he goes to *Cornelius* [Ananias]. He gets baptized, and then scales fall from his eyes (he's been blinded for a while). "Scales" are a great word—as an English translation—because they not only imply, potentially—like the scales of a fish; like a contact lens that's opaque, and you can't see through it. But they also imply judgment—that Paul's judgment about things were was wrong, and the scales needed to be put aright.

So Paul comes aboard. But Paul is just as much what Paul was "before" as he was "after." And so Paul and Peter never do quite get on the same page. And Paul writes that he *"withstood [Peter] to [his] face, because he was to be blamed"* (Galatians 2:11; see also Galatians 1:6 RE), which makes it clear that you can be a Pauline believer in Jesus Christ, witness of His resurrection, and in communion with Him; and you can be Peter, who walked with Him and was told, upon the foundation (that he was part of), that this church would be built. And you can authentically be Christian in both cases and the two of you absolutely not agree on much of anything. So Christ set up, at the beginning, a Christianity in which there was a necessary diversity, a necessary broad-mindedness, a necessary tolerance.

The apostle Peter would write about coming into the union of faith. It's a theme that you see in James; it's a theme that you see in Paul—about **growing** into unity. So, why would we have a Christian establishment, at the outset, in which we have this diversity of thought, with the expectation that you will **grow** into unity—and we're told *"love one another; as I have loved you...love one another"* (John 13:34; see also John 9:5 RE). So, why would it be set up that way if Christianity was simply supposed to be "mutually-opposing camps with differing points of view," in which your-particular-brand-of-Christianity will ex-communicate their-brand-of-Christianity, and your-brand-of-Christianity will denounce (as "the great whore") Catholicism, instead of everyone saying:

- What has the Lutheran group observed about Christianity that can help bring light, knowledge, and understanding to me?
- What has Catholicism preserved from their traditions that can help enlighten my understanding, because it's a treasure that we have not preserved in our own right?
- And what is it within the Baptist movement that has developed a keen insight into some of the most penetrating beliefs that Christ taught?

Why do we separate into denominational differences and hold this hostility towards one another?

One of the things that I personally believe in is that you have to take the money out of religion in order for religion to ultimately be its greatest self. I believe that in order to have faith, you have to sacrifice for your faith. That means that no one can or should pay me for anything I do as a religious individual. I have to sacrifice to come here. I have to sacrifice to prove my belief in Christ. No one gets to pass a plate, collect money, and give it to me. I have an obligation, instead, to donate, to sacrifice, to serve.

We have an incipient group of people—very small—but people that believe that we do have an obligation to give tithes and offerings. But we collect tithes and offerings in very small groups, and once the money's collected, then within the group, the question is asked, What are the needs; who among us has a need? And if there is a health need, if there's a food need, if there's a housing need—the money is used to benefit those that are in need among the household of faith. And no one gets to be paid. The reason why Catholic priests are hostile to Lutherans, and Lutherans are hostile to Methodists, and Methodists hostile to Baptists, and Baptists hostile to the Church of Christ is because the clergy of the respective denominations have a financial stake in making sure that their version of Christianity survives.

I went out to a Christian Evangelical conference in Memphis, Tennessee a couple weeks ago—again, on my own nickel.

[Stephanie Snuffer:] Nashville.

[Denver:] Oh, it was Nashville.

[Stephanie:] Not that it matters.

[Denver:] Yeah—no, it was Nashville. It was a national conference, lasted for days. Went out with some Evangelical folks, met some new Evangelical friends; and our last day there, when we were on our way to the airport, the driver was a retired Air Force Chaplain. (He'd been enlisted; he left, used the GI bill to get through ministerial school, became a Chaplain, came back in as a Captain, served his twenty years, retired.) After he was retired, he went to work as a Methodist church leader—I think Bishop; he was ordained to something—and he led a Methodist congregation in South Carolina until he retired again. And he was being paid retirement from both the Air Force and from the Methodist church because their clergy have a financial setup in which they're not only compensated during their time of ministry, but they're then also compensated in the retirement. So, he's all on board with Methodism, and that's just the way things work in this world.

During the period of time between that very first generation of Christianity and 324 AD, when Constantine determined that it was a mistake to have made Christianity the religion of Rome (because they were in disagreement), and his internal strife was not going to be solved by making Christianity (he thought it was **one** religion)—

The factions were so opposed to one another over teachings that they literally were—Christians were killing Christians. And so the answer to the need of the Roman empire to have a "state religion that would unify" was not going to be served. And so he had (what is called by the "historical Christian movement"—and that includes everyone, it includes all denominations—they called it) the First Great Ecumenical Council. He summoned all the Bishops to Nicea; he put them under arrest, and he told them they could not leave until they reached an agreement on some fundamentals of what the Christian faith was so that once that was adopted, we had an orthodoxy. And they nearly got unanimity, but there were a handful that would not agree, and they were exiled from Rome. So they had a state religion that was now agreed upon.

If you look at what are called the ante- (or the "prior to"), the ante-Nicene fathers—and you read the works of the ante-Nicene fathers, there are a lot of teachings that were still left over from that first generation that began to evaporate once you reach the 324 AD time period. It still required years of conflict—and many more years of death and killing — before Christianity settled down into a stable form that you could call "orthodox."

During the time period prior to 324, there were multiple kinds of Christianity. One of them gets identified as "proto-orthodox." The reason the one form is regarded as proto-orthodox is because it will eventually win the battle. Once it's won the battle, then you can go back in hindsight and you can say, well, that was the one that was the predecessor to what will become orthodox Christianity over time. That was the Petrine church—or the Petrine view—which emphasized priestly authority, which emphasized the necessity of a priestly intervisor.

That view held sway until a split that occurred at about a thousand [1000] AD between the East and the West, between Constantinople and Rome, between two Bishops who were vying for primacy. And so you have the Orthodox Christianity that spread into Eastern Europe and into Russia—the Greek Orthodox Church being part of that; the Russian Orthodox Church being part of that—and once again, they preserved some teachings in Christianity that got dropped off the table in the Western church (or the Catholic church)—doctrines that you don't hear much about.

You get down another 500 years to 1517 [1517] AD, to the time of Martin Luther, and Martin Luther comes along a devout—

He was a sincere, a religious man as ever lived in the Catholic faith. He believed. And he believed with all his heart—believed so much, that he saw signs in his life of God intervening to do things. He saw miraculous events that showed him that God was walking with him. Martin Luther went to Rome and was horribly disappointed by what he saw as corruption and as profiteering and as something that could not possibly be true because these men were doing vile things—prostitutes were at court with Bishops; everything about what was going on was unseemly.

But Martin Luther believed. In fact, in the universe of Martin Luther's Christianity, salvation required a priest "to save." If you did not have a priest, you could not access

salvation. And so Martin Luther's dilemma was, "Is it possible—is it even possible to be a Christian, separate from the clergy that comes down from the time of Christ? Is that even possible?"

Reading in the New Testament in the book of Romans, he comes across the passage that says it is by grace that you are saved; it's through the instrumentality of faith; and that faith is, in itself, the means for salvation. So Martin Luther conceives the idea that salvation just might be possible, separated from the Catholic clergy, if you rely upon the grace of Christ and the faith that you have in Him. And so Martin Luther took the brave step of trusting what he had read, and he founded the Protestant movement, based upon the concept that it is possible to be saved separate from, then, a hierarchy that's grounded in Rome. Well, that separation began—

As soon as you have Lutherans, you're inviting someone else to come along—like John Calvin—to say, "Wait a minute. You've got part of the idea, but you don't have it really in place." You have John Wesley; you have Zwingli; you have a number of Protestant leaders, all of whom say, "Yeah, Martin Luther got one thing right, but he didn't get **everything** right." And so immediately, you begin to divide up, and the Protestant movement morphs into dozens—and then hundreds and now thousands—of different denominational divisions that are saying, "Yes, BUT—all those other churches got some things right, BUT! There's still something that they've omitted that needs to be done."

So, I was raised by a Baptist mother, and I was shown the Baptist religion from my youth. I never joined the Baptist Church. My next door neighbor, my best friend, was a Catholic altar boy—Rick was a Catholic altar boy! And so was Wayne. (You'd need to know those two guys before you understand how broad-minded Catholics are about their altar boys.) And so, on occasion, I would go to Rick's church. Mary was really devoted and (his mother) —Rick was just a pedestrian that happened to be, on occasion, in the Catholic church. I was always interested in religion. I always thought there was something to this—that Christianity has a core that is true. I believed that. Over the years, the more I have examined it—

I'm an attorney, and I do trial work. In the courtroom, witnesses of an event (if they're telling the truth) will agree in broad-brush and will disagree on details. If they agree on all the details, someone's lying, because that's not the way witnesses work. Witnesses

If you're standing on one side of the street and you see an accident, and you're standing on the other side of the street and you see the same accident, what is left on one is right on the other. They will disagree, if nothing else, from the vantage point from which they observed it. You also have the tendency to focus on "something," as opposed to "everything." And if everyone is focused on a different "something," the story that you will get from people—swearing to tell the truth, under oath—will be different versions; same general theme, same large-picture outcome, but they will disagree many times on the details.

"Oh, I didn't notice that"—because that's the way humans are. "I didn't notice that. I didn't hear that. You're sure he said—he really said that? Because when he was speaking, he said **this**, and I know he said **this**. The reason I know he said **this** is because **that** struck me to the heart. And when he said that, I was thinking back about twenty things in my life, and so when I tuned back in—you're telling me that one of the things I missed is what you heard about **that**? I find that astonishing! I wish I'd heard it." My story and your story and the next person's story of the event (if they're authentic, in the courtroom), you will always find details are different. Same major theme.

Jesus Christ had a group of witnesses in a **single** generation—in a **single generation!** This isn't a work of fiction! You have **four** different gospel accounts that come into being **in a single generation of time**, in which they all agree on the massive truth that this was the Son of God who came into the world to be the sacrificial lamb, who died—He was rejected and died—and who was resurrected and ascended into heaven. All four of them agree on that. And yet, only Matthew has the Sermon on the Mount. Some of them mention feeding five thousand; some of them mention feeding seven thousand; and some of them mention both. But not all of them mention everything. There are differences. It's what you would expect if you're dealing with an authentic account of a real person that lived a real life and left behind people who were so astonished by what they witnessed from this man that they wrote accounts. And whereas, before, they were cowering, and they were running, and they were denying that they knew that man, after His resurrection (and they witnessed that), they went forth boldly and proclaimed who He was, performing miracles themselves, based upon the name of Jesus Christ. **Something** actually happened. And that **something** was the life of Jesus Christ. And these men went willingly; whereas, before they ran and hid, after His resurrection—after they became acquainted with Him—they went willingly to their deaths as witnesses of Him.

So I believed that there was something authentic about Christianity. I just wasn't quite sure about the brand of Christianity that my mom, a Baptist, was teaching me in my youth. I also—going down to the Catholic Church—was skeptical. (It was Pope John VI —was the pope back then; seemed like a decent enough chap. The first Catholic pope that impressed me was Pope John Paul I. That guy was—he was a fan of Mark Twain's, ok? Pope John Paul I was the greatest pope that ever lived, as far as I'm concerned.)

I thought there was something missing from the Baptist faith. I thought there was something theatrical and hollow, even inauthentic, about what I saw in Catholicism—not because the pageantry wasn't depicting something noble and great and wonderful, but because the players weren't always up to the job of carrying off the pageantry. There were times when it appeared to me that the last thing the priest in Mountain Home, Idaho was interested in was celebrating the service—the Mass. He did it anyway, and it was lifeless. His heart wasn't in it. And so, it seemed to me, hard for that to drive religious conviction if the heart of the priest is not in the celebration of the Mass. The Baptists were always into the celebration of what they do because it's based upon a sort of charismatic movement, in which enthusiasm is expected—an expected part of it. But I remember the pious gestures, the things from the pageantry of Catholicism that

depicted things, that depicted holiness—and I believe there is holiness. I honestly believe there to be holiness. But I think it is hard to imitate it, instead of authentically be it. That's why a Mother Theresa stands out as a global figure because she didn't imitate it. And Mother Theresa stands as evidence that there is such a thing as Catholic holiness.

Another one that stands out in history as an authentic evidence of Catholicism having holiness is St. Francis; St. Francis believed and accepted the Sermon on the Mount. He lived the Sermon on the Mount. He went to Rome to get an order commissioned by the pope, and the pope laughed at him and said, "You can't—you can't get anyone to live the Sermon on the Mount." He said, "I would give you an order if you could come back here and bring with you twelve men who would be willing to live the Sermon on the Mount." (St. Francis was the guy that—if you saw him in the cold in winter and you gave him a coat—he would wear that coat until he ran into someone that had a greater need than he; and then he would give away his coat to the person in need. When he decided that he was going to become a priest, his father—who was a wealthy man—went and intervened and said, "You can't do this—everything about you, I paid for! You are utterly dependent upon me, and I refuse to let you go do this." St. Francis took off all his clothes, handed it to his father, and came to the clergy a poor and naked man—literally. He was a devout man.) When he came back to the pope with twelve believers, the Franciscans were commissioned, and the order of the Franciscans came into being.

The current pope is named after St. Francis. I think St. Francis was an authentic Christian. In the last two months of St. Francis' life, he reported that angels were visiting with him. There are a lot of people that dismiss that end-of-life spiritual experience (and telling tales of angels and visits and such things) as, you know, the frailties of a dying body. I don't think so, in the case of St. Francis. I think that he was ministered to by angels.

There's an expression—it's found in places some of you would find dubious—but there's an expression about how some people do not "taste death." The statement that they do not taste death doesn't mean they don't die. It just means that their death is sweet because they die in companionship with those on the other side who bring them through that veil of death in a joyful experience. There are a handful of people who have reported that, as they were dying, angels came and ministered to them. I think all authentic Christians, in any age, belonging to any denomination—I don't care what the denomination is—I think all authentic Christians who depart this world find that death is sweet to them and that they are in the company of angels as they leave this world. And I don't think it matters that the **brand** that you swore allegiance to—and you contributed your resources to support—matter anywhere near as much as whether you believe in Christ, whether you accept the notions that He advances about the Sermon on the Mount, and whether you try to incorporate and live them in your life.

Jesus took the Law of Moses as the standard. What the Sermon on the Mount does is say, "Here is the standard, but your conduct should not be merely **this**. '*Thou shalt not kill*' (Exodus 20:13) is not enough—you must avoid being angry with your brother; you

must forgive those who offend you; you must pray for those who despitefully use you." Just refraining from murdering one another, with a reluctant heart, bearing malice at them—"Well, I didn't kill the guy, but I got even!"—that's not enough! That's not the standard that Christ is advancing. "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14) is not good enough—don't look upon a woman to lust after her in your heart. Jesus is saying, "Here's the law. And you can do all of those things and be malevolent; you can be angry; you can be bitter; you can be contemptible; you can hold each other out as objects of ridicule. Its purpose is to make you something more lovely, more wonderful, more kindly, more Christian."

Christ says to be like Him. The Sermon on the Mount is an explanation of what it's like to be like Him. St. Francis made the effort of trying that, of doing that. I suspect that the first time St. Francis gave away a coat in the middle of winter to someone else, that it pained him. He probably felt the biting sting of the cold and thought, "How wise is this that I'm doing?" Because it's always hard to accept a higher standard and to implement it for the first time. But I suspect by the hundredth time he'd done that, he didn't feel the cold anymore; he felt the warmth in his heart of having relieved the suffering of another person. Because the practice of Christian faith involves the development of Christian skill and the development of Christian charity in a way that changes you. You don't remain the same character that you were when you began the journey! You become someone absolutely and fundamentally different.

So, while I was in the Air Force, away from home, I was attending a University of New Hampshire night-class—some kind of organizational behavior class. Having grown up in Idaho, I knew what Mormons were, and this professor, Cal Colby (he's from Brandeis University, but he was teaching a night class for the University of New Hampshire) just gratuitously started attacking Mormons. And my honest reaction was, "What the hell are you talking about Mormons in New Hampshire for? That's a local infestation somewhere out in the West, and there's no—there's none of that going on here." And in the middle of his diatribe, a guy raised his hand, and Colby called on him. And a fellow named Steve Klapproth defended—because he was Mormon—defended Mormons. I made the mistake afterwards of saying to the fellow (I didn't know his name at the time, but I know him now—Steve), "Good job!" I always hate it when a person in a position of strength picks on someone in a position of weakness, and so I went to the guy that was weak and said, you know, "Good job!" He mistook this for interest in his religion. And I wound up (trying to be polite), I wound up being hounded, literally—pamphleteered, missionaries coming. It was—it was gosh awful.

Well, I left New Hampshire on what's called "Operation Bootstrap," where they send you to college. I went to Boise State University. The Air Force paid for me to go to school. I came back. When I came back there was this campout; the campout was at the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont. And I went to the campout. There was a book that was in the Visitor's Center, and they gave me a copy of that book for free. Steve says, "You should read this." I read that. And at that moment, I was surprised because my reaction to Mormonism had been very, very negative. But the ideals that were expressed in this one statement were lofty and noble and Christian and charitable,

and I wanted to know, "Where did this come from?" It was something that Joseph Smith had written; a revelation that Joseph Smith had received.

Well, I got baptized for the first time in my life on September the 10th of 1973, into the Mormon church. I was a Mormon until September the 10th of 2013—forty years to the day. And on the 40th anniversary of becoming a Mormon, I was excommunicated from the Mormon church.

So, I don't say this to sound like I'm bragging or exaggerating, but I do not know anyone alive today that knows as much about Mormon history as I do. Because while I was part of that, and then afterwards, still, I've read every historical document that I can get my hands on; I've read everything that Joseph Smith said that got recorded, wrote, or transcribed when he had a scribe writing for him. My understanding of Mormon history is encyclopedic, really.

There's a thing that goes on in Salt Lake City called the Sunstone Symposium. It's run by people who are, basically, renegade Mormons—intellectuals—and it started out being friendly to the Mormon church; it grew into outright hostility and anger towards the Mormon church; and then it converted into a mixed bag. And some of it is pro; some of it is con. And I've spoken at the Sunstone Symposium. One of the things I've presented was a paper about Brigham Young, in which Brigham Young's megalomaniacal-presiding over Mormonism (during the late 1840s, into the early 1850s) and the excesses that went on during that time period—including murders that occurred on Brigham Young's watch—were laid out. Sunstone asked the Dean of Mormon History—the guy that is most respected, Thomas Alexander—to respond to my paper. And Thomas Alexander came and responded to my paper. I was talking about Brigham Young's literal regarding of himself as an actual king from the time they got out of the valley in 1847, until the time he was deposed by the Army of the United States as the territorial governor in 1857. I was talking about that period of time. Thomas Alexander got up and said, "No, Brigham Young didn't believe those things because he said things in 1860 and in 1870..." and he read the quotes from 1860 and 1870. Well, as soon as he was deposed as governor he knew he wasn't king. All 1860 and 1870 have to contribute is the fact that Brigham Young ultimately managed to grapple with reality because he had been deposed. But what he was saying in that early time period is exactly what he meant. So after Thomas Alexander got through with his rebuttal paper, I got up and, for five minutes, dismantled the Dean of Mormon History's view.

The Mormon church is a cult. It is not an authentic Christian organization. But I believe that you can find Christians who are Mormons. I believe that you can find Christians in every denomination that are out there. I believe that there is an authenticity to belief in Christ that transcends every denomination that's out there. I wrote books about the history of Mormonism that expose many of the things that the Mormon church represents to be true—I show to be false, including their authority claims; including their [in]consistent following of what the founder of Mormonism stood for, believed in, and practiced himself.

Joseph Smith raised the largest Army. The largest standing Army in the United States in 1844 was under the command of Major General Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois. Literally, he could have taken on the United States Army and defeated them. And do you know what Joseph Smith did with a standing Army larger than anyone else in the United States; larger than the federal government; larger than any of the state militias? Do you know what he did? He disarmed his soldiers; he turned the canons over to the state of Illinois; he surrendered to the governor of the state of Illinois; and three days later, he was murdered while he was in jail. He would rather personally die or give up his life than to have people on both sides of a fight die as a consequence of a religious dispute.

In 1837, Joseph Smith was in Missouri; and while he was in Missouri, hostilities broke out between Mormons and Missourians. Part of the problem with the hostilities was that leaders around Joseph Smith were spoiling for a fight—literally, spoiling for a fight. Guy named Sidney Rigdon who was a counselor to Joseph Smith gave a speech in which he said, If you people show any more aggression towards us, we're gonna wage a war of extermination, and we will wipe all you Missourians out. It's called the Salt Speech; it was delivered on July the fourth of that year. It's an incendiary talk.

There was a Mormon named Sampson Avard who went about provoking hostilities with the Missourians. Sampson Avard was a Mormon, and he had a group that he called the Danites (based upon the tribe of Dan—the blessing that is given to Dan in the 49th chapter of Genesis talks about Dan being an asp in the way that bites the horses; it's a preamble of the violence that the tribe of Dan would render in the posterity of Dan—so Sampson Avard took the name "Danites" as his group). And they began to retaliate by burning houses, burning fields, stealing cattle, stealing hogs, bringing them back. Joseph Smith found out about it, and he demoted Sampson Avard. He was relieved of all responsibility, and Joseph made him a cook. So the guy who was the militant leader is now a cook.

Hostilities ultimately did break out. It was inevitable that there be retaliations. Each side were saying that they were the victim, and the governor of Missouri said, "We're gonna wage a war of extermination," quoting what the Mormons had said in that July 4th talk. And so Mormons were expelled from the state of Missouri. The militia was outside Far West, Missouri (a town called Far West). Joseph Smith and his family, friends, and Mormons were inside Far West. They had a defensive position from which they literally could have caused so many casualties that the militia could never have overrun the town. The cost in blood would have been too high. Joseph Smith surrendered and told his people to surrender their arms, and he deflated the tension.

He was taken into custody by the state of Missouri; he was charged with treason against the State for fomenting rebellion. And they had a series of hearings trying to get witnesses to prove that Joseph Smith should be held for trial on the charge of treason. And no one—no one—could prove that Joseph Smith was involved with any of the hostilities, until the guy who actually caused the hostilities, Sampson Avard, came to the

courthouse to testify—to blame Joseph Smith for everything he [Sampson Avard] had done.

And so Joseph Smith was held over on the charge of treason, based upon the testimony of the guy who knew what cattle were stolen, what hogs were stolen, what fields were burned (that he was responsible for.) And he simply said that all that—that Joseph engineered that. And so, based upon the testimony of traitors, Joseph Smith was held in prison for a period of six months, over a winter time-period in an unheated dungeon that had bars but no glass on the windows. And they suffered for six months in a Missouri prison.

He was allowed to escape and get back to his people, all of whom had been driven out of Missouri. But while he was in prison—and while he had the opportunity to think about everything—Joseph Smith composed a letter from Liberty Jail that breathes with the spirit of Christian compassion, forgiveness, love, kindness, and refraining from abusing others. This is a man who got betrayed by his friends, and he turns around and shows—for his friends—compassion.

One of the books that I've written is called *A Man Without Doubt*. In it, I set up the historical context out of which Joseph Smith produced the three longest writings of his own in his life. It's a letter from Liberty Jail; it's Lectures on Faith; and it's a statement of his own history because the church historian had stolen all the manuscripts. Time and time again, the worst enemies of Joseph Smith were Mormons—people that claimed to follow the religion that he was developing.

Joseph Smith, in my view, is authentically Christian the same way as Saint Francis is authentically Christian. The problem is (and it is an enormous problem)—the problem is that everyone outside of the Mormon world looks at him as the property of the LDS Church. They look at him as if he were accurately represented by a group of people that, time and time again, he condemned and, time and time again, betrayed him. *A Man Without Doubt* is an attempt to let people see Joseph Smith as a Christian, divorced from the LDS Church or any of the splinter Mormon groups, and to see him, potentially, as an authentic Christian—in the same way that I think Martin Luther and John Wesley—even John Calvin, although Calvin was so militant, he's kind of a drummer that scares me a little—nevertheless, he was authentically Christian.

I think that everyone who sacrifices for the cause of Christ can help contribute to my understanding of what it means to follow Christ—because people who follow Christ bear the evidence of that discipleship in the way in which they walk and the things that they do and the things that they give up—in how they discipline their heart and how they discipline their mind; in how they treat one another. When you find someone whose life bears evidence that they are authentically Christian because of what they **do**; they are authentically Christian because of what they **say**—

Christ said it's not what goes into the mouth that proves you're unclean. It's what comes out. What do you say? How do you display the grace of God in your life? I can tell you

one way you **don't** display the grace of God—and that's by condemning merely because of their affiliation with one Christian group or another, condemning them as being inauthentically Christian.

Christ looks upon the inner person. All of His parables—all of His parables suggest there's something very different about authenticity and inauthenticity. There are ten virgins—well, what are virgins a symbol of? If Christ is using the virgin as a symbol, He's talking about good people. These are good religious people; they have to be. And of that group, only five were allowed in.

There's a wedding feast—and at the wedding feast, He invites friends, and they don't come. Well, who are the friends of Christ that are invited to come to His wedding feast? And they don't come. They don't come because their hearts aren't right; their words aren't right; their mind isn't right; they are not authentically what Christ is trying to have us be. But He invites, and they don't come—because they will not be His. And so He goes out, on the highways and the byways, to try and find anyone that will come. And "anyone that will come" suggests that, well, they could be a Samaritan. Think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan from the perspective of a Jewish audience—they were nothing but apostates! And yet he uses the **apostate** as the illustration of authentic Christian discipleship. They invite in—off the highways and the byways—strangers, people that you don't expect to be invited 'cuz they're not at your church every week; they're going to some other place or, perhaps, no place at all. And yet, they're invited in, and they're allowed to remain, so long as they have on the wedding garment. In other words, if they come, having donned the mantle of authentic Christianity, they're welcome—they're welcomed. We care and we fight about religious issues that are of no moment at all to Christ. And we do that because we're paying clergymen every week to rile us up so that we'll stay loyal to them and their congregation— and we'll contribute, and we will view one another with fear and non-acceptance.

You take the money out of Christianity, most ministers would go into politics. They would not hang around. I'm not lying—they have done polls of Christian ministers to ask them if they believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was resurrected. The majority of Christian ministers do not have faith; what they have is a career. And they can't abandon their career. "If I leave your employ, what's gonna become of me? Because I'll be a poor man." And so they stay employed, preaching what they don't believe. It's one of the reasons why I think Father Ordway—in Mountain Home, Idaho—made the gestures, and his countenance was devoid of the holiness that should be expressed, of the joy that should be expressed. I saw that in my friend Rick's mother, Mary. I saw in her that fire of belief, that devotion. I didn't see it in Father Ordway.

Well, I'm trying to get people to consider the possibility that authentic Christians could come from anywhere, among any people—and that we can fellowship with one another. And that it is even possible to fellowship with one another, even independent of an employee-hireling priest—in which we study together; we worship together; we rejoice in Christ together; we try to figure out how to be more authentically Christian in what we do, and what we say, and how we treat one another, and how we view one another.

And then to take the next step and to contribute our tithes and our offerings to a group of believers to help believers, to help each other—so that it's not just the support of the clergy and the support of the buildings, and the support of the programs—but it's also helping the fatherless and helping the mother who has no one to help her. And to have Christianity, not just theoretically modeled in feel-good sermons, but actively part of life and part of how we deal with and treat one another, in which we all say, "We've all sinned; we've all fallen short of the glory of God, but let's **not** let **that** cause **me** to condemn **you**. Let's not let **that** stop **me** from trying, in as authentic a way as I can, to be charitable or kindly to you, and you to me, and us to the people in need among us." Because if there were ever an authentic group of people who are Christian who were helping one another, the appeal of **that** would cause everyone who comes into their midst to have a change of heart. They'd want to be part of that; they'd want to live that kind of life because there's no better life than the one that Christ taught us to model in the Sermon on the Mount.

Anyway, I've talked for an hour—and my experience teaches me that when you've had people sitting and listening to you for an hour, you're a wicked and despicable man if you make them sit and listen to you any longer. So, unless there's anything that someone wants to talk about, ask about—

I really do know a lot about Mormon history, and it's not at all what the Mormon persona is represented to be—either by the church itself or by its critics. In some ways, its history is much worse than the critics tell you. And in some ways, the very beginning of it was much different and much better than what they represent.

I believe that Brigham Young introduced the practice of plural wives. I believe that Joseph Smith was an ardent opponent of that. I believe that Joseph Smith has been falsely portrayed because Brigham Young didn't think he could bring that into the practice unless he laid it at the feet of Joseph Smith. And I think there's been a lot of history in Mormonism that tries to lay at the feet of Joseph Smith responsibility for the things that traitors and treacherous and evil men did—and escape responsibility for it by saying:

"Joseph taught it."

"Oh, he taught it in private."

"Oh, he lied to the public."

"He lied to the public about it, but in private he practiced it, and he taught it."

And I have to tell you, Joseph Smith was not that kind of man. I read the letters between Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma. Emma was a stronger personality than Joseph. Emma was his trusted counselor and guide. Joseph deferred to her; he took advice from her; he took counsel from her. She was better educated than him. The stories that have been attributed to Joseph Smith—

You should read *A Man Without Doubt*. You should go back and reconsider whether what **you** think Joseph was, is it all supportable by a true-telling of history—because I

don't think it is. And that's one of the reasons why I'm an excommunicated Mormon because—

Because I think the truth is valuable, and it's worth searching out.

2019.06.08 Remarks at the 2nd Annual Joseph Smith Restoration Conference

June 8, 2019

Boise State University, Boise, Idaho

Clearly—

I don't know, can you hear me? Is this mic good?

Clearly, most of you are not familiar with the writings of Hunter S. Thompson, or you would have been a little surprised by him being quoted here: the father of "Gonzo journalism" and the author of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*—a laugh-out-loud funny, but obscene, book. [Audience laughter]

I've enjoyed every talk that has been given today:

- The first one was the recorded testimony of Tony Davis, who essentially made a plea for us to unite, which has been echoed then in every talk that has been given at the conference this year. This is the second year of this conference. And I have to tell you, last year it felt like we were trying to pull into different camps, and this year it feels very much like we're all trying to pull into one camp. In just one year of reflecting on this subject—remarkable differences. I would suggest all of you go listen to the talks last conference, and then listen again to this conference. There has been **meaningful** progress that has been made.

(Jeremy, you dropped something when you pulled your... Yeah, he's good.)

- I learned something from Neil Simon's talk.
- I noted the omission of Jeremy Hoop's musical number from the schedule. I don't know if that's an answer to prayer—his or ours. [Audience laughter]
- I thought Michael Kelly's comments were, to me, very insightful—I do not know a lot about the Church of Christ and the Temple Lot, and I'm interested now to know if the view expressed by Michael Kelley is a widespread view within that community, or it's his conclusion as a result of the tension that you feel from trying to parse through Mormon history. And I intend to investigate that after today.
- I thought James McKay's reminder about the vigor of the Book of Mormon as a tool for conversion was important.
- Jeremy's talk (delivered much too fast because of the time constraints) contained fabulous information that everyone ought to go back and listen to and look at. [Speaking to Jeremy:] Was that in writing? If it is, can you put the written copy out? That was getting a drink with a fire hose. [Audience laughter]
- Tausha's "Time to Unify the Branches" was wonderful.
- The music "Come Thou Font"—that song gets to me.
- And Adrian's "Why We Need to be Wrong" was terrific.

I want to go to the Book of Mormon, and I want to look at what it says **as if** the Book of Mormon was only written **to address us, to address you**, to speak to people who not only have become believers in the Book of Mormon but who have **read** and are **reading** the Book of Mormon. It does not make much sense to think of the Book of Mormon as a text that's designed to tell you, "Hey, you're okay, but everyone else is screwed up." It makes a whole lot more sense to read the Book of Mormon as if it's saying, "I—God—would really like to save you. But **you** are **so** riddled with error, you are **so** riddled with false tradition, you are **so** riddled with wrong ideas that I'm gonna give you a text in the **desperate hope** that you might take it seriously enough that it **might bring** you a little closer to Me. To the extent that you will accept it faithfully and fully, it will bring you a **lot** closer to Me." But **I'm begging you—**

Please give heed to these words, because God wants to bring you, as someone that takes the book seriously, closer to Him.

It was in the same year that the Book of Mormon had been published, a church had been organized (although all it was, was locally gathered believers in a fellowship; no—absolutely no—hierarchy). They held elections to approve people to hold the position of Elder, but that didn't mean anything other than they were elected to a position of Elder. Right now, in any branch of any of the various iterations of the Restoration, people could get together and elect a woman to be an Elder. There's nothing that would prevent that, because the position is not the same thing as priesthood. You do not have to hold priesthood to hold office. You do not have to hold anything but an election to hold an office—in any of the branches. There is no such thing as the "priesthood of Elder"; there is only an office that you can occupy by being elected. You could elect a man to be a Relief Society president if you got enough votes for it. That doesn't mean that he is a **female**; it means that he is the president of the Relief Society. The same is true of a Sunday School president. There's no such thing as a priesthood office called "Sunday School president," but there's an office within an organization. Most of what we assume to be "priesthood" is simply an **office**.

For many years in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the president of that organization, over a two-decade period, took the position that no one needed to have the priesthood conferred upon them. According to Hebrew J. Grant, it was enough simply to set them apart into an office of the Church. And so, for a period of two decades, what people received was ordination (or conferral) of an office within an organization.

Well, there are a lot of things that are peculiar about the history of the various Restoration movements that ought to raise serious questions in your mind about whether or not the traditions of your fathers that have come down to **you really** represent a conferral or a conveyance of what the Restoration commenced as and has been delivered in continuity; that is preserved, intact, true—and your salvation can be gambled on it.

That first year after the Church existed, after the Book of Mormon had been printed, **speaking to** a revelation given to two members that had been called to the ministry in October of 1830, the Lord said this:

*"My vineyard has become corrupted every whit, and there is none which does good, save it is a few, and **they** do err in many instances because of priestcrafts, **all** having corrupt minds" (T&C 16:1, emphasis added)(D&C 33:4)*

Okay? It didn't say, "Fortunate for you two, you belong to a true branch." [Audience laughter] It didn't say, "Now I'm gonna tell you about all those folks out there who were in a state of rapid decomposition, hell-bent for the nether regions of darkness in the afterlife." He's talking to **them** about **them** and everyone else. "*My vineyard has become corrupted **every whit**, ...there is none which does good, save it [be] a few, and **they** do err in **many** instances because of priestcrafts, all having corrupt minds*" (ibid). An enemy has snuck in and corrupted your mind—every one of you. You all possess a corrupted mind.

Well, if that weren't good enough to set things on the right course, in September of 1832, not quite two years later (little over a year and a half), another revelation is given. And this one is **specifically talking to everyone who**, between 1830 and September of 1832, had become converted/had accepted the Book of Mormon/had been baptized/had joined the organization of a church that existed at that point. So now, you cannot escape these words because they're addressed to the folks from whom **all of you**, one way or another, derive **your tradition**. So these are those folks from whom **you** spring as a believer:

"Your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation" (T&C 82:20)(D&C 84:54)

We didn't have branches back then. We didn't have Communities of Christ versus LDS versus FLDS versus—

It is one. It's still one; we don't have any break-offs. So this is the **trunk** from which you all spring. The **whole Church**, all of you, the **whole** of this is under condemnation.

*"And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall **remain** under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, **even the Book of Mormon**, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to **say** but to **do** according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth **fruit** meet for their Father's kingdom. Otherwise, there remains a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion, for shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, ...I say unto you, **nay**." (T&C 82:20, emphasis added)(D&C 84:56-59)*

Okay? You're not gonna be allowed to do that. So you're not gonna get possession of a Holy Land because He's not gonna allow you to pollute it. Because at this point, with our various traditions, if we were to go occupy that land it would become **instantly** polluted because of what we bring with us, because we are not of one heart, we are not of one mind; and therefore, we can't help but pollute it.

The condemnation that we received, we have learned for *not only to say but to do according to that which I have written* did not mean solely that they were **saying** but not **doing**, it meant that they **weren't even saying** what the Lord had written. Hence, the need to go back, repent, and redo the scriptures from the ground up. Hence, the need for the scriptures.info website that you referred to because the scriptures of all the various groups have been corrupted. And all of us remain under condemnation until we stop "not saying" according to what He'd written, and then we begin to **do** according to what He has written. (That project will culminate in the publication of leather-bound versions of those scriptures within the next few months.)

Well, with that introduction, then—

[Speaking about the AV technology on the podium] You see, I'm afraid I'm gonna touch this, and then some slide is gonna jump up on the screen, and then we'll all be distracted because if there's a screen to watch—well, we've been conditioned. [Audience laughter]

Okay, so let me then read from the Book of Mormon with that assumption in mind that we began with—that this is talking **to you about you**; to you about your congregation, your denomination, your organization; to you about the whole of this. Okay? And I hope it makes you squirm.

*"He [this is talking about the Lord: **He**] commandeth that there shall be **no priestcrafts**; for behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and **set themselves up** for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world, but they seek not the welfare of Zion. Behold, the Lord hath **forbidden** this thing; wherefore, the Lord...hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity, they were **nothing**; wherefore, if they should have **charity**, they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish. But the laborer in Zion shall labor **for Zion**, for if they labor for money, they shall perish."* (2 Nephi 11:17 RE, emphasis added)(2Nephi 26:29)

So that's the first part of this. The only reason we should practice our religion is to **sacrifice** for the bringing about of Zion. We're not to be remunerated. We're not to be compensated. If we're not sacrificing, we cannot develop faith. Therefore, sacrifice for your religion is mandatory.

*"And again the Lord hath commanded that men should not murder, that they should not **lie** (ibid)[great comments about lying made today in Jeremy's talk]...that they should not steal, that they should not take the name of the Lord their God **in vain** (ibid).*

That doesn't mean swearing; that means testifying to something as the Lord's doctrine or teaching when it is, in fact, not His and attributing it to Him— that's taking the name of God in vain.

*...that they should not **envy**, that they should not have **malice** (ibid)—*

Envy, malice are particularly relevant when you consider how the various Restoration branches have **regarded** one another, have **condemned** one another, have **competed** with one another, have failed to recognize the goodness that exists within each body of the Restoration congregations.

*...that they should not **contend one with another** (ibid).*

That's the only thing that has been happening since the various factions have broken up into the "Rigdonites" and the "Josephites" and the "Brighamites" and the "Bickertonites" and the "Strangeites" and the "Hedrickites" and "What's-that-guy-in-jail-ites."

*...that they should not contend...with [one] another, that they should not commit whoredoms, ...that they should do **none** of these things. For whoso doeth them shall **perish** (ibid)—(2Nephi 26:32)*

"Whoso doeth **them**"—any of them. We're contending with one another? It'll perish.

*...for **none of these iniquities come of the Lord**. For he doeth that which is good among the children of men, and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men. And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness, and he denieth none that come unto him. (ibid)(2Nephi 26:33)*

This is the verse that we got read earlier today by Neil Simons. These are the words that precede what he was talking about—about the absence of divisions.

*...he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen, and all are alike unto God, both Jew and gentile. But behold, in the last days, or in the days of the gentiles, yea, behold, all the nations of the gentiles, and also the Jews, both those who shall **come upon this land** and those who shall be upon other lands, yea, even upon all the lands of the earth, behold, **they will be drunken with iniquity** and all manner of abominations. (Ibid, vs. 17-18 RE, emphasis added)(2Nephi 26:33 & 2Nephi 27:1)*

Just so you know, when these words were written as part of Nephi's valedictory address talking to those who would read the Book of Mormon, he wants it really clear that he's including within this description the Gentiles who shall come upon this, the American land, or **you—you** who have a copy of this book to read.

Nephi is trying to summarize what he would like us to get out of his effort in summarizing the vision that he had that he was forbidden from writing; but others had written about the same thing, and so he co-opted the words of Isaiah, put them into his book as **his** testimony—and so that we understood that he was applying the words of Isaiah with his own (Nephi's message), he gives his valedictory summary of his text in the closing chapters of Second Nephi. This (what I just read and what I'm about to read) comes from that closing summary by Nephi of what he would like the Gentiles to **get** out of this, to **understand** out of his message:

"For it shall come to pass in that day [when the Book of Mormon comes forward], ...the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when...one shall say unto the other, Behold, I, I am the Lord's — and the other shall say, I, I am the Lord's, — and thus shall everyone say that hath built up churches and not unto the Lord." (2 Nephi 12:1 RE, emphasis added)(2Nephi 28:3)

I don't have a church. The one I was loyal to kicked me out because I was more loyal to a truthful history than to fairytales. I was still willing to belong to and support with my tithes and with my attendance, but I did not think it had a credible **claim** to be the Lord's —**too many** departures, **too many** failures, **too many** lies, **too many** plain errors. I thought it had value—I think every branch of the Restoration has value, but the Book of Mormon has greater value than **any** of them, greater value than **all** of them collectively.

*"And they shall contend one with another, and their **priests** shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with **their learning**, and deny the holy ghost which giveth utterance. And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel. And they say unto the people, Hearken unto us and hear ye our precept, for behold, there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men." (Ibid, emphasis added)(2Nephi 28:4-5)*

Hands were laid on heads. Voilá! [Audience laughter] You are a priest! Not just a priest —a **Melchizedek** priest. And Melchizedek may have done something that was great, but don't worry about it, kid—you're just as great. [Audience laughter]

*"Because of pride, and because of **false teachers**, and **false doctrine[s]**, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride, they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing, and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart because in their pride they are puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads..."(Ibid, vs. 2, emphasis added)(2Nephi 28:12-14)*

See "stiff necks" means you do not bow in reverence to God's will; you've got another agenda rather than God's, so your neck is stiff because you won't bow to Him. And "high heads" means you're proud of what you know. It's the point Adrian made today: we need to realize, no matter how much we think we know, none of us know that much. None of us ought to hold our heads high. All of us ought to be willing to become as a little child

and heed and hearken to the holy ghost that giveth utterance. And what is the most often utterance given by the holy ghost? "Repent. Repent, forsake your false ideas, forsake your false traditions, return to Me."

They wear stiff necks and high heads, yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations (ibid)—

You know, "abominations" is a terrible word; it just sounds bad. But it means that what you're doing is you're celebrating something false as a religious sacrament—that you're treating something that isn't God's (or even approved by Him) as His. It's abominable. It's blasphemy. It's repugnant to God, and it ought to be repugnant to us.

C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *Mere Christianity*. We ought to get back to the **mereness** of the Restoration, because in its mereness, the Restoration asks us to repent, be baptized, read the words that we get in the Book of Mormon, and then search for and find that God who caused the Restoration to come about to fulfill His purposes. And His purpose is to save us.

...abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray, save it be a few who are the humble followers of Christ (ibid).

This sounds very much like that revelation given to the missionaries being sent out during that first year of the Church, *they have all gone astray*—now the words here are slightly different:

*"They have all gone astray, save it be a few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, **they** are led, that in many instances **they** do err because they are taught by the precepts of men. O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all [they that] preach false doctrines, and all [they that] commit whoredoms and pervert the right way of the Lord, **Woe, woe, woe** be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell." (Ibid, vs. 2-3, emphasis added)(2Nephi 28:14-15)*

"Woe, woe, woe" is a three-fold condemnation. You can be condemned with one "woe" or with two, but when you're condemned with three "woes," that follows you on into what comes next. You just don't want to wind up there, particularly when you have the means in your hands to understand how to avoid these kinds of errors and this kind of condemnation.

Well, Michael Kelly this morning referred to a statement by Paul in his letter to the Galatians:

"Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:2 RE) (Galatians 1:8)

What is that gospel? See, it's almost as if when Christ set up and called twelve apostles to be the ministers He sent into the world to preach repentance unto the world, whom He called and whom He ordained—it's almost as if one of the very first acts of the Lord was to call Paul **outside** of the organization He had set up, **outside** of the group that He had authorized, **outside** of the group that He had ordained. Why would the Lord call Paul on the road to Damascus and give to him a dispensation of the gospel when there was already an **existing** dispensation of the gospel in the hands of the twelve who had been with Him all throughout His ministry? It's almost as if the Lord wanted to make the point from the outset:

Don't ever assume you can rely on a structure.

God will call whom He will call, and Christ made that point with Paul. And so when Paul writes to the Galatians, "Let anyone that preaches a different gospel than the one I've delivered to you be accursed," we ought to ask ourselves, "Well, what then is the gospel that Paul preaches?" It's a gospel founded upon a man who can bear witness and testimony, like the other twelve could, that Jesus Christ was the resurrected Lord who came and sacrificed, died and rose from the dead, who will draw all men to Him. And Paul knew that.

That gospel—that same God who did something very similar with Joseph Smith, who came and delivered to him a dispensation of the gospel in which Joseph could testify—that Lord (who lived, who died, and who rose again) lives and testifies and is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His gospel is unchanging; His act doesn't change. That gospel of ascension, in which men are brought up unto Him—

Amos foretold this:

(And we read these words as if they applied during a 1700/1800 year hiatus between the death of Christ and His Apostles and the opening of the heavens to Joseph Smith. We don't read these words as if anything like this began **again** at the death of Joseph and Hyrum. But I want you to consider that these words may be a description of what began immediately upon the death of Joseph and Hyrum.)

*"Behold, the days come, [saith] the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from...north even to the east. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and **shall not find it.**"*
(Amos 1:27 RE, emphasis added)(Amos 8:11)

Oh, you'll find plenty of

- *lo hear's* and *lo there's*;
- *I, I am the Lord's*;
- *God hath **finished** his work* and give His authority unto me—

You'll find plenty of those. You'll find plenty of preaching involving the traditions of fathers—but you also find a famine. Then, Micah said:

"Then shall the seers be ashamed and the diviners confounded. Yea, they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer of God... The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money. Yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord among us? No[ne] evil can come upon us." (Micah 1:8 RE)(Michah 3:7)

Evil will come upon them, because Zion is what the Lord intends to preserve. We should be desperately seeking for that.

Isaiah said:

"The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled, for the Lord ha[th] spoken this word. The earth mourn[eth] and fade[th] away; the world languishe[th] and fade[th] away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance[s], broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore ha[th] the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." (Isaiah 7:1 RE)(Isaiah 24:3)

Well, that's coming.

Look, whenever the Lord sets about to do a work, vessels are broken, traditions are discarded. **Reform may work to splinter Catholicism, but reform does not work to repair a restoration.** It doesn't, and it can't. You either need a restoration or you're just messing with an old bag that can't take a new patch.

Christ said—

(This was in a conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was one of the Sanhedrin. He was a member of the Seventy, one of the "presiding authorities"; one of those who could speak with authority, with the confidence that he occupied a position approved by God—a governor in the land.)

Jesus told him, "You're gonna have to get baptized." And Nicodemus, who'd already been baptized—

See, when they came and they questioned John's baptism, they didn't question **baptism**; they questioned the authority of John **to baptize**, because everyone was being baptized. And Nicodemus, who'd been baptized, came to Christ; and Christ told him, "You gotta be baptized again." And Nicodemus' reaction was, "Why do I gotta go do that? I mean, that seems redundant." And Christ's answer to him is the same answer

that has to be given to everyone, in every branch, at any time when restoration begins again:

"No man also sew[eth] a piece of new cloth on an old garment, else the new piece that fille[th] it up take[th] away from the old and the rent is made worse [the tear]. And no man put[teth] new wine [in] old bottles, else the new wine doe[th] burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled and the bottles will be marred. But new wine must be put [in] new bottles." (Mark 2-3 RE)(Mark 2:21)

In other words, any time a restoration begins anew, there has to be baptism again because you have to acknowledge and accept the fact that God speaks again.

Well, as was mentioned, a new set of scriptures has begun the process of repenting and returning. And those new scriptures are not the only thing that is underway. In addition, rebaptism... it doesn't—

You're not joining an organization; we have no organization to join. The problem with all the Restoration splinters is that they're competing with one another. We have no interest in providing a competing organization. We offer baptism. We accept the Book of Mormon—not just as a text, but we accept the Book of Mormon as a covenant.

The early Saints voted to accept Lectures on Faith. They voted to accept the revelations that were found in the Doctrine and Covenants. They never accepted the Book of Mormon, either as a volume of scripture (they just assumed it), and they certainly never accepted the Book of Mormon as a covenant.

In an effort to undo the condemnation that was given in September of 1832, we've gone back, we've recovered the scriptures as accurately as it is possible to do so today—not only to **say** what the Lord wanted said as accurately as possible, but also to **do** according to that which is written. Once it is **said** correctly, the next thing is to **do** it.

And so baptism is being offered anew—rebaptism. Most of the baptisms you read about in the Book of Mormon are rebaptisms. They'd already been baptized once before, but they had to repent and return and be rebaptized. All those people that Alma went out in the wilderness and baptized at the waters of Mormon—those were all rebaptisms. All the great accounts of conversion in the Book of Mormon are reconversions/rebaptisms, with the exception of recovering some particularly militant apostates who had not practiced in faithfulness the religion that they had been given at the outset.

Look, I hope this conference continues. If as much a difference in spirit can occupy this conference next year as is different from last year to this, then we really are headed towards a greater unity. Tausha lamented all the frustrations she had in trying to get this thing put together. [Speaking to Tausha] Oh, you worry too much; it's that red hair. You just leave it alone. If you're inspired to do it, when it happens, it'll take care of itself, as it has today.

What I saw today (compared to last year) is progress. It's astonishing. It's wonderful. And I feel closer to all of those who have spoken from the various traditions today. I hope we can grow closer again from now until the next of these. And I hope that there is a next of these.

Thank you.

2019.07.14 Love Others as Yourself

Stephanie Snuffer
Regional Conference Address
July 14, 2019
Sandy, Utah

DENVER: I wanna thank those that organize this and every other conference—put on by volunteers; facilities are rented by them, at their expense, so that we can come and participate. I don't know how much work or preparation went into this, but 17 days is not inconsequential in terms of the effort that has been required by everyone that has worked on this. Part of what we believe is to sacrifice, as part of the religion and that—and that putting on a conference requires that, and it requires a lot of hands to make it work.

Is—is that better? Okay, I lowered my voice when I said, "Is that better?" [Audience laughter.] I would rather be out in the hallway screaming like we heard a little— better go— Okay, can you hear me?

Okay, now that we've got that all figured out, since my wife and I are one, the first part of this talk is gonna be given by her—assuming that she'll actually get up and do this. All— all of the best marriages are fiery, and the idea that you—you somehow failed because you had an argument—what was it? Day four of the marriage? We have this running joke—we keep score. What am I? 12,727 argument wins—and she has four, or was it five? [Audience laughter.] Which—which is a reflection of her charity and generosity. And oh, you just said get the—get the sheep hook out.

She's gonna talk.

STEPHANIE: Okay, now you have to re-do all this nasty whatever.

Okay, I've detected a theme. Jennifer, thank you; Tyler, thank you; and some of the others that I've heard—like a genuine legitimate theme, and I think I'll stick with it, okay? And the good news is, as far as I can tell, there will only be one repeat set of scriptures from my talk to Jennifer's talk. So—

I've noticed that there are Ten Commandments—ten (oh, someone needs to give me some water, by the way), not 15, not a hundred, and not a thousand, but ten. And that doesn't seem like a **lot** to save the entirety of mankind, right? I mean, when I was leaving lists for babysitters, I left more than ten commandments. [Audience laughter.] It takes more than a list of ten things to take care of our dogs when we leave town. So, I find it interesting that there are only ten. But I'm gonna focus on two—the first two.

So, in Mark chapter five, verses 44 and 43 [45] (and you have to excuse me; I have had a terrible cold, and so forgive whatever comes out):

*And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment...? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is: Listen, and hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like [unto] this: You shall love your neighbor **as yourself**. There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, you have said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but him. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor **as himself**, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 5:44-45 RE, emphasis added)*

So, the question is, What is this thing about loving yourself, k? I'm not sure, but let's take a look at it. So, I'm wondering if God gives *love your neighbor as yourself* as the second great commandment because he thinks we're all ego-maniacal narcissists, and the only possible way we're able to love **other people** is if we love them as much as we love **ourselves**? Yep—no, I don't think so, because there are plenty of examples of people who are literally selfless people and who give up their lives and everything they have for other people. So, that can't be it.

So let's start with Romans 65:

Therefore, owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loves another has fulfilled the law for this: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there is any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying — namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself (love works no ill to his neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law), and that, knowing the time — that now [it] is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. (Romans 1:65 RE)

Did you all catch that? If there is any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in the command to **love your neighbor as yourself**. If you love God and your neighbor, the other eight commandments take care of themselves—because people who love each other work no ill to their neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law, and our salvation is nearer than when we believed. So, it is—quite literally—time to wake up.

Galatians 1:19:

I wish they were even cut off who trouble you; for, brethren, you have been called unto liberty. Only use not liberty for an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. (Galatians 1:19 RE)

So, here are a few interesting commentaries on that "bite and devour" thing. In the Weymouth New Testament, it says, *But if you are perpetually snarling and snapping at one another, beware lest you are destroyed by one another* (Galatians 5:15 WNT). The Contemporary English Version says, *But if you keep attacking each other like wild animals, you had better watch out or you will destroy yourselves* (Galatians 5:15 CEV). Okay? God's Word Translation says, *But if you criticize and attack each other, be careful that you don't destroy each other* (Galatians 5:15 GWT).

So, how do these words apply to you? And me? Because they do—that's why they're part of the scriptures. I just described **us**; that is us. So, let's ask it again: What's up with loving our neighbors as ourselves?

So, Luke 8:7 says: *And he answering said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.... But he [the man asking the question], willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?* (Luke 8:7 RE)

Well, we're not gonna do that, are we? We're not gonna try and justify who our neighbor is. Okay? So, who are our neighbors, and what does it mean to love them?

In this context, I can tell you what love doesn't mean. It is not necessarily an intense feeling of deep affection; it is not necessarily a great interest and pleasure in something; and it is not necessarily to feel a deep romantic or sexual attachment to something.

Enos two—Enos two & three says:

Now it came to pass that when I had heard these words, I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them. And while I was [thus] struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying, I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land; and I curse it not, save it be for the cause of iniquity. Wherefore, I will visit thy brethren according as I have said, and their transgressions will I bring down with sorrow upon their own heads. And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord. And I prayed unto him with many long struggling for my brethren the Lamanites.

*And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me, I will grant unto thee according to thy desires because of thy faith. And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him: that if it should be so [be] that my people the Nephites should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people [that] the Nephites, even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth some future day unto the Lamanites, that perhaps **they** might be brought unto salvation. For at the present, our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they*

swore in their wrath that if it were possible, they would destroy our records, and us, and also ~~our~~ [all the] traditions of our fathers. (Enos 1:2-3 RE, emphasis added)

In Helaman 4:2, it says:

And it came to pass that in this year Nephi did cry unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, do not suffer that this people shall be destroyed by the sword, but O Lord, rather let there be a famine in the land to stir them up in remembrance of the Lord their God, and perhaps they will repent and turn unto thee. And so it was done according to the words of Nephi, and there was a great famine upon the land, among all the people of Nephi. And thus in the seventy and fourth year the famine did continue, and the work of destruction did cease by the sword, but became sore by famine. And this work of destruction did also continue in the seventy and fifth year. For the earth was smitten, that it was dry and did not yield forth grain in the season of grain; and the whole earth was smitten, even among the Lamanites as well as among the Nephites, so that they were smitten that they did perish by thousands in the more wicked parts of the land. (Helaman 4:2 RE)

And then we move on to Nephi—and just as a side note, I'm pretty sure Nephi did not love his brothers, k? I just don't think he did. They were abusive; they were violent; and they were fratricidal, okay? But this is what he does—Nephi 2:4:

*And it came to pass that when I, Nephi, had spoken these words unto my brethren, they were angry with me. [Yes, so what's new? They were always angry with him.] ... But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren? ... And it came to pass that when I said these words, behold, the bands were loosed from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren and I spake unto them again. ... And it came to pass that **I did frankly forgive them** all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness. ... And after they had done praying unto the Lord, we did again [a] travel on our journey towards the tent of our father. (1 Nephi 2:4 RE, emphasis added)*

Genesis 11:4-9—again, another story of fratricide, k? Pretty sure Joseph didn't love his brothers, and his brothers certainly didn't love him—because 4-9, *And a cert...*

Genesis 11:4-9:

*And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, What do you seek? And he said, I seek my ~~brothers~~ [brethren]; tell me, I pray you, where they feed their flocks? And the man said, They are departed from here, for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren and found them.... [And when he comes, they see him, and they conspire against to slay him] *And they said one to another, Behold,**

this dreamer comes. [They don't even call him by name, okay? And they have so much contempt for Joseph that they just call him "the dreamer."] Come now therefore and let us slay him and cast him into the [some] pit, and we will say some evil beast has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands and said, [Let's] not kill him. And Reuben said...Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit... [That's great—we'll just cast him in this pit...Verse 7:] And it came to pass when Joseph had come unto his brethren...they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him, ...they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty, [and] there was no water.... And they sat down to eat... [And lo and behold, they see] a company of Ishmaelites ~~coming~~ [came] from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said... [Hey] What profit [it is] if we slay... and conceal his blood? Come...let us sell him to the Ishmaelites...let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh. [Well, that's nice. We don't hate him enough to kill him, but we just sell him to this band of Ishmaelites.] And his brethren were content. [So, they sell him for 20 pieces of silver. Reuben went back to the pit; Joseph wasn't in it.] ...he rent his clothes. And he returned [to] his brethren and said, The child is not; and I, where shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat, ...killed...the [goat], ...dipped the coat in...blood. And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father and [they] said, [Oh, oh, oh, it's so terrible!] (Genesis 11:4-9 RE)

Okay, so you know the story. Lots of stuff happens, and then this—Genesis 11:39-40:

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me! And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph. Does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence [because, yeah, what happened to you?]. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years has the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve ~~your~~ [you a] posterity ~~and~~ [in] the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God. And he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and [a] lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land[s] of Egypt. [And more happens and more happens] ...And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept. And Benjamin wept upon his neck. ~~And~~ [Moreover], he kissed all his brethren and [he] wept upon them. And after that, his brethren talked with him. (Genesis 11:39-40 RE)

The foregoing scriptures illustrate that forgiveness, intercession, and relationships do **not** have to be based on love, as we culturally define it here.

So let's get back to who our neighbors are. We're gonna start with the most intimate relationships and work out from there. At the top should be my relationship with the gods, which is not always my focus, but ideally, it should be; and then we go partner/spouse, family/children, extended family (aunts, uncles, in-laws), friends/co-workers/religious community/work community/neighborhood—blah, blah, blah—until we get down to our enemies. The makeup of these relationships might look different for everyone. Some of us may have all of them, and some of us may have only a few. But we all have intimate and significant associations or relationships, and we all have enemies.

So, how do we do it? How do we love them? (So, as a side note, I would like to make a distinction here—**service is not love**. It can be **motivated** by love, but there's a difference, because serving is actually quite easy—dropping off my gently-used clothes, tithing, dollar bills, blankets, granola, water bottles, taking my old "but I'm getting a new washer/dryer" to someone in need, plant a garden, make a casserole, take a salad or a dessert—don't get me wrong; these are great. We should engage in these. These are really nice things to do. However, they can be done at an arm's length—no conversation, no association, no relationship, no love, no risk. Relationships are where the real work takes place. Relationships are difficult **and** effortless. They are risky, and they are safe. They are uncomfortable, and they are comfortable. They are rich and rewarding; and they ebb, and they flow. They are **the** vehicle wherein we move through and into love, charity, sanctification, and ultimately, salvation. To be a part of the family of God up there requires us to create a family of God down here.)

So, moving back into "How we justify who our neighbors are, and why we think we don't need to love them," I've got some hypothetical scenarios—completely made-up (except I have heard variations on themes):

- Example one: My best friend doesn't go to church anymore. She believes some strange things that I'm having a hard time understanding. Our religious beliefs were a pretty significant part of our relationship, and I don't believe we have much in common anymore. She is willing to talk to me about some of this stuff, [inaudible] (excuse me) and I do listen, but because I know she's wrong about her new beliefs, I think I should just stop being friends with her. I'm really torn. I'm worried about how this will affect what kind of person she is, and I don't want her wacky ideas influencing my family.
- Example two: My daughter has confided in me about some frustration and hurt she's been dealing with because of the way her husband (my son-in-law) is treating her. I am resentful and holding a grudge. I treat him fine in public—and I do love him—but I can't help thinking negative things about him because of what I know. When I express my frustration to my friend, she commiserates with me and agrees that I am justified in resenting him.

- Example three: My sister borrowed a significant amount of money from me a few years back with a promise that she'll pay it back. I don't ask her for it because I don't really need it, and I'm okay with my financial circumstances, and I really do wanna be charitable. The problem is: every time I see her buying something or spending money, I judge her, based on her promise to pay me back. When I talk to my husband about it, he says I should ask her to start a payment plan and get it back. We could use it for a vacation or something. And she did say she would pay it back.
- Example four: My mother-in-law is not very nice. She's critical and unkind. I feel really insecure when I'm around her, and it's exhausting. For the sake of my relationship with my husband, I let her come over; and we ~~associate with as much as reason~~ associate with her as much as ~~as reason~~ as is reasonable, but I stew and grumble about it for days before and after. My sister thinks I should just explain to my husband how difficult this is for me and suggest that he can see his mom without me.

When I read an article or hear a news story about some tremendous act of forgiveness on the part of someone who has given absolution to another person for some grievous offense, I think, So what? The dad who forgives the drunk driver who killed his entire family; the woman who forgives the man who raped her; the elderly man who doesn't hold a grudge against the businessman who conned him and stole all his money—so what? We treat these instances as though they are great acts of emotional heroism. We heap praise and adulation upon the people who are so magnanimous that they forgave the horrible bastard who grieved or assaulted or offended them. It's ridiculous! We **lie** to ourselves when and if we think we are **ever** justified in resentment, grudges, judgments, or accusations. We are not, **ever**.

The Lord's standard is pretty clear, and there's not much wiggle room. You want Heavenly Father to forgive **you**? You forgive each other. That sounds like a really good way of **loving yourself**. Forgiveness is a **requirement**—it is a condition—and the Lord has this to say about it. Third Nephi 5:34, *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if [you] forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (3 Nephi 5:34 RE).

Colossians 1:13:

Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies, kindness, humility of mind, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you; and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 1:13 RE)

This sounds like loving yourself. Teaching[s] and Commandments section 157:58:

I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught that if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses... If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget. (T&C 157:58)

God is the **only** one who judges correctly. He is the only one who can decide whether an offense was intended or not, and then **He** reproves, corrects, **forgives**, and **forgets**. We are rarely worthy to judge, and we are only able to reprove and correct people we have a relationship with—and we are **always** expected to forgive and forget.

So, the real question comes down to this: Do we believe these words? It's pretty much that simple. Relationships with spouses, children, co-workers, parents, siblings, friends, enemies require vulnerability, work, and a deliberate effort to see the good and **be** the good. Relationship [inaudible] (excuse me)—relationships are emotionally fulfilling. People who have community live longer and healthier lives. Working on those relationships and having them be positive and uplifting for **your** benefit sounds like **loving yourself**.

[Inaudible] (Excuse me.)

I have a simple formula that works for me, and I'll share it with you. I figure that every single interaction I have with another human being will achieve one of three things:

- The experience will either build our relationship with a positive interaction,
- It will leave it unchanged or status quo, or
- It will tear down the relationship with a negative interaction.

Grocery store clerks, gas station attendants, students, teachers, husbands, children—doesn't matter. The good news about this formula for me is that I get to choose, **every single time** with **every single person**. It's **never** out of my control. There is no love for others **or yourself** if your time's spent focusing on flaws, criticizing, imputing intent, or taking offense for no good reason.

Here's what the Lord says about judgment, flaws, criticism, ascribing motive, offense, and intent—and it's time we start taking Him seriously. So, He moves on from the Ten Commandments to the Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew 3:40, He says:

Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people: Judge not unrighteously, that you be not judged, but judge righteous judgment; for with what judgment you [shall] judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matthew 3:40 RE)

(It's like a person with a cold's worst nightmare. [Audience laughter.]

The difference it here that I see between the no judging and the righteous judgment is likely related to Final Judgment, as opposed to all those in-between judgments that we can do if we **think** we have the Lord on our side, in terms of righteous judgment.

And then moving from Matthew into Third Nephi—Third Nephi chapter six, verse six:

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull ~~that~~ [the] mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam [out] of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again, and rend you. (3 Nephi 6:6 RE)

And so I say to that: What the heck does that have to do with anything? So, on the assumption that it is actually related to what came before that, I spent a reasonable amount of time contemplating it, and this is my version of pearls and swine and dogs and whatever. It's a strange ending to this particular thought; so, what if it means that **we** are the dogs and swine, and judging is a holy and precious act—one that we don't have anywhere near the godliness to engage in, at least without seriously pursuing God's help—and we will get out of the attempt (and **all** we will get out of the attempt) at that kind of judging is trampling and rending. So, that's my take; and so, let's not do it. Okay? Let's just not do it.

In the foregoing scriptures, we are being told to worry about ourselves **first** (and **that** should take a long, long, long time). And then, if we need to, we can worry about other people after that. So, in theory, if we're as critical towards ourselves as we are others, we should be doing a lot of repenting, improving, growing in love and charity and empathy—as we make ourselves better; because it's just about beams and motes, people. That's it—just don't do it.

When it comes to our interpersonal life, knowing how to make yourself better takes a lot of courage and introspection; you have to be willing to be clear on what's wrong with **you**. It's a lot easier to think about what's wrong with other people. So asking questions like:

- How did I make **that** better or worse?
- What did I do or say to make them react that way?

- What did I say or do to cause their defensiveness? or
- Why did I do or say what I did or said, and how and what could I have done differently?

are absolutely necessary in order to become more Christ-like. However, if focusing on other people is your jam, then do it charitably; impute the highest motive and best motive to other people; assume their best intentions; engage in empathy and perspective-taking. **These** are godly acts. They make **your** life better. They wash away the bitterness, anger, hurt, and unhappiness **you** feel when you're focused on the negative. This sounds like loving yourself.

Ephesians twelve and sixteen:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called, [and] with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, in one body in [and] one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Can you be angry and sin not? Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the Devil. Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands for the things which are good, that he may have to give to him that needs. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to [the] use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy spirit of God whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, [and] wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Be therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ [has also] loved us and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. (Ephesians 1:12,16 RE)

So, it still comes down to one simple question: Do I believe the words of God?

And then He raises the standard again—Third Nephi 5:24 through 26, 30, and 31.

[24:] Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God. But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

[25:] Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, go thy way unto thy brother and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart and I will receive you. Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he shall get thee and thou shalt be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost senine. And while ye are in prison, can ye pay even one senine? Verily, verily I say unto you, nay.

...And behold, it is written, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall ~~compel~~ [compel] thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and to him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away.

And behold, it is written also that thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but behold, I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, [and] do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and...the good. Therefore, those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled. Old things are done away and all things have become new... (3 Nephi 5:24-26;30-31 RE)

These admonitions are designed to make **your life better**. Much like the other eight commandments, the first two are so that we can (and will) live loving, Christ-like lives, being obedient to God's instructions, which we **really** need to take seriously.

Having said all that, I don't believe we can actually **do** any of this. Down here, the natural man takes over, and we're pretty much **incapable** of living the standard—at least on our own. **We need God**—we need God to change us. Inter-personally speaking, most of us aren't capable (or even willing) to do the hard work of evaluating ourselves, of checking our own "beams," of considering our own motives, of loving ourselves enough to become godly. We need to be willing to let God change us, mold us, and make us into something **He can use** to further **His** kingdom.

I had an experience several years ago that really opened my eyes and helped me see clearly some things that were seriously wrong with me. Some of you have heard this story, and I'm gonna tell it again because it illustrates why I feel so passionately about this subject:

Years ago, we took the family down to "Circus Circus" in Las Vegas for a softball tournament. And the team was in the arcade, Denver was in the hotel room, the girls were swimming, and it was my job to just be the "mother" down at Circus Circus. But there were so many parents there, I didn't have to be in the arcade; so, I was reading—

and I remember the book I was reading; it was called *The Element* by Sir Ken—Wade Ken Robinson. And I was sitting outside on a marble platform, outside of Circus Circus. And I was watching **loads** of people just walking by—back and forth, back and forth; and I was having a **heyday** judging these people. Ever been to "Circus Circus"? Okay, I—I mean, I can't even—I had thoughts going in my mind, things like, "Oh my gosh, I would hide my children from that person." I would literally put them behind my legs and—and hide them from people.

And I was just (in my mind, obviously—I wasn't talking to anybody; no one was there)—but I was on a rant, put my book down, people-watching. And as clear as (I don't know)—it was in my mind; it wasn't an audible voice—but as clear as day, I hear, "How dare you. These are My people! And at the moment, I love them more than you." No, that wasn't it—but the fact was, I was suitably chastised for what I was doing. And I thought, "Oh, I mean...and I"—it didn't take me, I mean I didn't need anything more than that. It was instant. It was like, "Oh my gosh, that is 100% true."

So, as I thought about it (over the next few months and whatever), I came to two conclusions:

- One, I am literally, figuratively, theoretically (and every other adverb word)—I am no better than any one. Period. End of story. That's it.
- Conversely, nobody is better than me. K? So there is no—like Jennifer said—there are no "subs" this, or I am **not** "subbed" to anyone, people are not "sub" to me.

And so, as I contemplated this and have tried to incorporate this into my life over the past several years, I see it everywhere. I see it in books I read. I see it in the scriptures I read. I am looking for it because I am truly, truly trying to change me. This was one of those moments in my life where God literally transformed me. He woke me up, and He completely altered the way I see my neighbor.

And I've had several more of those experiences, but it's probably because I'm looking for 'em. So start looking for 'em. So, in addition to "start looking for 'em," start asking the question, "What lack I yet?" And then **listen** to the answer. Start seeing people the way God sees them and then engaging with them in a way that reflects that. Start asking God to take the scales from **your** eyes, so that you are no longer deceived into thinking whatever is untrue for you. Start wanting to change you, and start taking the things God says seriously.

Now, you might think I'm being too absolute or too literal, and that's fine. You might even be right. However, ask yourself this: Was Jesus absolute and literal when He ended verse 31 with this: *Therefore, I would that ye should be perfect, even as I or your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.* (3 Nephi 5:31 RE)

2019.07.14 Authority, Keys, and Kingdom

Regional Conference Address

July 14, 2019

Sandy, Utah

DENVER: See, when they told me about the theme of this conference, I thought, "Well, it's right down her alley—Why would I talk about that when she spent years thinking about the very topic?" So I'm not going to talk about that; she covered the subject, and I'm gonna talk about something else.

There are three ideas that create a lot of problems, a lot of tension, a lot of conflict and discussion—and I want to address those three subjects here with you today: Authority, Keys, and the Kingdom of God.

On the subject of "authority," the scriptures draw a contrast between two kinds of authority. One kind involves preaching, teaching, or statements holding self-evident or compelling truth that convicts or convinces the hearers of the truth. There are some examples of this.

Matthew 3:49 (RE): *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings with his disciples, the people were astonished at his teachings, for he taught them as one having authority from God and not as having authority from the scribes. **The authority was resident inside the message**—didn't have to be borrowed from somewhere, didn't require a badge, didn't require a collar, didn't require a mitre; it simply held compelling truth that, in the ears of the listener, convicted them.*

When they asked Jesus where He got authority from, they might just as well have posed the question, "How do you preach with such persuasive conviction?" Because **Christ had moral authority**. It was that same moral authority that caused the guards—who came at night to arrest Him in Gethsemane with their swords and with their armaments—to stumble backwards and fall down when He identified Himself, "I am the man" (see Testimony of St. John 11:2). This is the **prophetic form of authority**.

Another form of authority involves the right to exercise control or demand obedience that is obeyed because of fear of the one holding that authority. There are examples of that in scripture. *Jesus called them and said, You know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them (Matthew 10:3 RE).* He's explaining to His disciples another form of authority.

The Apostle Paul held this second kind of authority before his conversion. He said: *And many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them (Acts 12:40 RE).* This kind of authority is a **priestly form of authority**.

Priests deal with rites, ordinances, commandments, and procedures. This **durable** approach to preserving a belief system allows a dispensation of the gospel to continue

long after the prophetic founder has died. Moses, for example, established a system of rites and observances that then became the religious fare of priests who perpetuated the system from the time of Moses until the coming of Jesus Christ.

Prophets deal with God and angels. They receive new insight, promises, and covenants. Their conduct can even appear to violate the tradition of the religion they follow, but that is only because they are not bound to the **tradition** as practiced by the priests. Instead, they have penetrated into the underlying meaning the original power—the **purpose** of the rites. They expressed the **original view from heaven** that motivated the founding prophet.

The *prophetic* form is rarely present, even among the people of God. It comes to restore and refresh, to call to repentance, and to move God's work along. The *priestly* operates for centuries trying to perpetuate the founding prophet's restoration, but once the religion falls exclusively into the hands of the priests, traditions always creep in that stray from the original and keep **forms** intact without maintaining the spiritual substance.

It's been the history of God's people that those who are raised at a time of only the *priestly* form will **always** assume they are guided by God's messengers holding God's authority, and therefore, the *prophetic* is alien to their thinking. This is the condition Nephi foretold would happen after the Book of Mormon came forth.

They shall teach with their learning, and deny the holy ghost which giveth utterance. And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel. And they say unto the people, Harken unto us and hear ye our precept, for behold, there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men. Behold, hearken ye unto my precept. (2 Nephi 12:1 RE)

Nephi teaches: Believers in our day will eventually choose the *priestly* over the *prophetic*. But Nephi counsels us to, instead, always choose the *prophetic* over the *priestly*. People accept priestly authority over the prophetic word of God because of false traditions. Those who arrive late at the scene in the generation after God's voice has become quiet, then start traditions to explain away that silence. Generations that follow them do not even **notice** *there is no God today* **because** *he hath given his power unto men* (ibid).

In the present circumstances of the Restoration, when the priestly authorities speak, **all** of the Restoration traditions (from the LDS to the FLDS), claim **that is** the voice of God. The tradition of priestly authority in Christ's day justified the guard in striking Jesus.

*The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world. I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple where the Jews always assemble, and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask **me**? Ask **them** who heard me what I have said unto them. Behold, they know what I [have] said. And when he had thus spoken, [behold,]*

*one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, **Do you answer the high priest so?** Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of...evil, but if well, [then] why do you smite me? (John 10:4 RE, emphasis added)*

The officer was so subject to the priestly tradition that he was only able to conceive of the high priest as God's representative. It made him blind to the Son of God because he could not imagine something greater than the established and trusted priestly tradition. It was that same priestly tradition that made Ananias think he had the **right** to have the Apostle Paul struck on the mouth for testifying of Christ. Ananias, no doubt, thought of himself as the authorized and empowered priest who spoke for God. Culturally, and according to their traditions, Ananias was correct.

*On the next day, because he desired to have known with certainty why he was accused of the Jews, he commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them. And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by...to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite **you**, you whitewashed wall, for do you sit to judge me after the law, and command that I be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by [him], **Do you revile God's high priest?** (John 12:20 RE, emphasis added)*

Ananias was defending his **role** and his **office**. He was the anointed high priest and, therefore, believed he deserved, even required, respect. He believed that if you disrespect the high priest of God, then you likewise disrespect God. The officers who received this command likewise thought everything was as it should be—Paul had no right to disrupt the priestly tradition. But the priestly tradition must always give way to the prophetic. The priestly tradition has **no right** to judge the prophetic, but the prophetic has **every right**, and invariably the **duty**, to judge the priestly.

Then there is the concept of "keys." The best way to conceive of a "key" is as knowledge or understanding; it means something that unlocks the hidden truths you did not previously comprehend. A new, true concept that acts like a catalyst to solidify an idea that eluded you is a "key." When the term "eternal punishment" was defined as God's punishment (because God is eternal, and punishment for Him is "eternal punishment"), we had a new key given to us.

Prophets hold keys because they unlock understanding. *And this greater Priesthood administers the gospel and holds the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God (T&C 82:12).*

This, therefore, is the sealing and binding power, and in one sense of the word the keys of the kingdom, which consists in the key of knowledge (T&C 151:12).

And then we have in Proverbs: *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings to search out a matter* (Proverbs 4:1 RE). It's an important thought; we'll return to that when we get to the Kingdom of God.

Joseph Smith taught, "Salvation cannot come without revelation; it is in vain for anyone to minister without it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith [TPJS hereafter]*, p.160). Joseph taught, "Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives his oracle's; there is the kingdom of God and where the oracles of God are not, there the kingdom of God is not" (*TPJS*, p. 272). Joseph Smith could ask and get an answer from God. Because of this, he held the keys of the kingdom—**because God presided**. God is the King of His kingdom. When His voice is silent, you have **no kingdom** because **the King is not speaking**. When we cannot have an answer from God, there is no Kingdom of God—because the King's voice is silent.

A key concept is one that solves the riddle, answers the question, or clears up the controversy. A key removes ignorance. When God explains something to improve man's understanding, He provides us keys or knowledge.

The Book of Mormon is filled with keys, including giving us answers to:

- who (at least one of) the other sheep were that Christ mentioned to His disciples in Jerusalem. When you explore that topic and you go into the closing comments of Nephi, you find a bit more about the other sheep because they've been divided, they've kept records, and they will be visited. When you go to the allegory in Jacob chapter 5 (LE; see also Jacob 3 RE), you learn yet more about the other sheep and how the vineyard has been populated with His sheep worldwide.
- One of the other keys of the Book of Mormon is what Christ did following His ascension into heaven. That same Jesus—two angels standing by—"that same Jesus whom you saw ascend unto heaven, shall in likewise return" (paraphrase, see Acts 1:3 RE). Well, He did that; He's gonna do it in glory to judge the world in the future, but He did that again in order to visit with the Nephites—because the description of the ascension to the Nephites in Third Nephi mirrors the description of the ascension in the book of Acts. It's symmetrical.
- Book of Mormon has keys to tell us what happened to other Israelites who were led away from Jerusalem.
- It explains and defines what it means to be redeemed from the fall.
- It explains and clarifies—in a way that the entire Christian and Jewish world could never understand—how pre-Babylonian Judaism really was practiced.
- It explains and clarifies that many Israelites were divided from the land of Jerusalem and continued as organized bodies in scattered parts of the world.
- It explains that many prophets wrote scriptures that we know nothing about.
- It tells us and promises that a great body of scripture exists, which God intends to gather into one.

There are many other keys or insights that have been kept from our knowledge, and the Book of Mormon reveals **some** of them.

"Keys" and the "Kingdom of God" are necessarily linked together. Because Samuel could obtain the voice of God, Samuel held the keys of the Kingdom of God. When the people of Israel demanded a mortal king, God explained to Samuel what their request really meant.

But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Listen unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Samuel 4:2 RE)

Reigning is what a king does. Reigning is what God, through Samuel, was doing for the people of Israel. They were rejecting their Heavenly King because they wanted a mortal king in His stead.

According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, in which they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto you. Now therefore listen unto their voice. Nevertheless, yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. (ibid.)

Now I want you to listen carefully to what Samuel does with that commission to warn the people about what happens when you displace God as the king, and you put a man in the place of God. What will happen to you:

*This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands and captains over fift[y], and will set them to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be compounders, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them [un]to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed [out] of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants. And he will take your menservants and your maidservants, and your **best young men**, and your asses, and put them to **his** work. [And] he will take the tenth of your sheep, and you shall be his servants. And you shall cry out in that day because of your king whom you shall have chosen you, and **the Lord will not hear you in that day.** (1 Samuel 4:3 RE, emphasis added)*

This is how the Kingdom of God is evicted from earth. Prophets fall silent, and priests overtake the kingdom to make it **theirs**. Then, possessing the kingdom, they take a tenth of all the people earn and divert it to their captains, to their appointed authorities—and they require the young men and daughters to serve as servants in the kingdom of the supplanters.

Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and William Marks all said that without Joseph Smith there was no longer a Kingdom of God on earth.

Dispensations are founded by prophets who establish practices and forms of worship to be administered by priests. In the moment a dispensation is founded, both the prophet **and** the priest are present. Moses was a prophet and established priestly rites. Christ was a prophet (and more), and He also established priestly rites. Similarly, Joseph Smith was an authentic dispensation head who was both a prophet and established priestly rites. **We** expect to have added to the prophetic voice heard among us an additional priestly set of rites in a temple founded by God. We await commands to identify the location and to begin construction. We've been told to expect that command will come.

The reason an apostasy can be concealed from the view of the religious believers is because the presence of continuing priestly tradition conceals the absence of the prophetic tradition. Concealing the fact that the prophetic is gone happens so easily because priests focus on **authority** and move the idea of authority into the **central, even controlling**, issue for salvation.

Catholics held a monopoly for a thousand years, using the idea of keys from Saint Peter as the foundation upon which the religion was built. It was not until the Eastern Orthodox faith departed, there was any choice to be made between keys. Only then could people choose between claims of keys in Rome and keys in Constantinople [Constantinople]. It took Martin Luther to finally peel away the fraud of keys held by wicked men, independent from righteousness. His expositions on the priesthood of faith allowed a divorce between claims of priestly keys and faith in God. It took Martin Luther's revolution in thinking to spread for several hundred years to create a religious landscape where Joseph Smith and a new dispensation of the gospel could be introduced.

These things move slowly because mankind is generally imprisoned by their traditions and are incapable of seeing the difference between the *priestly* and the *prophetic*. This **blindness** becomes the **tool** through which the priestly tradition controls mankind.

- *Priestly tradition* is stable; authoritarian; controlling; focused on outward conduct; amasses wealth, power, and prestige. Priestly tradition can continue in the absence of spirit, revelation, or even godliness. Priestly tradition can become the friend of government, business, and empires, and can work hand in hand with the powers of this world.
- *Prophetic tradition* is unruly, unpredictable, and challenges the god of this world. It cannot work with the powers of this world, but strikes at its authority. It cannot exist without the direct involvement of God and angels, and it cannot be divorced from continuing revelation.

You can have both traditions without an apostasy. You can have the prophetic without an apostasy. You can even have a priestly tradition without an apostasy, but that is

much less likely. In any complete apostasy, the presence of the priestly tradition is essential to be able to accomplish the **trick** of an unacknowledged apostasy. The trick to successfully substituting apostasy for the Kingdom of God is to distract people into thinking there hasn't been any change. The believers need to think everything remains intact. Apostate priests always claim there has been a perfect continuity and preservation of the keys.

So the idea of apostasy changes in the hands of the apostates. Instead of focusing on the silence of God in absence of the prophetic, apostasy is **redefined** to require individual conformity to the group. Only individuals become apostate, not the group. This allows claims of apostasy to be discussed under the watchful eye of the priests without anyone ever searching into the overall condition of a **fallen people**.

The Jews mocked efforts to tell them they were apostate. They thought it was humorous when Lehi preached the idea, because they were so very religious, so devout, so unassailably active in following God. The idea was absolutely laughable that **they** were apostate.

The Apostle Paul said the problem would begin at the top with the shepherds who would teach them falsehoods as truth. *For I know this: that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them...* (Acts 12:4 RE). These new leaders would have only a form of godliness without any real power to save.

Paul wrote:

This know also: that in the last days, perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous [covetous of their authority, covetous of their status, covetous of their rank, covetous of the priest-HOOD and of their priestly position], boasters, proud, blasphemers [it's blasphemy to attribute to God what God did not authorize. It's not merely bearing false witness, it's also blasphemy. You hear blasphemy from the religious leaders who, speaking and pretending to act in the name of God, have no authority or permission from Him to do as they claim], ...unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, without self-control, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. (2 Timothy 1:8 RE)

The Christian world adopted another false replacement of the original church. It became so universal it was hailed as the Universal (or Catholic) Church. It "rule[d] from the rivers to the ends of the earth" as the only official form of the faith established by Christ. To accomplish this, Satan was concerned with the macro-institutional failure, not just individuals falling away. That's always his objective! If the religion becomes corrupt, then devotion **for even the best of people** is meaningless. They cannot achieve salvation because the Kingdom of God has departed.

Satan is involved in strategic defeat of mankind. The small tactical battles between people is the concern of lesser fallen spirits. It's the small, minor spirits who follow Lucifer who tempt individuals to commit sin. Success for the adversary is not accomplished in petty enterprises. He wants "failure for the whole" so none can be saved. For that, **apostasy must be universal**. He has never succeeded by admitting there has been a failure—the trick is always to have the apostasy come unnoticed, unacknowledged, and from within.

Christ quoted the Father as He foretold what would happen:

At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all these things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them. (3 Nephi 7:5 RE)

Apostasy must first be noticed, acknowledged, and exposed before it is possible to repent and return. Until then, it progresses a-pace, discarding and rejecting what might have been given, all the while being happily ignored by the believers whose devotion will not save. The enemy succeeds when he manages to get us **not** to reject ordinances, but to **change** them. As soon as they are changed, they are broken.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. (Isaiah 7:1 RE)

And the day comes that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people, for they have strayed from [mine] ordinances and have broken my everlasting covenant. They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walks in his own way and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol which waxes old and shall perish. (T&C 54:3)

Those two statements about changing the ordinances and breaking the covenant are: first, a quote from Isaiah who prophesied about it happening; and second, a revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith saying it **was** happening.

Changing the ordinances has always been an important step because then even people who believe there was a restoration through Joseph Smith can continue to claim they follow a true religion, while practicing one that has been broken. These practitioners become like the ancient Jews who mocked Lehi because they knew they were still righteous; they knew Lehi was foolish, even fraudulent. They still had the truth, the

ordinances, the temple, and the priesthood. Lehi was thought to be merely a mistaken crank.

The Kingdom of God is with **us**, and for the present, we are still left among people who have not awakened to their awful situation. We should warn them and seek to recover as many as will listen. If you're awakened, warn your neighbor. We have a work to do among others before the Lord will have us depart from people He still loves and hopes to save.

I've seen and read of prayers and fasting by those among us who want a temple. Why do you think the Lord hesitates in giving the command? When He answers and says for us to remain and labor among other people He hopes to save, do you think we can neglect that obligation and still hasten His command to build a temple? I leave it to you to answer those questions.

Now, I want to clarify a point, because Joseph Smith actually knew what he was doing and—had he been around long enough—would have accomplished a work that was still at its very incipient stage at the time that he was slain. In the Council of Fifty, which he called the Kingdom of God (which was nondenominational because members of other religious beliefs were invited into the Kingdom of God)—

The Kingdom of God was not the church. The church was simply a mechanism for promulgating the gospel, disseminating the Book of Mormon, and accomplishing a certain work. But the Kingdom of God was something different.

Inside that Kingdom of God, Joseph Smith had himself anointed a king; and Emma, a queen. Hold that thought for one moment, because there's a statement made in Second Nephi. These things need to be understood.

But behold, this land, saith God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the gentiles shall be blessed upon the land. And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land who shall [rise] up unto the gentiles, and I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God, for he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish. For I the Lord, the King of Heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them for ever that hear my words. (2 Nephi 7:2 RE)

Joseph Smith knew exactly what he was doing. He intended to be a king, **subordinate to** the King of Heaven. He intended to create other kings, subordinate to **him**, all of them subordinate to **God**. Because the God of this land and the King that will rule over this land is Christ. *He that raiseth up a king **against me** shall perish* (ibid). Joseph Smith was not seeking to establish a kingdom **against** God. He was seeking to establish a kingdom **subordinate to** and **obedient to** the overall King of Heaven—as a subordinate to Him. Joseph Smith intended to establish the Kingdom of God and to be a king because that is what the Kingdom of God consists of.

Look, I read it just a moment ago. *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of **kings** to search out a matter* (Proverbs 4:1 RE). Joseph Smith was **always** searching out and revealing new things to the people. It was his **honor** as the **king** to do that. *The glory of God to conceal a thing but the honor of kings to search out a matter*— and who is the **king** that allowed the earthly man to search the matter out? It is the King of Heaven; it is Christ. The one who conceals is also the one that can reveal. Joseph Smith was fitting the pattern.

And then, this last thought—and we'll end, and you can socialize or fight among yourselves or... or she and I can go argue in the hallway about something.

Joseph Smith wrote a letter that was never canonized—an excerpt from it, altered in *its* form even, got published in the LDS canon of scriptures—but the entire letter that he wrote is now in the Teachings and Commandments, section 146. And there's a statement that gets made that I want to make sure, as part of this talk, I clarify or give a key (yeah, there's one), so you can comprehend **this** thing.

The standard of truth has been erected. The "standard of truth" is the Book of Mormon. It's been erected because it's been put into print. It's been in print, albeit in an altered form— until we fixed that with the latest set of scriptures; it goes back to manuscripts and tries to fix as much of that as possible. Nevertheless:

The standard of truth [that is, the Book of Mormon] has been erected. No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing: persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall [have been] accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say, The work is done. (T&C 146:20)

This prophecy is not about an institution. This prophecy is about the "standard of truth" going forward. And while the "standard of truth" has gone forward primarily in the hands of missionaries belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to whom credit should be given for all of that good work, it is going to go forth **independent**, meaning no one is going to own and control and have the institutional right to profit from the "standard of truth" going forward. It will sweep the earth, and right now, one of the biggest challenges of getting the Book of Mormon to be taken seriously by people is the apparent coupling of the Book of Mormon **to** the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There are people out there who have great offense, umbrage, and opposition to the LDS Church who, for that reason alone, will not consider reading the Book of Mormon. But it is another testament, and it was always intended that it go forth **independent** of everything else.

I've spent a great deal of time and effort, including just within the last few months, traveling around the country, attending conferences in Tennessee with evangelicals, speaking to a group in Montgomery, Alabama that included Catholics and Baptists and

others, attempting to get them to take seriously the Book of Mormon as an authentic Christian message, separate and apart from any institution. I would hope Presbyterians and Lutherans—I would hope that people that belong to the Church of England—would all be willing to look at the Book of Mormon and see what it adds to their Christian faith. I've said before and I'll repeat it again: we can baptize anyone who is willing to accept the doctrine of Christ. You don't have to swear allegiance to the Southern Baptist Convention in order to be saved. You don't have to pledge allegiance to the Pope or kneel to the president of any of the various Restoration groups.

Accept the doctrine of Christ. There are those who, free of charge, will baptize you. They expect nothing from you. They intend to sacrifice their time, their means, and their effort in order to perform the ordinance. No one is profiting. None of you who are practicing the faith in the form that it is presently being practiced should profit from that. We gather tithes, and we use that tithe to help those among us who need assistance—and there are presently some people among us who **need** assistance. And the glory of God is manifest in their life by the outpouring of your generosity. You're going to help them. You're giving of funds to help them defray their indebtedness, answering their medical needs. **Those** are the kinds of things that knit hearts together. **That's** what the religion was intended to accomplish. It was not intended to buy the minister a house or to pay to fly a church official with his bodyguards in first-class to Europe to attend area conferences. It was not intended to build ornate marble floors and statuary, in order to prop up the claim of priests who know not God.

Well, I've enjoyed everything that I've seen and heard in this conference. There was a mom who had a little baby a couple rows in front of us during the opening prayer, and the baby, during the prayer, lost all patience with the length of our opening prayer and began to offer a petition of her own. And I really enjoyed that! And to my dismay, mom got up and took the child out. I was trying to figure out what the child was praying for 'cuz I was thinking, "I might want some of that too, if I could...." Babies don't have words yet; they have noises. And a lot of time the noise sounds like a cry when, in fact, they could be communicating phenomenal things to us, their tongues not being loosed for our sake because if we heard what they had to say—

Perhaps they're announcing the judgment of angels upon our poor assembly. Perhaps they're celebrating in what way they can. I love it when the kids are around, and that noise, to me, is a delight, not an irritant.

Let me end by bearing testimony to you that all of the good things that you do, all of the faith that you have, all of the labors that you do for Christ's sake, in seeking after Him with a pure and unworldly/unprofitable in this world motivation— all of that cleanses your soul and brings you closer to heaven. You want to know how to get angels to pay attention to you? Sacrifice for the benefit of others.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

MAN: Denver, can you take some questions?

DENVER: I'll take one question. It's gotta be a good one. Does anyone got a good question? Yeah, oh okay...

MAN: So, you mentioned one thing. So one thing that's been on my mind is, as a group, what lack we yet? You've got to admit, you've been kind of pessimistic about our prospects for Zion. And you mentioned one thing during this talk and that was about opening our mouth to those who the Lord loves. Anything else you want to say?

DENVER: Yeah, I want to—

MAN: Can you justify your pessimism?

DENVER: Yeah, okay. So the question was premised on my pessimism that I've expressed before, and I want to challenge the premise because I thought something happened over at the conference in Grand Junction, last conference we had, that was—

There was a real different look and feel to what went on over there. And to me, it was like we had turned a corner.

We have been a really rancorous group of people who are strongly opinionated. It's like we're refugees from an abusive experience in a hierarchical religion that, as soon as we are set at liberty, everyone wants to pick at the slightest hint that you're aspiring to be the next Relief Society president or the next bishop or—just all of that. There's a decompression, there's a "post-religious trauma syndrome" that was really evident. Everyone was walking around saying, more or less, "I've been abused. Religion has been a source of anxiety and trouble in my life, and you're practicing religion—but by damn, you're not going to practice your religion on me! I mean, I want to have the liberty with which Christ has made me free. I do not want to have that experience repeat itself. I want nothing of that." And that—we were wearing that, and probably every one of us were wearing that chip on all of our shoulders.

I didn't see that over at Grand Junction. I didn't see people worried about the motivations of one another. I didn't see them looking for cause to complain or cause to take offense at what someone else was saying. I thought we turned a corner, and something happened. And maybe we needed a little while to decompress. Maybe we needed a little while to—

And as other people come in, they're probably going to walk in with exactly the same attitude that many of us had for the first several years because of our prior experience. We're just going to have to bear with that. And they need to get over that, because there's a lot of personal intrusiveness and personal abuse that goes on in the name of the Restoration. It's worse among the fundamentalist group. It's worse among the people that have come out from that tradition to say, "Let us—let us join in here." All of them have suffered from religious abuse.

But I am not as pessimistic as I was. I really—

I was authentically down, and now I'm saying, "Ah, this may happen." In fact, at this point—

MAN: But don't you think that's a minority? As I look around at the fellowships, and I don't see that clamor, and that— and I have maybe just a little...

DENVER: No, but it dominated the dialogue; the conflict dominated the dialogue. And that's one of the tools that get used. You can have 10 good people, and if you have two of them (or two others, so there's a total of 12), if two of the 12 are willing to be rancorous and complaining and upsetting, that spirit will invade the other 10. The problem is not just aggregating good people, the problem is also knowing how to not take offense from the people that are still running around pecking on one another. We're gonna have those people, and more of that attitude will come as people say, "I can no longer uphold this tradition. I respect Joseph; I respect the Restoration; I accept the Book of Mormon; I believe that God intends to bring back Zion—I believe all those things." But they come among us with this trauma, and they need a while to decompress. We're still gonna have that. What we need to do is to become adult enough to do the kinds of things that Jennifer Willis and my wife were talking about earlier today, about not taking those offenses—and letting them vent. Maybe what they're talking about is absolutely therapeutic and healthy for them, and they need to vent. Just don't join in; just don't encourage it. Let 'em know you understand. Put an arm around them and say, "I've been there," and then move on. "Hey, let's go help weed a garden."

There was an occasion when a son and I (he was a teenager, at the time) were really at odds—I mean, a pretty sharp conflict— and he and I about came to blows with one another. And I didn't like the way that left, and I didn't like the way that unfolded. So the next day, I got him up early (it was on a weekend), and he and I went out and worked in the yard. There was a project that needed to be doing, and we did the project together. It involved shovels and a lot of hard work. And both of us, for about, I don't know, a couple of hours, we dug like angry men. After two hours of digging and taking it out on the project that needed to be done, we didn't have the energy left to fight anymore. It, we— "You thirsty? You wanna run down to McDonald's and get something?" And it was over; the conflict was over because the backyard took the anger, and we got over it.

People act rationally; people don't vent without a cause. For the most part, when it comes to religious anxieties, what motivates them can be very deep, can be very troubled, can be very sincere. And if you extend empathy and sympathy and hear 'em out, you may find that underlying all of that is not aggression, underlying all of that is a broken heart and disappointment with what their fellow man has done.

I mean, one of the things that Christ—in the Sermon on the Mount—tells people to do is to bless those that curse you. Every one of us have seen the religious phony, the hypocrite, the pretentious religious character who comes along, portraying himself as

something that they're really not. The reason Christ in the Sermon on the Mount says to bless the people that are spitefully using you or abusing you and to do good that treat you evil for His namesake is because they're doing that to you, initially, because they think you're one of those hypocrites. They think you're one of those false religionists. They believe you, too, are nothing more than the last guy who abused someone on the mission, who took advantage of their position of authority, who exploited (maybe in a way that was felonious, and they ought to be in jail) victims—and they're angry about that, and they're taking it out on you. But if you really are a disciple of Christ, you will turn the other cheek; you will return kindness for goodness; you will ask them, even as they crucify you, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Many times they literally do not know what they're doing. They've got in their mind a monster, and they react to that monster. And it takes a while before they begin to recognize the image of Christ in the countenance of the kindly and the forgiving. You have to be the kindly and the forgiving. And there are a lot—

In fact, the whole—the whole theme of this conference is devoted to that very issue.

How do we get along better with one another? Start assuming that underlying much of the anger and hostility and friction is a broken heart and a legitimate reason for their anger and their fear and their troubled heart. And soothe that troubled heart.

That is a good question.

Thank you.

2019.09.22 The Book of Mormon Holds the Covenant Pattern for the Full Restoration

General Conference Address
September 22, 2019
College of Idaho, Caldwell, Idaho

That was lovely. I contrast that with Bart Simpson sneaking in the In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida soundtrack for the church lady to play that resulted in near collapse.

I want to thank the organizers that have put this conference together and have spent the time and the effort and the resources to make all of this available. Unlike other groups of believers that associate together, we don't own any buildings; we don't have any facilities; no one gets paid to do any of the things that have to be done in order to put together a conference. And so, what we see and what we experience when we come to one of these conferences is the result of volunteer effort, volunteer sacrifices, voluntary contributions. All of the costs are borne by the folks that put a conference together.

And I want to thank all those that are involved in getting this event to take place. I also want to thank the organizers for inviting me to come and speak because those who organize a conference are entitled to ask who they will, and see who they can get to voluntarily contribute.

Beginning in 2013, I spoke for a year in what's called the Mormon Corridor, giving a series of talks. I've since traveled to Los Angeles, Dallas, and Atlanta to present talks to Christians. All of that (in the talks to the Christians) were done with the aid of volunteer technical support. I've also had, with the aid of volunteer technical support, a website devoted to the Restoration, another devoted to the Christian Reformation—that website is now being turned into a site for general Christianity, with the help of volunteers. I've been able to produce, with a lot of help, a series of videos about historic Christianity, about the Reformation, and about the Restoration, also requiring a lot of voluntary technical assistance.

In just this last year:

- In January, I was in Twin Falls for a meeting with folks. I attended a South Carolina conference, and then I met with a delegation of remnant folks (I call them remnant folks because I don't know what else to call it—people that believe as we do) who are undertaking an effort to try and approach the Jewish remnant.
- In February, I spoke at a meeting in Syracuse and attended appointments with several people that are doing and volunteering to do work.
- In March, I gave a talk in Centerville, and later that month I flew to Houston and met with a group of people in a fellowship there.

- In April, I spoke at a fireside in Independence, Missouri during the World Conference of the Community of Christ. The Community of Christ World Conference only occurs every four years, and I went back during their World Conference and spoke to a number of those that were interested in hearing something. Then I attended a conference and spoke in Colorado, and later that month, I flew out to Tennessee and attended a three-day conference in Tennessee involving Evangelicals.
- In May, I met with (and spoke with) a group, and then I traveled to Alabama to speak with a group of Christian folks about Christianity and about the Restoration.
- In June, there was a Restoration conference held in Boise, Idaho that brought together various factions that believe in the mission of Joseph Smith but have divided into separate groups, and I spoke at that Restoration conference. I also attended meetings with small groups in Utah during that month.
- In July, I spoke at a conference in Sandy, Utah that had been organized.
- Last month, in August, I went to Sandpoint, Idaho, and I visited with Rock and Connie Waterman. Rock intends to write again, particularly after his work slows down this winter, and he wanted me to give his regards to all of you.
- And I'm attending this conference this month.
- Next month there is a... Shawn McCraney (I think) is a former Mormon. He's doing a podcast called *Heart of the Matter* that I've agreed, at Rock Waterman's urging, to go ahead and participate in.

There are those who are working directly to try and reach a hand out to invite and present information to the remnant of the Lamanite/Nephite group, and there are those that are working on trying to complete several projects that will attempt to introduce the Restoration to Jewish communities and in Israel itself.

I'm doing what I can. All of that travel comes at a sacrifice. No one pays me to go anywhere or do anything; no one reimburses me for the cost of doing so, and very often, in order to be able to have the venue available, others have to contribute as well, in order to sacrifice their means to advance what's going on.

An issue was recently raised about how one harmonizes when they are contributing — contributing to a temple fund or contributing to those who may be in need. And I thought that was a good point to start with because I assume since the issue came up that it's an issue for more than one person. In the scriptures, we have little to guide us about conflicts, but we have lots to inform us about the issues that then leave it our responsibility to resolve the conflict.

There was an incident that occurred **just before** the Savior went in on the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, where he was greeted with people shouting, Hosanna, Hosanna, spreading out their cloaks or palm branches for Him to ride in upon the colt/the foal. That incident is covered in these words:

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then says one of his disciples (Judas Iscariot, Simon's son who should betray him), Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money bag, and stole from what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone, for she has preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial. For the poor always you have with you, but me you have not always." (John 7:9 RE)
(John 12:3)

So, here is an incident in which something in the form of an ordinance that is necessary to prepare the Savior for His burial, about which the scriptures don't say enough, is taken care of at an **extraordinary** expense. It was an **extravagance** to perform the ordinance, and the Savior, in response to the criticism about the apparent financial waste, says, "Don't criticize her; this has been kept in place and prepared until now *that she might anoint me in token of my burial.*" She and He both knew that this needed to be attended to, and it was; and it was essential and extravagant. When the issue of "What about the poor?" comes up, the Savior I don't think was being dismissive; I think he was being rather lamenting about the condition. "*The poor always you have with you, but me you have not always.*" The time for taking care of what needed to be taken care of had a limited opportunity associated with it, and if it were not performed within that limited opportunity, then the time would come and the time would go and the event would not have occurred.

It's very often the case with assignments or opportunities that are presented to mankind that the opportunity is extended and the time has to be taken advantage of, but if not, then the opportunity comes, and the opportunity goes. And in this case, the principle that I would say relates to what we are concerned with and the question that was asked to me is that when we're given an opportunity, even though it may seem extravagant, if we don't take or avail ourselves of that opportunity, it will come, and it will go, and that will be that.

But you have to juxtapose that issue about the propriety of sacred things (even when they involve cost) being attended to, on the one hand, with another event involving the Savior, in which He told, in response to the query, "Who's my neighbor?" this account:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance, there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side of the way. And likewise a Levite, when

he was at the place, came and looked upon him, and passed...on the other side of the way — for they desired in their hearts that it might not be known that they had seen him. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day, when he departed, he took money and gave to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Who now of these three do you think was neighbor unto him who fell among the thieves? [And the person who had posed the question to the Savior responded] ...He who showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do likewise." (Luke 8:8 RE)(Luke 10:30)

Those words, *go and do likewise*, echo down through the corridors of time into our own ears and remind us of the obligation not only to be neighborly to each other but to be neighborly to all mankind. See, when he was on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, that was not his fault. It was a well-traveled road and should have been safe. It's two places at which sacred events had and **would** take place. He was on familiar, even sacred, terrain, and he fell into misfortune, through no fault of his own; others came and perpetrated it. So, what I take from that (as a principle for us) is that we ought not be judging those who fall into bad circumstances, nor should we be hesitant about putting them on our own beast to be transported, paying the innkeeper, binding up the wounds, doing everything we can. Not to say, How might I conserve resources in the process of giving aid?

Everything you do for the benefit of another, as a neighbor, is a good thing. Don't question whether or not your contribution to help someone else is extravagant or could be better used (...or you could find a cheaper house to rent in which to house the injured man or, perhaps, a less demanding innkeeper to pay). Your contribution is good. It's right, and your assistance helps those in need. When you give, give with gratitude, and then take no more thought about it. And if you choose to donate to the temple, take no more thought about it. Don't go about always doubting and second guessing. No matter how you reconcile the conflict between the principle that "supporting and providing the means for ordinance work to take place is extravagant" or "there's a way to help and give less"—how you divide up the resources and how you contribute, you decide how you resolve the conflict. Do what you think best, and don't question yourself after you've done that. Be at peace. Christ's example covers both, and there are conflicts—deliberately. The gospel is full of dilemmas that require us to act and to choose and to resolve limited means, limited time, limited strength, limited resources, and how you apportion them. But when you make the choice and you do the apportionment, be at peace.

I mention the temple funds, and I can give you the following information because I met with the people involved this last week. Not one cent of the temple funds have been spent, nor are there, at present, any plans to spend any of the funds until we have some direction from the Lord.

Every name and every amount that is contributed is being maintained. There are those who contribute... A handful of people have contributed in very small amounts who have chosen to remain anonymous. We know the date of the contribution, we know the amount of the contribution, but we don't know the name for that. But for almost all the funds that have been contributed, the person who made the contribution is known. When the temple is completed, a complete accounting will be available for anyone to review. However, most of those who have donated, to this point, wish to remain anonymous; therefore, the accounting will only show the names of those who consent to having their names disclosed. And for the others, the donations that they made will be disclosed and the dates on which the contributions were made—but their names will be withheld. Also, all the costs associated with the building will be provided. But donors who wish to remain unnamed will have their identities withheld.

The path to Zion is so far beyond the reach of mankind that we know of only two successful times in scripture where heaven and earth united in Zion. One was at the time of Enoch; the other, the city of Melchizedek. In Eden, heaven and earth were united—but Eden fell. Following the visit of Christ to the Nephites, there were several hundred years of peace. But Christ's visit was temporary, and they did not reunite with heaven as a people.

We face a challenge to become something very rare, godly—even holy. It's perplexing how people were able to lay aside all envy, strife, ambition, selfishness, and enmity between one another—yet that is exactly what **we** are asked to do.

We cannot obtain land without purchasing it. We have revelations that command us:

*"Behold, the land of Zion; I, the Lord, hold it in [mine] own hands. Nevertheless, I, the Lord, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Wherefore, I, the Lord, will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have advantage of the world, that you may have claim on the world, that they may not be stirred up unto anger. For Satan puts it into their hearts to anger against you and to the shedding of blood. Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by **purchase** or by blood; otherwise, there is no inheritance for you. And if by **purchase**, behold, you are blessed, and if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you and you shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive an inheritance." (T&C 50:7, emphasis added)(D&C 63:25-31)*

The saints in Joseph Smith's day failed. The Lord, speaking of that, said:

"Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed, even now. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becomes saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not

united according to the union required by the law of the Celestial Kingdom. And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the Celestial Kingdom, otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things which they suffer." (T&C 107:1)(D&C 105:2)

This building up of Zion, according to the principles of the law of the Celestial Kingdom, does not initially involve the law of consecration. Joseph Smith ended that practice. He said, "...that the law of consecration could not be kept here and that it was the will of the Lord that we should desist from trying to keep it, and if persisted in, it would produce a perfect abortion, and that he assumed the whole responsibility of not keeping it until proposed by himself" (*History of the Church*, 4:93; cf. 105:34). And Joseph died, of course, without ever proposing again the keeping of that law, although there were subsequent attempts made which proved to be a perfect abortion.

Consecration will eventually follow, but like everything that is distant and above this fallen world, it is not a single step. It is a stepped-process and cannot be done in haste nor in a single instant. We have to grow, degree by degree, measure by measure, in order to attempt.

This is another revelation:

*"Therefore, in consequence of the transgression of my people, it is expedient in me that my elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion that they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and **know** more perfectly concerning their **duty** and the things which I require at their hands. And this cannot be brought to pass until my elders are endowed with power from on high, for behold, I have prepared a great endowment and [the] blessing to be poured out upon them, inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me. Therefore, it is expedient in me that my elders should wait a little season for the redemption of Zion." (T&C 107:3)(D&C 105:9)*

It is clear, at least to me, that the temple is where the Lord intends for people to be taught more perfectly and have experience and know more perfectly concerning their duty and the things which He requires at our hands. He calls that an endowment with power. Knowledge is power, but to qualify to receive that endowment, we're required to be like Abraham, who described himself in these words:

"Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge..." (Abraham 1:1 RE)(Abraham 1:2)

All of those things go together. These are not disconnected thoughts. They are also not thoughts that are unrelated to "returning knowledge and understanding that reaches

back into the creation itself, and before the creation," and then goes forward to the end of this cycle of creation. So, he desired to possess:

*"...great knowledge...to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge [those things go together], ...to be a Father of many nations [he was situated at a time where that was **necessarily** one of the things that followed from obtaining what he sought after], a prince of peace, and desiring to **receive instructions** and to keep the commandments of God [We tend to think that instructions and commandments from God can be burdensome. Abraham viewed it as an opportunity to gain greater knowledge, greater understanding, and therefore, with a better perspective and understanding of what God expected of us, to be a greater follower of righteousness, to fit into a pattern], "I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers: it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning (or before the foundations of the earth) to the present time, even the right of the firstborn (or the first man — who is Adam — or [the] first Father) through the Fathers unto me." (Abraham 1:1 RE) (Abraham 1:2-3)*

This is what God has in mind for the Restoration to be completed. This is what God intended for us to inherit as our endowment, as our greater knowledge, and enabling us to be greater followers of righteousness.

Now, for purposes of the discussion today, I want to redefine the term "Mormon." I thought it was going to be an orphaned term, but apparently, that has proven to be very problematic for another institution. But today, I want to redefine the term "Mormon" for purposes of my comments to mean those who accept the Book of Mormon as a covenant, so that they become those who are Mormons, of which I speak.

In this restoration process, there's an obligation we have to reach out to Lamanites and to the remnant of the Jews and to seek to recover and reclaim them. We do not need to turn ourselves into Jews, nor do we need to turn Jews away from the things that they prize in order to have them accept the Restoration. But **everyone** needs to understand what the **objective** of the Restoration is, because it's going to reach back into something that is altogether earlier and more complete than anything presently in the possession of Mormons or Jews or Lamanites. We need to have a greater understanding of God's covenants with **all** of Israel.

The Torah is part of the Old Covenants. It is important for us to preserve and to understand the Torah. It testifies throughout of Christ. Studying the Torah has value, but that is not the objective of the Restoration. A religion much older is to be restored. The gospel, as it was taught to and understood by Adam and the Patriarchs (or the fathers that Malachi refers to), is the gospel that God wants and we seek to have restored. Turning the hearts of the children to the fathers is turning the hearts to the faith that they believed and practiced.

Joseph Smith taught this:

"Jehovah...continued to [Noah] the keys, the covenants, the power, and the glory with which he blessed Adam at the beginning, and the offering of sacrifice which also shall be continued at the last time.

For all the ordinances and duties that ever have been required [of] the Priesthood under the directions and commandments of the Almighty, in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last [dispensation]. Therefore, all things had under the authority of the Priesthood at any former period shall be had again, bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets, then shall the sons of Levi offer an acceptable [offering] to the Lord. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord...

It will be necessary here to make a few observations on the doctrine set forth in the above quotation, [and] it is generally supposed that [the] sacrifice was entirely done away when the great sacrifice [that is, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus] was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in [the] future, but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges, and authority of the Priesthood or with the prophets...

These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood will, when the temple of the Lord shall be built and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to: [in] all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and will exist when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood are sufficiently manifest. Else, how can the restitution of all things spoken of by...the holy prophets be brought to pass?

***It is not to be understood that the Law of Moses** will be established again, with all its rites and variety of ceremonies. This has **never been spoken** of by the prophets, but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely sacrifice, **will be continued.**" (T&C 140:16-18,20-22, emphasis added)(History of the Church 4:211-212)*

The Old Covenants now explain how the law given through Moses was an altered and lesser law intended to **prevent those under it from entering into God's presence.**

*"Hew [thee] two other tablets of [stone], like unto the first... But it shall not be according to the first, for I will take away the Priesthood out of their midst. Therefore, my Holy Order and the ordinances thereof shall not go before them... But I will give unto them the law as at...first; but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment, for I have sworn in my wrath that **they shall not enter into my presence**, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage." (Exodus 18:5 RE, emphasis added)*

The Book of Mormon clarifies that the Law of Moses was both temporary, incomplete, and intended to come to an end. Abinidi declared:

*"And now ye have said that salvation cometh by the law of Moses. I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses. And moreover, I say unto you that **salvation doth not come** by the law alone; and were it not for the atonement which God himself shall make for the sins and [the] iniquities of his people, that they must unavoidably perish, **notwithstanding** the law of Moses. And now I say unto you that it was expedient that there should be a law given [unto] the children of Israel, yea, even a very strict law. For they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity and slow to remember the Lord their God. Therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him." (Mosiah 8:1 RE, emphasis added)(Mosiah 13:27)*

Paul explains essentially the same thing to the Galatians in his letter to them:

*"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to [the] seeds (as of many), but as of one: And to **your** seed — who is **Christ**. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before [of] God in **Christ**, the law (which was four hundred thirty years **after**) cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, then no more of promise; but **God gave it to Abraham** by promise.*

*Wherefore...**the law** was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made in the law given to Moses, who was ordained by the hand of angels to be a mediator of this first covenant (the law). Now this mediator was not a mediator of the **new covenant**, but there is one mediator of the new covenant, who is Christ, as it is written in the law concerning the promises made to **Abraham and his seed**. Now Christ is the mediator of life, for this is the promise which God made unto Abraham.*

*Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture has consigned all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, **shut up** unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, **the law was our schoolmaster** until Christ, that we might be justified by faith; but after faith has come, **we are no longer under a schoolmaster**." (Galatians 1:9-11 RE, emphasis added)(Galatians 3:16-25)*

We study the Torah to learn what the schoolmaster was instructing for generations about the Savior who would come. We don't study it to practice it (although I see no harm if someone wants to engage in that, so long as they understand the ends of the

law were fulfilled in Christ and that they are no longer under the schoolmaster—or at least under **that** schoolmaster)."

The Lord declared in April of 1830: *"You cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses..."* (JSH 18:8 RE)(D&C 22:2)

If the law of Moses were salvific, then we would still be under the obligation of following it—but we are not. We seek the Restoration of the first, original gospel, as Paul wrote also in Galatians:

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,
preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations
be
blessed."
(Galatians 1:7 RE, emphasis added)(Galatians 3:8)

That is the gospel **we** seek to have restored—not the one added 430 years later at the time of Moses but the one that existed at the time that it was preached unto Abraham. Abraham explains:

"But the records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord, my God, preserved in my own hands. Therefore, a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets and of the stars, as they were made known unto the Fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me." (Abraham 2:4 RE)(Abraham 1:31)

This is an English version of whatever it was that Abraham wrote, and we're familiar with the word "planets," in the present meaning of that sense. But the original word that got used (that is translated, now, as the word "planets") was a word that meant "wandering stars." So, at the beginning, knowledge of the beginning of the creation and knowledge about the wandering stars and the fixed stars were made known to Abraham. These are topics that belong squarely and comfortably within the gospel that was known to Abraham because all things testify of Christ. Abraham attempts to write some of them upon his record to give a clue of what it was that that original gospel included.

All volumes of scripture refer to the Restoration as having the effect of turning the hearts of the children to the Fathers, and the hearts of the Fathers to the children, which is not genealogical work. Genealogical work has a place in the grand scheme of things, but the Fathers to whom the hearts are to turn are the Fathers that were in possession of the original gospel in its completeness, the original patriarchs. Because they were entitled to come forth out of the grave (and did so at the time of the resurrection of Christ), they then assumed positions back in the heavens. Joseph Smith refers to *turn[ing] the hearts of the children to [the] Fathers* (T&C 98:3), as turning our hearts to the "Fathers in heaven."

Because the first general resurrection occurred at the time of Christ (and because the second installment of that general resurrection is going to occur at His second coming), none of your ancestors who died after the resurrection of Christ until this day are among those who are the Fathers in heaven. Rather, they are imprisoned in the spirit world, awaiting the opportunity to be resurrected at the Lord's return (or some time following that). Turning the hearts of the children to the dead is not the objective of the promise that is made about the Restoration of the gospel having the effect of turning the hearts of the children to the Fathers.

Is it your ambition to join your kindred dead? Well, you're going to do that. Why is it not your ambition to join the **Fathers of whom Malachi spoke**, who were the first fathers, who are the fathers now in heaven, having returned back in a resurrected and glorified form, to dwell in the heavens. **Those** are the ones about whom the promise is made. You're one motorcycle accident away from your dead kindred. You're one bout of some nasty, infectious disease from joining them. There's no great accomplishment to be spoken of by dying and going into the world of the spirits. The promises are more glorious, but they are also about something **far more ancient**.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall seal the heart of the Fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."
(Malachi 1:12 RE).

That is how the prophecy of Malachi is worded in the Old Covenants (in the scriptures that are being published now that include Joseph Smith's interpretation or inspired rendering of the text). *"He shall **seal** the heart of the Fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the Fathers."* That's not there in the typical rendering and not in the King James Version, because there it says, he will **turn** the hearts of the children to the fathers (see Malachi 4:6 LE).

This is referred to, also, in the New Covenants:

"And he shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:3 RE) is how it's rendered in Luke.

In 3 Nephi, the Lord quotes Malachi to have this information added to the record in possession of the Nephites. This is how the Lord rendered it:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful

day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"
(3 Nephi 11:5 RE).

In the Joseph Smith History, when he was visited by the angelic visitor Nephi, he quoted the prophecy in these words:

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (JSH 3:4 RE).

So, now we have (in various renderings of this) something that is referred to as "sealing hearts of Fathers to children and children to Fathers," something that is called "turning the hearts," and something that is called "promises made to the fathers."

"Promises made to the fathers" are covenants that God made with them concerning the last days' work, in which there would again be on the earth those who are connected to the Fathers in a way that avoids the earth becoming utterly wasted at His coming. This is something that has to be attended to through the restoration and construction of an authentic temple conforming to the pattern of heaven, in which these things can be attended to and the knowledge and understanding imputed, in order for people to comprehend what it means to be a "greater follower of righteousness."

This was a revelation given in March 2015: "Hence, the great need to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children—and this too by covenant and sealing through the Holy Spirit of Promise" (*Plural Marriage*, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. March 22, 2015). This is to restore **us**—as God restored Abraham—to the original religion.

Abraham came into this world uniquely different from the fathers that had gone before. There was an unbroken chain that continued from father to son and father to son, from the time of Adam, down through the generations until the time of Melchizedek. All of them were participants in an unbroken familial line. Abraham came into an apostate family in which his father worshipped—indeed made—dumb idols as the god to be worshipped. Therefore, Abraham is the first one that will join this line, who emerges from apostasy into possession of the original holy order. In that sense, Abraham is representative of **all** who would follow after, that seek after righteousness, in a world that is **constantly** overcome by apostasy.

Apostasy exists the **instant** that God ceases to talk, the instant that God ceases to **restore**, the instant that further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil comes to an end. Abraham—**because** he came at a time of apostasy and **because** his father had turned to the worshipping of dumb idols—could not inherit that

same standing as the first uninterrupted period, unless it were possible for that to be accomplished through adoption. Therefore, Abraham represents the revolutionary idea that one can emerge out of a state of apostasy back into (and be adopted into) the line that is in possession of the fullness of the gospel and to be one equal with them. Abraham represents an astonishing revolutionary moment in the history of God's dealing with mankind, and he also represents the opportunity for redemption for others at remote times, in remote places, who dwell among people who are apostate. It represents hope for **us**. And so, when the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers, that hope is verified and confirmed **primarily** through God's covenant with Abraham. Abraham inherited the promises that had been given to the first fathers, to be sure, but Abraham represents **hope for us**. He represents **our** opportunity to, likewise, obtain that same hope, which was given to Abraham 430 years before the law was added through Moses.

Now, at the time of the founding of Egypt, the original Pharaoh of Egypt was a righteous man who sought earnestly to imitate the order that began with the first fathers. The government of Egypt was an attempt to imitate Adam and imitate a family order that came down from the beginning. That founding occurred at a period that is referred to as Predynastic; and the Early Dynastic Period also is plagued with some lack of records, some destruction of material. The Old Kingdom really begins with the Fourth Dynasty, and it's **after** the Eighth Dynasty that what is referred to in Egyptian history as the First Intermediate Period took place.

The First Intermediate Period represented a radical period of apostasy from what had gone on before. While there had been an effort to preserve the order that came down from the beginning in Egypt, the First Intermediate Period represented something very much akin to what would take place in the Jewish Kingdom at the time of the bickering and the fighting and the strife of the Deuteronomists, when the Southern Kingdom was taken captive into Babylon. And then a remnant of the Southern Kingdom returned back to rebuild the temple, at which point the religion had been remarkably revised and the content changed to reflect the kind of strife that was taking place just a few years before the "migration out" of Lehi and his family (that we read in the first chapters of the Book of Mormon—where the idea of the Messiah was trying to be suppressed, trying to be altered). One of the reasons why Zenos was dropped out of the record of the Old Testament is because it's filled with Christological content that they intended to suppress.

Well, the kingdom of Egypt was going through something similar, and in the First Intermediate Period, they were forsaking things that had come down from the beginning. What is remarkable is that **Abraham entered Egypt to teach the Pharaoh immediately following the First Intermediate Period**. Now, the right that Pharaoh claimed was not his; indeed, when Abraham went into Egypt, Abraham entered possessing that right. (I don't know that he claimed that in the presence of Pharaoh; that might have been fatal.) But he came to teach, and he came to restore, and he came to reinvigorate the understanding of the Egyptians concerning that first order that came down from the beginning. Therefore, when Abraham came, he came not merely as

evidence that you can emerge from apostasy and inherit the rights that belong to the first fathers by adoption; he also came as a messenger and a restorer to provide such light and knowledge as those who were his contemporaries were willing to receive.

In many respects, **you** are now in possession of a great body of knowledge—much of it originally established through Joseph Smith, but neglected or misunderstood or misapplied or currently being opposed—that the people among whom you live would benefit by having that knowledge restored to them.

The works of Abraham are not limited to taking a son out and attempting to sacrifice him. The works of Abraham include all of these things:

- the seeking after righteousness;
- the willingness, indeed, the desire to receive commandments and to obey instructions, so that he might become a greater follower of righteousness;
- and then to go among those who were fallen and apostate (but who were attempting to mirror something they simply did not possess) and to bring to them news and light and truth and knowledge that could benefit them; so that what they were willing to receive, they could receive, but what they were not willing to receive did not need to be imposed upon them to their condemnation.

We have a delicate balance that we're trying to achieve.

I mentioned all of the folks to whom I have presently spent my time attempting to persuade to accept greater light and truth. It's a daunting effort. I began among the people that should **welcome** the idea that the Restoration (which is, obviously, incomplete) can and should move forward; and that if the original failure provoked divine ire for three and four generations, that they had now passed and the time had arrived in which it's possible to now move forward. I went on from there to the Christians, and we're now making efforts (me, primarily, behind the scenes) to reach out to the Lamanites (the remnant of Lehi) and to the Jews (the remnant that still identifies themselves with Israel). Don't spare your own effort in that regard—because only a handful are laboring to accomplish what needs to be accomplished to fulfill the covenant.

The Book of Mormon makes this subject a major theme of the Book of Mormon text. On the title page of the Book of Mormon, it says the purpose of Mormon's work in this book: *...which is to [show] unto the remnant of the house of Israel how great things the Lord hath done for their fathers, ...that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off for ever.* It's the intent of the book to bring people to understand concerning the covenants that were made to the fathers.

After Nephi finishes his testimony that Christ will visit all of scattered Israel, he then uses Isaiah to show Christ's ministry and that He will visit Israel and keep His word that He gave. Then Nephi explains how God's work will take place after Israel has been scattered among all the nations. He writes:

*"After [they've] been nursed by the gentiles, and the Lord has lifted up his hand upon the gentiles, and set them up for a standard, and their children have been carried in their arms, and their daughters have been carried [on] their shoulders — behold, these things...which are spoken [of] are temporal, for thus **is** the covenants of the Lord with our fathers. [Then] the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the gentiles...**unto** the making known of the covenants of the Father of Heaven unto Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*

And he goes on to say:

...they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness." (1 Nephi 7:3 RE, emphasis added)

That's the whole purpose of the Restoration—to bring further light and knowledge. Lehi gave a final blessing to his son Joseph, the younger twin of Jacob, born in the wilderness. In his blessing to his son Joseph, he refers to and commends Joseph to the example of their ancestor, Joseph of Egypt. He says:

*"I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph. Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord that, out of the fruit of his loins, the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel, not the Messiah, but a **branch** which was to be broken off, nevertheless to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, ...bringing...them out of darkness unto light, yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom." (2 Nephi 2:2 RE)*

Freedom, in the sense used by prophets, does not mean that you're not captive by a corrupt culture and subject to a corrupt government. Freedom means that you have the ability to escape sin in your life because you know enough to understand the will of God, and you're devoted, and you fulfill it. He goes on that—

Father Joseph of Egypt testified:

A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. [And then he says,] ...he [that choice seer, Joseph Smith,] shall do a work...which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers....I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work. (2 Nephi 2:3 RE)

In the grand scheme of things, Joseph Smith came here to do the work that God assigned to him to accomplish, and he did that against the resistance and opposition of people who were **internal** to his followers.

In the book *A Man Without Doubt*, I took the three longest things written by Joseph Smith, and in order to understand the heart of the man, I gave a brief historical context so that you could see the opposition or the failure or the trouble that produced the document that Joseph Smith wrote. Out of what should inspire bitterness and rancor, anger, frustration, and disappointment, what you get are three remarkably cheerful, upbeat, hopeful, encouraging, lovely documents that testify of truth. The hope that I had in writing *A Man Without Doubt* ([cough] excuse me) was to put people in possession of something Joseph wrote, so you could see the heart, you could see the mind of the man through his own words—but then you could understand him within a context that had extraordinary opposition.

Joseph Smith was, perhaps, least understood and least respected by the people who were closest to him because they tended, invariably, to assume that he was a man of like-passions with them. Joseph Smith was different than his contemporaries. In many respects, his contemporaries **could not** understand him because they made the wrong assumptions in contextualizing him. As a consequence, when Joseph was nearing the end of his life and speaking to the audience in Nauvoo (that would subsequently write the history), he said, "You don't know me; you never knew me." And yet, they would be the ones to compose the history, and then take over the legacy, and then figure out that the legacy that he left behind was susceptible of aggregating social and monetary and political power. And then what Joseph Smith founded became a great institution—which, incidentally, has preserved much of Joseph Smith's teachings that are of value to us.

I don't begrudge them the accumulation of wealth and the satisfaction of self-interest. If they had not been able to monetize Mormonism, we might not have the Book of Mormon today. I'm grateful for all that they've done. (And there have always been among them sincere believers, devoted people who believe in and accept the work of Joseph and of the Book of Mormon and the revelations and teachings that came through him.)

But they've never done enough. Almost immediately after the process began, they fell under condemnation because they failed not only to say but to do the things that had been revealed in the Book of Mormon and in the former commandments, which is why—as an act of collective repentance, as an act of the desire to repent and return—one of the very first things that has been accomplished is for a group of people to go out and do the research necessary to try and find, as close as we can, the original text of the Book of Mormon, together with such alterations as Joseph Smith had made or authorized or clearly intended to have take place.

Now, you may have all heard this story, but the original transcript of the Book of Mormon is one long sentence from beginning to end with no punctuation. That original manuscript was copied by hand, and then the **copy** was taken to E. B. Grandin, and E. B. Grandin put the Book of Mormon into print. The **copy** made from the original still exists in its entirety. The original was put into the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, and the cornerstone leaked. We only have about 22% of the **original** manuscript, but we have 100% of the **copy** of the printer's manuscript. Therefore, we can make a

comparison between the two, and we know that (on average) mistakes were made throughout the copying. Then E. B. Grandin punctuated it; and E. B. Grandin's punctuation reflects **his** understanding.

One of the first acts of repentance was to go back and to look at everything that is available, to try and sort through, and to get the Book of Mormon in as close a way to mirror what was intended to be handed to us as the text. Sadly, we **know** that the Book of Mormon that we have today—even though what we have put together (and the research effort) is the closest to anything that Joseph Smith endowed us with—it nevertheless, invariably, necessarily must contain mistakes. But as an act of penitence, we've gone as far as we can. We've done the same thing with the revelations that came through Joseph Smith, and we did the same thing with the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, which is his inspired revision of the Bible. **The scriptures are not perfect**, but they were presented to the Lord as our best (though inadequate) effort, and they were **accepted** by the Lord. And He said that they were **adequate for His purpose**. Therefore, we have the confidence that for the work that we are to perform in the process of completing the Restoration and getting us in a position to emerge from under the condemnation for failing not only to say but to do, we have the confidence that we can now rely upon something that the Lord has identified and clarified is sufficient or adequate, in order for the tasks that we've been handed to be accomplished. Or in other words, while they may not be perfect, they are **enough** for God to labor with us to continue the Restoration. Therefore, our act of collective repentance to return again has pleased the Lord enough that He's given us acceptance and extended to us the opportunity to enter into a covenant.

Jacob (Nephi's brother) delivered a sermon that Nephi records in his second book. In his second book, after Jacob had read from Isaiah to teach his brethren that were interested in learning about things, he then elaborates or explains the prophecy given by Isaiah:

"And now my beloved brethren, I have read these things that ye might know concerning

*the covenants of the Lord, that he has covenanted with **all the house of Israel**"*
(2 Nephi 6:1 RE).

That's important—because "all the house of Israel" is greater than those that they left behind at Jerusalem. "All the house of Israel" is greater even than the Nephites plus those left at Jerusalem. The Ten Tribes had left the Northern Kingdom. They had migrated away years before Lehi left Jerusalem. Therefore, "all the house of Israel" (which includes those scattered on the isles of the sea, as the Nephites were) were remembered, and Jacob wants his brethren to understand that God's plan is all-inclusive, wherever they are, in whatever scattered condition. Even if they've altogether lost their identity as members of the house of Israel, yet they are remembered in the covenants of the Lord.

*...[he's] spoken unto the Jews by the mouth of his holy [prophet], even from the beginning, down from generation to generation, until the time cometh that they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God, when they shall be gathered home [into] the lands of their inheritance [lands—plural, not singular] and shall be established in **all their lands** of promise. (ibid)*

What Jacob is teaching to his brethren is that there are those who have received (who belong to the house of Israel) covenants that have handed to them—by covenant—**lands**, plural. This land has people upon it today who have entered into a covenant (with the Lord today) that has made this land a place of their inheritance. The descendants of the Lamanites likewise descend from fathers with whom a covenant was made that **they** inherit this land. The Jews in Israel have a promise given them; that land is theirs by divine decree—God gave it to them; it is their land. And there are **other** broken branches from the house of Israel living on lands (their descendants today) that they possess by right.

Jacob continued his sermon over a second day; and in the sermon the second day, this is the second part of Jacob's teaching concerning the covenants:

*Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are **in the flesh**, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, **shall perish**; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth. For they who are not **for me** are against me, saith our God. For I will fulfill my promises which I have made unto the children of men that I will do unto them **while they are in the flesh**. (2 Nephi 7:3 RE, emphasis added)*

This isn't some dreamy, distant, other-worldly event. He says He is going to establish, in the flesh, a people that will become Zion; and He will defend those people who are His Zion.

As Nephi closes his record, he explains plainly what he wants us (the Gentiles) to understand from his record:

Woe...unto him that shall say, We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough. ...unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them [which] say, We have enough — shall be taken away even that which they have.

...I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me...

There shall be many at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I...remember my covenants which I have made unto the

children of men, that I may...remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that...shall say, A bible, a bible, [we've] got a bible, ...there cannot be any more bible. But thus saith the Lord...O fools, [that] shall have a bible...

O ye gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay, but [you've] cursed them, [you've] hated them, and have not sought to recover them...

Thou fool that shall say, A bible, [we've] got a bible and we need no more bible. Have ye obtained a bible, save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? ...I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and...I remember those [that] are upon the isles of the sea? ...I rule in the heavens above and [I rule] in the earth beneath...Wherefore murmur ye because...ye shall receive more of my word? (2 Nephi 12:6-9 RE)

That was the very objective that Abraham sought: to **get more** of God's word. He wanted to know more; he wanted to receive commandments; he wanted to receive instructions.

Because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another...

*The Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews, and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel, and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. ...My people which are of the house of Israel shall be gathered home [into] the **lands** of their [possession], and my word also shall be gathered in one. ...I am God, and...I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed for ever (2 Nephi 12:10 RE, emphasis added)—*

That includes those portions of the family of Abraham that migrated out of the view of the scriptures we presently possess, so that when they drop out of the Biblical narrative (or they drop out of the Book of Mormon narrative), God was still with them; He was still doing with them; He was still leading them and teaching them; and ultimately, He visited them. All of them kept records. Those are all to be restored.

Ye need not suppose that the gentiles are utterly destroyed. For behold, I say unto you, as many of the gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord... For the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 12:11 RE)

Therefore, the covenant people of the Lord (according to the Book of Mormon) who will inherit the promises of Abraham necessarily include those gentiles who are willing to covenant with Him to allow Him to labor through them to restore things that will bring the remainder of the house of Israel back to the knowledge of their God.

Mormon interrupts his narrative summary of events by an observation he makes about the work of the Lord (inserted into his account just prior to the final round of apostasy, violence, and the great tempest that destroyed the wicked—and then Christ's visit to the other sheep that are covered in the Book of Mormon). This is Mormon's insertion into the record:

Surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God. And as surely as the Lord liveth [he will] gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob.... He hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled, in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant [which] he hath covenanted with them.... Then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.... (3 Nephi 2:18 RE)

In Christ's teachings to the Nephites (after He had been resurrected, appeared to them, had them come and be in contact and witness of His death and resurrection), He delivered to them the Sermon on the Mount in a slightly different form, the Sermon at Bountiful. And after He had taught that sermon, He commanded that they write down and preserve these teachings that He's going to give:

(Hmm... someone wrote in the margin of my book. It looks like my handwriting, so I wanted to read that.)

...the remnant of their seed, who [should] be scattered forth upon the face of the earth because of their unbelief, may be brought in... (3 Nephi 7:4 RE)—

Okay, He's now talking to the Nephite believers about the descendants of the Nephite believers, and He's telling them, "You have to write this down." And He tells them what they're to write down is that eventually their descendants are gonna be scattered upon the face of the earth because of their **unbelief**, but those descendants may be brought in. The note I wrote in the margin is that even the Lamanite remnant, who are the target of the covenant, **have to be reclaimed**, have to be brought in, have to **know** of their inheritance in order to take advantage **of** it. If they're not brought in, then they still suffer under the plague of unbelief.

...because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me...I [will] gather them in...I [will] fulfill the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.... In the latter day shall the truth come unto the gentiles, that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them. (Ibid.)

In other words, He's promising to the Nephites... Their descendants are going to fall away, but He promises their descendants will be gathered back in. In order to bring the

descendants back in, He's promising them that the Gentiles shall receive **this knowledge**—the truth shall come unto the knowledge,

...that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them... I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fullness of my gospel. But if the gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. (3 Nephi 7:4-5 RE)

When the Gentiles repent and they return, then they're numbered back—just like the descendants of the Nephites when they're awakened and repent and are taught the truth and return unto God. All become one house, one fold, one people.

Then, after Christ had introduced the sacrament and had commanded that Isaiah's words be searched because they tell of fulfilling of God's covenant, Christ then teaches:

This people will I establish in this land unto the fulfilling of the covenant which I made with your father Jacob, and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And the Powers of Heaven shall be in the midst of this people, yea, even I will be in the midst of you. (3 Nephi 9:8 RE)

Christ is reiterating to this group, in this setting, promises directly to them that He had previously given to Enoch about what would happen in the last days. When He told Enoch about it, He said that there would come a point at which righteousness and truth would spring forth; it would be upon the earth; there would be a tabernacle or a temple there; and that He, along with Enoch's people, would return and fall upon and kiss the necks of those who gathered there. This is the same prophecy that was given to Enoch (one of those first Fathers in that first direct descent)—this is a covenant that Christ is reiterating, but it goes back to the first Fathers. Indeed, if we had a full restoration of all that had been given, we would know that the gospel in its fullness was understood far better by the first generations, or the original Fathers, than it is understood by us today. He says to the people gathered there (this is Christ, same talk):

Ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed, the Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities — and this because ye are the children of the covenant. And after...ye were blessed, then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed, unto the pouring out of the holy ghost through me upon the gentiles. (Ibid.)

In genealogical research, what you find is that if you start with yourself and you go backwards generations for about 500 years, your genealogy chart expands and expands and expands. And at about the 500-year-mark, it begins to contract and contract and contract, so that the genetic spread of the blood of Abraham throughout

the world is so far and so wide that you practically can't find people anywhere on the earth that don't have some of the blood of Abraham, to whom He said, "all the kindreds of the earth will be blessed in thy seed."

If they shall harden their hearts against me, I will return their iniquities upon their own heads, saith the Father. And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people, and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance. (Ibid.)

So, it should begin to emerge into your view that physical descendancy is one thing to open up an opportunity—but covenanting, remembering, repenting, returning, accepting what God has to offer is the component in the last days that distinguishes whether or not they are **redeemed**, whether or not they are to be **gathered**, whether or not they are to be **recognized** in the own due time of the Lord as His, to be protected and to be preserved against the harvest. It's not enough merely to have genealogical connection back to some remnant of Father Abraham.

I can trace my genealogy back to Jewish ancestry, to Native American ancestry. That doesn't mean a thing if I don't repent and return. I remain on the outside. I remain a Gentile. I remain a disbeliever unworthy to be gathered. I suspect everyone in this room has a direct genealogical connection, probably, not only to Abraham but also Joseph—and perhaps eleven out of the twelve tribes of Israel. It's just the way that descendancy works.

Christ continues:

Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; ...then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance....

*When these things which I declare unto you — and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself and by the power of the holy ghost...shall be made known unto the gentiles, that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob...it shall be a sign unto them that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel. ...The gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, that **they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel...** (3 Nephi 9:10-11 RE)—*

...means that it was always the design that the Gentiles should also be gathered in—or that what is, in all likelihood, an unsavory, bitter-fruit-producing branch of the original

tree should be taken and gathered back to the original root and gather nourishment from that original root, that they may come in and be numbered among the house of Israel. It's always been the intention of the Lord to restore the Gentiles and to make them the means through which the last days' work would become accomplished.

As Mormon completed the record of Christ's visit to the Nephites, he provided this description of the Book of Mormon's purpose:

*When the Lord shall see fit in his wisdom that these sayings shall come unto the gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel concerning their restoration to the **lands** of their inheritance is already beginning to be fulfilled. And ye may know that the words of the Lord which have been spoken by the holy prophets **shall all be fulfilled**.... The Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 13:7 RE, emphasis added)*

And as Moroni concluded the record, he inserted some final words of instruction for the people who would receive the Book of Mormon in the last days. These words were taught to him by his father. He says:

*Hath miracles ceased? ...I say unto you, nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For...they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, [showing] themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the **covenants** of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, ...declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him; and by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the holy ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father the **covenants** which he hath made unto the children of men. (Moroni 7:6 RE, emphasis added)*

There are numerous other passages in the Book of Mormon that speak to the same thing. The Book of Mormon is a forerunner—a harbinger—that was intended to say to the people who receive it: There are covenants that go back to the very beginning, to the original Fathers. Those covenants got renewed/they got restored/they got continued in the form of Abraham (who received all that had been there originally) coming out of apostasy and being adopted back into that line of Patriarchs. That original covenant material provoked the creation of the Book of Mormon, and it is one of the major testimonies that is given to us by the Book of Mormon about the work that God intends to do in the last days. You can believe in the Bible; you can accept Jesus as your Savior; you can be (in the words of the Evangelical community) "born again." You can be (in the words of Latter-day Saints) someone whose calling and election is made sure. But the work of God, at this point, is not about, merely, individual salvation; it is the work of fulfilling the covenants that were made with the Fathers. It is the work of

restoring again that original gospel (of which the law given to Moses pointed forward to but did not comprehend).

We tend to view priesthood in institutional ways. And it's hard to be terribly critical of misunderstandings because, quite frankly, priestly authority (following the success of the Petrine branch of original Christianity and its triumph, with emphasis on authority and priesthood and keys) predisposed the entire Christian world. Even the Christian world, after the Protestant Reformation, succeeded in finally breaking off areas in which a different form of protest Christianity could be practiced that was not subservient to the Roman "See" and papal decree. They still had this misapprehension about priesthood. So, when Joseph Smith began to talk about priesthood and to begin the process of restoring it, he gave a new kind of vocabulary, but possession of a vocabulary does not mean possession of the thing.

When Abraham talks about becoming a rightful heir and becoming a high priest, it would be best if you threw out everything that you have heard or learned or understood about the concept of priesthood. Priesthood includes the prerogative, the right, the obligation, or the duty to go out and perform ordinances that are effective, that God will recognize to be sure—and that's part of it, and it's a true principle.

However, priesthood in the original sense was something far more vast. It included an understanding of things that relate back all the way to the beginning—or before the world was—and goes forward through all periods of time until the end. It includes a basis of knowledge. So, when you read Abraham's description of what it was he looked for, and he mentions priesthood, you have to merge that into the entirety of what he's talking about: knowledge, understanding, commandments, instructions; having the capacity to see things in their correctly-ordered fashion, similarly to how God originally intended that it be ordered—so that you are no longer out-of-sync with this creation and doing your best to "reign with blood and horror" by subduing nature with the iron plow and gunpowder and lead—but instead you find yourself situated in a place that Eden itself can be renewed, and harmony can be achieved between man and the earth.

The Book of Mormon is talking about something vast, but it continually points back to Abraham. And I do not care what arguments can be made (or what a pitiful effort has been put together) to defend the Book of Abraham that Joseph Smith provided us. It was essential to the Restoration that the book of Abraham be given to us, because without it, we would not understand a great deal about the Restoration and what the final objective of the Restoration was to achieve.

If you're going to please God, you don't please Him by having your "born again" experience (or having your "calling and election made sure" experience) if the result of that is to make you proud, conceited, self-assured, and arrogant, and to disconnect you from the restoration process that was begun through Joseph Smith and has yet a greater work to be done than was achieved at the time of Joseph Smith. Go off and be saved, but you will not fulfill the work of the covenants that God intends to achieve. He has committed himself to that end.

Those who will labor alongside Him—whether they be Gentile or Lamanite or Jew, it does not matter—if they will repent and accept the process of the Restoration, as it began through Joseph Smith, not only to say it correctly but to do what it tells us needs to be done, then you will be numbered among those people that God has covenanted to gather against the coming harvest.

But if you want to be the lone guru, whose commentaries fill pages of blogging and hours of pontification, but you're going to labor at odds, I read you the warning: All that fight against Zion are going to perish. So, you can shout your hallelujahs in the spirit world, and you can proclaim your calling and election guarantees you something, but quite frankly, practically everyone's calling and election can be made sure. You get to continue progress. You get to continue to repent. God's not gonna terminate you at the end of this cycle of creation but you're gonna be allowed to go on—and upward, if you'll continue to repent.

You will always be free to choose, but the work of the covenants that the Book of Mormon foretell are to be accomplished through the reclaiming (by repentance and returning to Him) of Gentiles that will, ultimately, reach out to (and include) restoring the Lamanites/ restoring the Jews to a knowledge of the works of the Father, that—**that**—is what is on the mind of God today. **That** is the purpose of the covenant that was given unto us in Boise, just a few years ago—two years ago. **That** is what fulfilling the covenant ultimately requires that we labor to achieve.

That effort began in earnest with the reclaiming of the scriptures and the presenting of those to the Lord for His acceptance—and the marvelous news that God accepted them as adequate for His purpose for us—and the commitment that He would labor with us to go forward.

Anyone can join the party. Anyone can come into this work. Anyone can remain a Catholic or a Presbyterian, a Catholic or a Latter-day Saint. It doesn't matter. Those things are more like civic clubs. I don't care if you're a Rotarian or a Kiwanis Club member—means about the same thing as belonging to any of those organizations. Associate with whoever you like to associate with, but you **must** accept baptism. You **must** accept the Book of Mormon. It **is** a **covenant**. The covenant must be accepted, and you **must** help labor alongside those who seek to return Zion.

Now, just a couple of short comments.

(Wow, I took more time than I thought I was gonna take. I know they gave you a schedule, but whatever I'm gonna cover, I'm gonna cover—and then we'll sing or whatever comes next.)

In September 2014... I want to remind you of something. This was the talk given down in Phoenix, September 14, 2014:

Last general conference the entire First Presidency, the 12, the 70, and all other general authorities and [their] auxiliaries, voted to sustain those who abused their authority in casting me out of the church. At that moment, the Lord ended all claims of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to claim it is led by the priesthood [meaning the leaders who exercise control, compulsion, and dominion, and not the powerless who had no part in the affair]. They have not practiced what He requires. The Lord has brought about His purposes. This has been [done] in His heart all along. He has chosen to use small means to accomplish it, but He always uses the smallest of means to fulfill His purposes. (*40 Years in Mormonism*, Talk 10, "Preserving the Restoration," page 8 of the paper)

If you will take a moment to consider the path that has been taken by that church's leaders since April of 2014, you can see how (in only five years) they have shown, by their decisions, the lack of heavenly guidance. Their trajectory will continue to arc downward. If you doubted my declaration in Phoenix in September 2014, then do not doubt the course taken by those church leaders since then.

Then I gave some closing remarks in the September 3, 2017 conference that I want to read to you:

Those who have entered faithfully into the covenant this day are going to notice some things. The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly more angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. There is increasing anger and resentment of gentiles. In political terms, it's rejection of white privilege.

Language of scripture gives a description of the events now underway and calls it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process, with the spirit withdrawing, will end on this continent as it did with two prior civilizations in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as that light becomes eclipsed, the coldness of men's hearts is going to result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked.

The covenant, if it is kept, will prevent you from losing light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. The time will come when you will be astonished at the gulf between the light and truth you will comprehend and the darkness of mind of the world. (Closing Remarks, Covenant of Christ Conference, 3 September 2017, pg. 1)

And I ended by saying:

May God bless you and send to each of you a growing light and warmth. As the spirit withdraws from the world may it continually shine un-eclipsed on each of you to enlighten your minds and warm your hearts. (Ibid, pg. 2)

In the *Answer* that we received, there was an explanation given to us. It says:

In your language you use the name Lucifer for an angel who was in authority before God, who rebelled, fought against the work of the Father and was cast down to the earth. His name means holder of light, or light bearer, for he had gathered light by his heed and diligence before he rebelled. He has become a vessel containing only wrath and seeks to destroy all who will hearken to him. He is now enslaved to his own hatred.

Satan is a title, and means accuser, opponent and adversary; hence once he fell, Lucifer became, or in other words was called, Satan, because he accuses others and opposes the Father.

...there are those who have been Satan, accusing one another, wounding hearts and causing jarring, contention, and strife by their accusations. Rather than loving one another, even among you who desire a good thing, some have dealt unkindly as if they were opponents, accusers and adversaries. In this they were wrong.

You have sought to recover the scriptures because you hope to obtain the covenant for my protective hand to be over you, but you cannot be Satan and be mine. (T&C 157:7-10)

I read those excerpts from the talk in Phoenix and from the Covenant Conference in Boise to remind you about what was described in both of those events. There **is** a process that **is** underway. People are increasingly accusing, opposing, and fighting with one another without good cause. It is as if they are submitting themselves to listen to obey the spirit of Satan (or the spirit of strife, envy, jarring, accusing). That course is not going to change. I hope it may plateau for a season. There are things we have to do, and we need something other than chaos and warfare, in order to accomplish the things that we need to achieve. But I believe when the command is given, that we're going to have to act with alacrity if we are going to be able to fulfill the covenants and the obligations that have been promised by God and handed to us to do.

But don't expect the world to get better, and don't expect organized religions to get better. But hopefully, there will be more and more who come to take refuge among a band of believers who have no hierarchy, office, position, who have only ourselves to fellowship with informally, gathering at one another's homes, renting (on occasion) facilities like these to meet in larger groups.

I intend to continue my efforts among all of those people that I have been working with up to this point. I will continue that labor for so long as I am allowed to participate in any of this. But each of us, similarly, have the same kind of obligation to spread the truth and the knowledge and the scriptures (that we now have) that more accurately recover. We

have to go back to what was given to us through Joseph Smith as the foundation, in order to qualify to be able to move forward.

The new scriptures are a vital part of the Restoration process. And I want to thank all of those who participated in that recovery effort—because it was not easy and it wasn't just one or two people. There was a great number of people, ultimately, who were necessary, in order to get the work accomplished. But as the Lord labored with the group and opened doors, there literally were computer programs that were essential to the collaborative process that were not available. There were resource materials that were essential to the collaborative process that came out, either online or in print, just in time to be available so that the work could be accomplished. The timing, the serendipitous occurrence that coincided with the scripture effort was remarkable. And all that were involved realized that this was not a work that could have been done ten years ago, let alone attempted last century. This is a work that only could be done at the time that it took place because the doors opened and materials became available.

So with that, there is a musical number and then an intermission. And so, we can shout, Hallelujah, indeed! And then, I'm supposed to come back here and answer questions. Someone handed me a bag of questions. I'll come back; I'll be back at twelve. The musical number is next—if they want to come up. You know, why don't we resume at ten to twelve. Is everyone okay with that? Let's do that. Let's do that.

2019.09.22 Conference Q&A Session

Keeping the Covenant Conference

September 22, 2019

College of Idaho, Caldwell, Idaho

Hah! I guess it's "ten to" [the hour], and the blessed moment has arrived. That was a great musical number, and both Sarah [Sariah] and Doug did a remarkable job with that. And I'm led to believe that there's yet another great musical number coming up to conclude this.

I was handed some questions and some of 'em are pretty good, and let me see what good I can do.

[QUESTION:] How can you know if the boils you receive in life are due to being like unto Job, or because you are more akin to Pharaoh?

[ANSWER:] It's a great question; I love the question. First, there's an interesting exercise that I would commend to any of you. Go to the account of Exodus, the early events, and only read the words of Moses. Just read Moses' responses, his reactions, his complaints, his fear, his doubts—and what you will realize is that it doesn't matter if someone occupies a great position, as Moses did, or the lives that each of us are now living. No one fits easily or comfortably or without anxiety into the work of the Lord. There's a measure that you take of yourself in which you look inward and say, "I'm not adequate to what needs to be done; I don't have the faith required." And you'll see that that's exactly what Moses was telling God—that looking inward, he did not think himself equal to it.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi gives us an account of their journey—after they had been delivered from Jerusalem which was about to be destroyed and they were migrating—here are some comments that he makes about their experience:

- *"We have suffered much afflictions, hunger, thirst, and fatigue"* (1 Nephi 16:35; see also 1 Nephi 5:10 RE);
- *"...we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness"* (1 Nephi 17:1; see also 1 Nephi 5:11 RE);
- *"...we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea even so much that we cannot write them all"* (1 Nephi 17:6; see also 1 Nephi 5:14 RE).

This is Nephi explaining his experience in the wilderness. Afflictions, hunger, thirst, fatigue—so many afflictions that they can't even talk about 'em. We don't look at those words; we pass over them as if Nephi were somehow being modest, or Nephi were being self-deprecating. We pass over what Moses says when he's getting the responsibilities imposed upon him by the Lord, as if it's just common sense that he's heroic and larger than life and greater than the common man. When you read his reaction, he sounds like us: he sounds common, he sounds ordinary. And when you read the lamentation—we suffer because we are... because we're mortal, because we're here, because that's the common lot that is designed to be experienced as a consequence of the fall. And there's no escaping that.

The question isn't: Are we going to suffer while we are here? The only question is: To what degree do we bear up under the troubles of this life, graciously and humbly—and acknowledging that God rules in the heavens above; He rules in the earth beneath; and He rules in your life, too. And that everything that you experience is designed to make you be added upon by the things that you suffer and the things that you experience here.

[QUESTION:] I was asked, verbally, if I would comment on some of the challenges that people of faith have in defending the Book of Abraham.

[ANSWER:] And that's probably a subject that's worth writing about, rather than just talking off the cuff, but—here's, generally, my observation. The people want to know what Joseph did and how he did it, in order for them to understand, maybe, how **they** can do it.

So there's this relentless inquiry into: "How did that process take place? What went on?" When, in fact, the gifts of God are almost entirely incapable of being transferred from one to another. Each person has to come to God on their own.

Oliver Cowdery was a man of faith, and he believed in Christ and the possibility of the second coming of Christ being proximate (or in close proximity) to his life. He believed in, and he got answers from God; and then he hears about what Joseph is doing, and he goes to become his scribe.

One of the early revelations that were given to Oliver talked about his, Oliver's, own gift—that he had this gift, in which Oliver could get yes or no answers by using the (what we would call a) "divining rod" (or a stick) that would respond positively or negatively to inquiry. And so he had this—and the revelation does not call it anything other than "a gift." It may seem like a peculiar gift to you and I; but it's, nevertheless, a gift, and it came from God.

Joseph had a gift in which he was capable of receiving revelation—sometimes through instrumentalities, sometimes by study, sometimes simply by God speaking through him in the first person in a spontaneous way. How he went about doing that is unique to him. The way in which you relate to God is unique to you. Running out and trying to replicate something—in order for you to know the process by which God involved Himself in revelation in Joseph Smith's experience—is not gonna teach you what Joseph Smith experienced. In the same fashion, those that would like to anchor the process of restoring the Book of Abraham to the surviving remnant of the Joseph Smith papyri and to say that that is the source material from which the Book of Abraham was derived are neglecting the bigger part of the process.

Can God use a bird in flight to answer a prayer? Can God use a billboard to convey a truth or an idea? Can God use a song to inspire you? Can God use the words of a poet, speaking about something entirely different, to convey to the mind, inspired by the light

of Heaven, to see those words in a context that speaks directly and immediately to what it is that they're searching for?

There's a line in one of the Indigo Girls' songs: "The less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine" (*Closer to Fine*, Indigo Girls). It's a beautiful song. It's about the frustration that they have with gurus, generally, and the notion that you really need to divorce yourself—"There's more than one answer to these questions, Pointing me in a crooked line" is part of that same song. "I spent four years prostrate to the higher mind, Got my paper and I was free... The less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine." Because the answers that you get from most of the authoritative sources will always point you in a crooked line, but the paths of God are straight. Which is one of the reasons why I juxtaposed those two issues involving "sacrificing for the sacred" and "sacrificing for the benefit of man"—which, if you adopt in an absolute sense, point you in a crooked line. And yet, it's incumbent upon you to find the harmony, to find the middle road, to find the path that reflects the graciousness of Christ's walk while he was down here in this troubled sphere, dealing with all of the troubling issues in which we find ourselves.

In one of the very earliest meetings that we have a report of, Hyrum Smith got up to introduce his brother, Joseph, and he introduced him by saying, And Joseph will now explain to you the process by which the Book of Mormon was translated. And Joseph got up and said, It's not needful for that to be explained. The person who understood the process of translating the Book of Mormon was Joseph Smith. Even the scribes who were in the immediate area don't know the process by which the Book of Mormon was translated. The reason for settling upon the Book of Abraham (and the remnant or relic of the Book of Abraham) as a basis for criticizing Joseph Smith is to enable them (who desire to discredit Joseph) to then extend the argument from the translation of the papyri to the translation of the Book of Mormon—so that they can dismiss the work of Joseph Smith altogether and not have to trouble themselves with the heavy, unnerving obligation that devolves upon the shoulders of every person who finds out that God sent a prophet (in the form of Joseph Smith) in order to begin anew and complete the process of preparing mankind for the second coming of the Lord. And so, criticisms directed at the Book of Abraham and that translation process are surrogate for criticism, ultimately, intended to be aimed at the Book of Mormon—in order that Joseph might be diminished as a authoritative figure, on the one hand, to equip you to dismiss him as authoritative figure, on the other hand. People want a much smaller, more cunning, more contriving, less virtuous Joseph Smith because then it justifies **them** in their smallness and cunningness and treachery in dealing with their fellow man.

One of the reasons why I mentioned, earlier, *A Man Without Doubt* is because it's impossible (in my view) for a small, cunning man to write the things that Joseph Smith wrote in the three transcripts of his three longest writings (apart from the Book of Mormon) that are put into *A Man Without Doubt*—particularly given the graciousness with which Joseph Smith endured the circumstances he was put into by the betrayal of people who should have been his friends and who should have endeavored, in a kindly manner, to reclaim him if they thought he were deluded. That's a quote from what

Joseph Smith wrote about his history in the Joseph Smith History (see JSH 2:10 RE) that he was recreating in 1838, after being betrayed by John Whitmer (the church historian who took all of the history) and his brother (one of the three witnesses). They betrayed him, and they took it.

So, when Joseph was writing in 1838, and he was reflecting back upon how he was treated when he had mentioned (to a handful of people) the first vision—when that had happened (in 1820, as he dates it in that history), he wasn't really talking about the persecution that he had received when he was a child; he was commenting to the people of his day who, if they had thought him to be deluded, ought to have endeavored, in a kind and affectionate manner, to have reclaimed him, instead of betraying him and surrendering both him and the people who remained true to him to violence.

Well, if you start with the **real** proposition about the Book of Abraham, that's **really** where we ought to go first. And that is: Is Joseph Smith the kind of man that would be capable of receiving a revelation to outline for us something going back to the era of Abraham and give us insight by restoring a text? Is Joseph Smith capable of doing that? Or is he a craven manipulator who's dishonest and inventive and fanciful, egomaniacal, and in it for his own self-gain? **That's** the real question that the 'Book of Abraham translation issues' raise.

And for the answer to **that** question, I don't think you can parse your way through a relic of papyri—which is clearly only a fragment of what he was working with and doesn't match, at all, the description of the text being in a beautiful hand in both red and black ink [from a letter Oliver Cowdery sent to William Frye, dated December 25, 1835, and published in the Latter Day Saints' *Messenger and Advocate* of the same month]. It's a rather sloppy hand (the fragment we have), and there's no red ink. It's black ink, and it's sloppily done.

I don't think we should let Joseph Smith off the hook for being accountable and responsible to **us** for being a virtuous man, for being a truthful man, for being a reliable man. But I don't think you answer those questions by an **appeal** to a fragment of papyri and what modern Egyptologists may be able to divine from a complex language that had migrated from hieroglyph to hieratic to demotic—and that, too, over millennia of time in which...

Abraham came along at the first intermediate period. These papyri? They were created in the Greco-Roman era. What...about eighteen dynasties later? After the influence of the Greco-Roman world? The *Book of Breathing*s and the text from which this was drawn, the *Book of the Dead*, these are very, very Egyptologically late documents. There's nothing comparable to it in an existing culture—maybe in China; maybe if you go to Hong Kong, and you walk down the street in Hong Kong, and you take a look at all the advertisements that are on the billboards that are in both English and Mandarin (or Cantonese—I don't know what they're using on the road signs or their billboards there); and you take that as the measure of reconstructing something from one of the earliest

Chinese dynasties. And you say, There was no McDonalds back then; it doesn't work. You're literally trying to bridge a gulf that is almost unimaginably foreign.

So, the earliest pictographic representations were done alongside a **story**. So, you get a pictographic representation, and you get a story that tells you what this picture is about. Can the picture be replicated to tell yet another story by making a few minor changes and then telling a different story? The answer to that is (obviously) yes, you could. It's not until later that you begin to insert into the text (in addition to the pictographic representation) additional commentary that's designed to explain what this particular one is telling you in this particular setting. But that doesn't mean that the representation hasn't been borrowed from another account or an earlier account or a different account and been slightly modified and adapted, in order to tell another story, based upon the same kind of pictographic representation.

The fact that I have concluded that Joseph Smith was a restrained man (in many respects, a very modest man), whose defense of what he believed to be the truth was fierce, but who recognized that there were a lot of people (including his own wife, Emma Smith) who had a better education than did he—

Joseph was like a sponge when he thought he could get truth or help from others, and he was meek and humble in that respect. But if God had revealed something to him, he was an iron-fisted, immovable man for the truth, personally and privately, just as the scriptures say concerning Moses. Moses was the meekest of all men. If you just read the dialogue from Moses (in Exodus), you'll see nothing but meekness in that man. If you'll read Joseph Smith's three documents in *A Man Without Doubt*, you'll see a meek man—**unbelievably frustrated** by some of the circumstances into which he was put, **searching** to find the right way out of the dilemma, **trying** to get God aroused to anger in the same way that the circumstances aroused Joseph to anger, but **submitting always** to whatever the will of God was for him. Ultimately, Joseph Smith left to go to be imprisoned in Carthage, knowing he would not come back from there (or at least expecting that he would not)—and commenting about how his life was no value to his friends, as he returned and he went back for the slaying.

Say what you want about those final moments in the life of Joseph Smith. He put himself in harm's way to prove his fidelity to his friends. He would not forsake **them** (as they claimed he was doing in **their** hour of need) and ultimately gave his life up. That's not the conduct of a con-man. That's not the way in which someone who's going to lie and cheat and steal and behave as an immoral exploiter of others would conduct their lives. Joseph, in my view, was not just a virtuous man, but he qualified as one of those who hath no greater love, because he went back and surrendered at the behest of his brethren—in part, with the hope that by losing **his** life, Nauvoo would be spared the slaughter that had gone on at Far West and Haun's Mill and elsewhere.

And so, when you ask about the translation issues and the controversy over the Book of Abraham, the bottom line/the real issue is: However the mind of Joseph was set on fire

with the restoration text of father Abraham's account of his search, you have to decide that the content either is from heaven or it's a lie.

There was a series (it's now been abandoned, but it's a series that was begun at Brigham Young University), the first volume of it—the Book of Abraham series—the first volume of it was pretty good. What they did was take concepts that are included in the text of the Book of Abraham which were completely unknown in the Christian world at the time that the Book of Abraham was put into print. They had to be **unique** concepts. If you could already find them in the Bible or if you could already find them in what was available to the Christian world, generally, then those weren't included. They had to be **unique** ideas. They took and gathered the unique ideas that come out in the Book of Abraham (about which Joseph Smith would have known nothing), and then they looked into other material that exists (from diverse places) about legends or stories concerning the life of Abraham. And what they found is that there were **Hindu** traditions that talked about Abraham, that preserved some of the very same incidents that are only found in the Book of Abraham at the time Joseph published the Book of Abraham. They found there were **Islamic** texts that were similarly describing the same kind of event, the same incident that's unique to the Book of Abraham. They found sources that were in **Coptic Egyptian** texts. They amalgamated into one volume (it's a pretty big volume) all of the parallel accounts from the life of Abraham (in cultures from around the world or religious traditions from around the world) that Joseph Smith nailed on the head in his account of the Book of Abraham.

That approach does not defend Joseph Smith as a translator of Egyptian, because it has nothing to do with the papyri. But it does a pretty good job of defending Joseph Smith as a **revelator**, as someone to whom God could reveal light and truth and he could accurately record it—because echoes of the unique material in the Book of Abraham show up in the ancient world and in other cultures that date back nearly to the time of Abraham. So, the real question is, Do you trust Joseph?

[QUESTION:] Okay. Oh, here's one. This was from a kid, and I like this question. Why are there angels?

[ANSWER:] That's a great question.

[Angels] are subject [to God], to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, ... declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ (Moroni 7:30-32; see also Moroni 7:6 RE).

There's a system that was adopted before the foundation of the world that was designed to bring to pass the salvation/the resurrection of all mankind after we fall into the grave.

That system requires a lot of things to come together in order to achieve the purposes of God. You might think that the purpose of angels (in some of the online extravagant claims that we read that people make) is to appeal to the vanity and the pride of those to whom they come.

But my experience teaches me that the purpose of angels is to, first, cry repentance to the individual—because every individual before God is in need of repentance. There are none of us who have gone through life, or who go through life daily, without giving offense— however unintended and however slight—we, nevertheless, give offense to our fellow man and to God. We excuse ourselves—we just don't measure up. The office of the angelic ministrant is to snap you back out of the fog of "indifference to the casualness in which you discharge your daily obligations" and to awaken you to the **peril** that each of us face if we don't repent and return to God. It's to make us soberly assess our own personal inadequacies. But their office isn't to get someone, somewhere, to pay attention to them and to try and be a better boy or girl. Their office is to invoke the salvation process, itself, for the benefit of mankind.

Those to whom angelic ministrants have come from heaven are given assignments to labor for the salvation of others. They use their own resources, and they wear out their lives and their time in pursuing the obligations imposed upon them, which include:

- the salvation of others,
- the crying of repentance to others,
- the bringing to pass the fulfillment of the covenants that God made with the Fathers.

If they're not laboring on an errand such as that, but they claim to be receiving "God and Jesus in their living room who came and told them all about this or that," I don't know who they're entertaining—but it certainly doesn't fit the model, and it certainly doesn't fulfill the covenants of the Father nor do the work that's necessary in order to prepare the people for the coming of the world [Lord] *so that the whole earth is not utterly wasted at His coming* (see JSH 3:4 RE).

Salvation for the souls of men is something that no one ought to be trifling with, least of all those who are vain and proud. And I don't care if that vanity comes because they think they're somehow specially chosen by some imagined encounter with the Great Beyond, or if they think they've been so careful in their study of scripture that they know better than all others because they can clearly see a pattern through their own study, labor, and effort. I don't care what you think the correct interpretation of the scriptures are or will be. It's fair game to look at 'em in whatever fashion you want to look at them. But when an angel from heaven **tells** you what God is doing—or when the Lord Himself declares **what and how** he intends to go about vindicating the covenants that **He** made with the Fathers—then there's no room to come up with a contrary interpretation. The fact is, your interpretation, then, is wrong. And the humble man and the searcher for light and truth will adapt what they understand from their learning and study to what it is that the Lord has declared. And what they will find is that if they'll conform to the word of the Lord, that their study and their learning is still of great benefit because it helps them to see things more clearly.

Scriptures are sometimes written, deliberately, in a way that conceals how the Lord intends to fulfill them—in order to let those who may mean mischief never arrive at the correct formula. And the proud and the haughty and all those that do wickedly are not necessarily irreligious or not necessarily unpersuaded that there's a restoration that is taking place through Joseph—they simply will not **yield** to what it is that God says they mean; they will not **yield** to the work that God says He now has underway.

So, angels align with the work of God, and they help bring about the repentance of **all** mankind.

[QUESTION:] If Christ is the prototype of the saved man, is Mary the prototype of the saved woman?

[ANSWER:] Yes.

[QUESTION:] How did She earn Her place on the throne without having atoned?

[ANSWER:] Because She sacrificed and led the Lamb to the slaughter. She had a Lamb whose "fleece was white as snow," and She led that Lamb everywhere She wanted it to go. And She gave up Her Son and attained to the resurrection and laid claim upon Her body because She condescended to come here and to fulfill that work. Read *Our Divine Parents* (Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Gilbert, Arizona, March 25, 2018). I don't know if that question was asked by someone that hasn't read *Our Divine Parents*, but that talk addresses that issue.

[QUESTION:] [Chuckle.] This is a great question. It's probably one of the more important questions that someone came up with: The "name of the Lord," "believe in His name," "believe **on** His name," "do things **in** His name"—and in the Testimony of St. John, they lift the quote: "...what name is now yours." No one asked, What name is now yours? Can you help us understand the importance of the name of the Lord?

[ANSWER:] Yeah, uh, okay—let's put it into a bigger context. Hebrew (in the Old Testament form) lacked vowels. As a consequence of the lack of vowels, the name for the Lord had four Hebrew characters, the tetragram[maton]—which, lacking vowels, became unpronounceable. The pronunciation of that name was the **property** of the High Priest. And the correct pronunciation went from High Priest to High Priest—who would use that name in the Holy of Holies, in order to participate in the ordinances that were required there.

Because the name (we know the consonants, but we don't know the vowels [YHWH]) lacked the ability to pronounce it, when Jerome was working on the Latin Vulgate version and came to the letters, he rendered it "Jehovah." And there are a lot of people who, today, have supplied different vowels, and they render it "Yahweh." (I think the "Yahweh" pronunciation was the creation of a Germanic theological movement in the 1940s, and Yahweh came out of that—although the Germans may have borrowed it

earlier from Yiddish or from Hebrew sources.) But the truth of the matter is that the name of God, like **many** Hebrew words, are late-in-time reconstructions of probable pronunciations of the Hebrew lettering, and they've gained common acceptance, at this point. But if you were to take someone who is absolutely fluent in speaking modern Hebrew and you were to take them back and put them in a setting with/contemporaneous with Moses, even though they may be relying upon the same basic language, they may not even be able to communicate with one another because the pronunciations are so incredibly strange. "Strange." "StrăñGeh." "StrăñGee." The word "strange"—how are you gonna pronounce that? "Străñ Jee." If someone were to say "străñ jee" to you, would you know they intended to be saying strange? You'd think it was gibberish.

The modern convention of how we reconstruct pronunciations is—across the board, and I don't care if you're appealing to the most learned Rabbi breathing today—is **wrong**. It's not correct. And I **know** that to be the case. So, having said that...

Jerome supplied us with "Jehovah." It was early; and so, subsequent additions of Christian literature accepted the convention and used that term as a nomenclature, where anyone who's reading the Bible knows the Personage that we are attempting to assign this identity to or this name to. We know Who we're talking about. But (what the correct pronunciation may be, notwithstanding) we're **calling** Him, "Jehovah." And so King James' translators, Wycliffe, others who rendered the... Martin Luther in his German Bible... They all adopted the pronunciation that had been suggested. So it's just an agreed-upon convention. We know Who we're talking about. We're gonna use this as the Person about whom we're talking.

Then others come along and think, "Well, this is the 'vulgar on the street,' common, ill-informed, uneducated name for the Almighty. But, surely, the Almighty deserves the dignity and the benefit of higher learning, and our higher learning suggests—after we lay 'four years prostrate to the higher mind [and] got [our] paper [which set us] free' (see *Closer to Fine*, Indigo Girls)—we now can say with authority should be 'Yahweh.' It's Yahweh; that's His name—ohmmmm—because only the uninitiated in the mysteries of our theological schools use the common and vulgar term 'Jehovah.' So, when you say 'Jehovah,' I know (from my vantage point atop the ivory tower) that I'm really talking to a Plebeian and a pedestrian and the ignorant who has not yet been initiated into correct pronunciations." Well, it's not Yahweh, either.

The name in Greek of Joshua (or Yeshua)—in Greek is Jesus. And the New Testament was either originally composed (or in it's first translations composed) in Greek. And so, the name that we inherited, as a consequence of running all the stories about Yeshua (or Joshua) through Greek, is Jesus. And the status of being "anointed"—which is what Messiah (or Mashiah) means—"anointed." I mean, it could have been "Joshua, the Anointed," but it turned into "Jesus." And the word in Greek for "anointing" is "Christ" or "Christos." And so, Jesus became Jesus Christ, and that became the common vernacular by which the identity of that Person who came and taught the Sermon on the

Mount, who lived and died as a Jewish teacher, crucified on a Roman cross, and raised the third day from the dead is (in our common language) referred to as Jesus Christ.

Now, you can say, "I would like to be more pure and use 'Yeshua.'" Or, "I would like to be at least more Hebraic and call Him 'Joshua.'" And, "I don't like 'Christ'—I like 'Messiah' or 'Mashiah.' I like that better." And as long as what you're talking about is the same person (the identity of Whom is fixed by scripture), I'm not gonna quibble over how you want to pronounce it.

But the fact of the matter is that in the restoration process, God (who condescends and who is humble enough to speak with men plainly, in plain humility, as one man talks to another) took absolutely no offense to the Book of Mormon and the modern revelations calling Him by the name "Jesus Christ." **I use** the name Jesus Christ, because **He** took no offense in that name.

When John the Baptist came and visited with Oliver and Joseph and conferred upon them authority to baptize, the only name he mentioned was "Messiah." *Upon you, my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the priesthood of Aaron* (JSH 14:1 RE). John's a good Jewish boy, and so he uses a Hebrew-based term rather than a Greek-based term. But it's still not the original Hebrew, pronounced correctly, because that's been lost. The idea...

(Well, I'm not gonna go there. That's a-whole-nother subject, and that's minutes that I don't wanna take.) The correct pronunciation of God belongs (in the **last** dispensation) as it belonged in the beginning: in the temple. And if there were ever a full restoration, that would be one of the things about which information would be granted, and we'd finally clear that up.

But for the present, so far as **I** am concerned, "Jesus Christ" is a perfectly-fitting name to be used in prayer in addressing the Almighty or in referring to Him. And if someone else wants to call Him "Yeshua," it's not gonna trouble me—because I know Who they're talking about. If they want to call Him "Messiah," rather than "Christ," that doesn't trouble me, either. If they want to call Him "Yahweh," I'm fine with that, too. But that doesn't mean I agree that they're correctly nailing the ancient pronunciation of the name (that they're going to some trouble to pretend they possess great knowledge about).

[QUESTION:] What does it mean when the Answer to the Covenant states to not forsake the house of Israel? (See T&C 158:11)

[ANSWER:] You know, the house of Israel occupies a very unique place in history. That is true not only of the Native American remnant of the house of Israel but also of the Jewish house of Israel. We are not to forsake them by ignoring them, by forgetting them, by failing to pray concerning them—people who believe strongly enough in the preservation of their culture. In the Native American sense, their culture was ravaged by apostasy before the arrival of European conquerors, devastated by disease that was imported, defeated in war waged against them, and then consigned to reservation

property; and yet, despite all that, there are Native Americans who hold on to a culture that reaches back and has within it echoes of the very truths that we also find in the Book of Mormon.

Their highest and holy teachings resound with the same themes of light and darkness, creation by God, power in the heavens, accountability for the good deeds you do. They reach more closely and correctly into an understanding that nature, itself, is an extension of God and the mind of God; and that harmony between man and nature is something that is part of their religion and should be, also, part of ours.

The Jews have persisted through centuries of persecution and slaughter. My own family line (when you get back far enough) includes a series of Rabbis. My last name is actually an Americanization of a German—it's an **old** German word, because the transition occurred in the 1400s—in German, the word meant "breath" or "spirit." There's a Hebrew word that means "breath" or "spirit" that is the probable, original family-name that got converted into the Germanic (old Germanic) name or the old Germanic word for "breath," which is, well, it's spelled "S-c-h-n-a-u-f-e-r," which, when they migrated to America (that happened before there was a United States—my ancestors were here long before, more than a century and a half before this country was founded), it was too hard to pronounce, and so it got converted into something that they can pronounce here. At the same time, there were others who came over with the same last name, and their names got altered into other various forms, but the original name goes back to that *ru'ach*—the word for "breath"—it's what animated Adam when he was given breath; it's what the Holy Spirit of God is called in their language.

I don't think that how we decide to pronounce matters when we have language in scripture that—

I don't think you improve or show greater respect or show greater homage or honor to God by adopting a different form. I think you show greater respect for God—no matter by what name you choose to call Him—by your heed and your diligence to what it is that He asks of you. It is in the **doing** of what's requested that we show the respect that He asks of us.

[QUESTION:] Here's another one: Christ said that the gifts of the spirit would follow those who believe. The gifts are far too **uncommon**, even among us. Your ideas, please.

[ANSWER:] Well, one of the things that we are cautioned about is boasting about the gifts of the spirit that we experience. There have been a lot of spiritual/divine encounters/miraculous encounters/vindicated blessings that I have either witnessed or participated in or I know about. And I say very, very little about them.

One of the problems with significant signs is that when **that** is the focus—and not obedience and laboring to achieve what the Lord would have done—when the focus is upon signs, and we boast about 'em, you attract sign-seekers, including the adulterers who lust after such things and run from sign-giver to sign-giver. Christ constantly told

those to whom He performed some miraculous work, See that you tell no man, and they would go out, and they would brag about it, and they would shout about it—and then the net result of that was that a lot of followers were attracted who were not attracted to the **work**. A lot of people were excited to hear some new titillating thing, but they weren't willing to roll up their sleeves and sacrifice. They were not willing to sell all that they had, give to the poor, and come, follow him, as he asked the rich, young man on the road that he was traveling toward Jerusalem, even though, had the rich, young man done that, we would probably all be talking about him today in a name and not in a category. He relegated himself to merely a category because he was unwilling to step out of that category, have his name known to God and to us by the sacrifice that he made in order to follow the Lord.

The fact is, that however appealing you may believe the things of God to be from what you read in scripture, when you begin to live them, you realize every single one of them lived under a strain—a burden. Those words of Moses in early Exodus help illustrate it. Nephi's lamentation about all the trouble that they had (and all the suffering that they did and what they had to endure) was so significant that he can't even explain all the troubles that they passed through. Joseph Smith's life was filled with compromise by his friends; treachery by those that should have stood by him; betrayal; loss after loss; economic circumstance that brought about trouble after trouble; advisers that told him if he would do this, that they would do that, who then failed to keep their obligation to him.

So, there are signs. They do exist. I have witnessed many of them, but I find no value in talking about or appealing to the minds and hearts of those to whom signs are appealing. I would rather keep them and ponder them in my own heart to try to understand—and then to arrive at the point where it is possible, using the scriptures, to teach the truths, just as Nephi (who would not reveal what he'd encountered in a heavenly vision) used Isaiah, in order to testify of the things that had been revealed to him. That's a good pattern. And so, I speak very little about some of the most important things, but I take them into account as I try to teach things that will bring us all to the **labor** of keeping the covenants of the Father.

[QUESTION:] Okay, so now I'm just gonna do something entertaining that reaches far and wide, and you can do with this as you see fit. Okay, who were the three wisemen who visited Jesus after He was born? Where did they come from?

[ANSWER:] Probably Magna. [Audience laughter.] I say that—I hope no one's from Magna!—I say that because I use Magna in a lot of my personal humor. I don't know—if I do this, someone's gonna be sorely offended. But Magna's a small town; it's a mining town. And it's suffered a lot because of mine tailings. And so, you know, there's kind of a perception that if you live in Magna, you're probably gonna have buck-teeth and three legs because your genetic makeup has been altered by the chemicals from the mine out there (that is now bigger than the mountain that it's been carved in).

So, I will occasionally use Magna in a self-deprecating way. Someone pays you a compliment, and you say, "Well, that's the rough equivalent of being the homecoming

queen at Magna." [Audience laughter.] And I really, I mean, I'm saying this stuff, while I'm apologizing for saying it, but I have a perverse sense of humor in that way—and Magna suffers a lot, at my expense.

So, the three wisemen...

Okay, they didn't come from Magna. There's a lot of lore that got preserved that actually **can** be pieced together to tell a story. And I'm gonna tell one version of that story because **I like it**, and it appeals to me in ways that are evidence of God's mercy and caring and love for us. So, here is that story, piecing together a diverse group of legends and tales:

Before Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden (into the world in which death would enter, and Adam would be obligated to succumb to that death), there was an anointing oil prepared in Eden itself that was designed to be used in order to help the Descendant of Adam who would come to crush the head of the serpent—that, once He was anointed, would equip Him to come back from the grave and be resurrected. And that was entrusted into Adam's care before he was cast out of the Garden, as something to be preserved and handed down until the time that the Messiah comes. And as circumstances would have it, that got passed from those that had the responsibility, down through the generations— until finally, Melchizedek turned it over to father Abraham, who, in turn, handed it down through his lineage. And subsequently, there was a line—entrusted not only with possession of the anointing oil that came from Eden but also knowledge about the signs that would be given when the moment came for the oil to be delivered.

And so it was that the sign was given. They recognized and interpreted it correctly. They went to the place where it had been stored by their ancestors. They retrieved it, and then they traveled to find Him who was born the King of the Jews. And upon finding the family (with a sign that signified—from above, according to their understanding and interpretation of the signs—that this was the child, this was the family), they delivered the gifts, which were, in turn, used.

But the oil for anointing was kept. And that oil was handed down, until finally, the moment came when the Savior intended to go up and to provoke His crucifixion. And preliminary to that moment, Mary (the mother) instructed Mary (the consort of Christ) in the manner by which this was to be done. And so, He was anointed—in preparation for His death and His burial and His rising again—with what had been set out and kept (originating in Eden), to be used in order to complete the process of qualifying Him to return again, to have strength in the loins and in the sinews, and the power to rise again from the dead and to lay hold upon all of the faculties of the immortal, physical body.

And so, He was anointed—at the end—with the oil that had been entrusted, originally, to Adam and handed down with an obscure and small body of believers (who were dying out and who were older—and the last of their tradition, it seemed). But the Messiah came, and they discharged the obligation; and the blessing was able to be given, and

the Savior was able to rise from the dead. And so, He opened the way, then, for the return from the grave of **everyone** who has faith on His name and accepts (on condition of repentance) the terms to have His atonement applied to us.

Now, I know we're a little bit early, but I'm tired of talking, and I'm really looking forward to the closing hymn, which I understand is going to be as good as the musical number in the interlude—which was absolutely wonderful.

2019.10.08 Heart of the Matter Interview, Part 1

This is the first part of Shawn McCraney's interview of Denver Snuffer for the Heart of the Matter podcast, which was recorded on October 8th, 2019 in front of a live audience.

Shawn: Denver Snuffer.

Denver: Shawn.

Shawn: It's good to meet you. I've heard many things about you. I have not followed up to confirm any of it. I've heard about you for years. I'm glad you finally agreed to come on. I've tried to get you a couple times.

Denver: [Laughs]

Shawn: You're camera shy. You prefer the radio.

Denver: Or writing.

Shawn: Or writing, yeah. But let me explain, kind of, to you and our audience if you're not familiar with the approach we take. We do this with every guest. I don't do research at all. I've just *heard* things. I don't do inquiries. People have told me things over the years, but they're not really that significant. The purpose I want people to come on the show is to have *them* tell *us* everything they want to say, and then we'll do some— I'll do some, "Stop for a second; explain that a little bit," if you want. If you say, "I don't want to," you don't have to, and it won't be an inquisition of any sort, and you're free to— And it's so that people who watch the show (many of them who have come out of Mormonism) can say, "Is this a viable alternative for me?"

Denver: Mmmhmm.

Shawn: We've had atheists; we've had transhumanists; we've had every type on the earth. But years ago—a couple years ago—we were doing a show [background rattling] (yeah, that happens sometimes), and I said on the show, "I think the only true religious leaders in the state of Utah are John Dehlin, Denver Snuffer, and myself." And the reason I said that is, John Dehlin— He is leading the "I wanna be me: free; I wanna be what I am: gay, straight, no God, any god, and I just don't even care." And John is kind of the Pied Piper of that group.

I am: Forget relig—organized material—religion altogether. I trust in the Lord Jesus Christ "with all your heart." Forget about priesthood; forget about sacrament, communion. And I base that off my eschatology.

Denver: Mmmhmmm.

Shawn: *You* are unique because you have been LDS.

Denver: Mmmhmmm.

Shawn: And you are continuing on what—the only thing I can say now, not *knowing*—is, it seems to be, a form of Mormonism. Is that proper?

Denver: It's fair.

Shawn: Fair?

Denver: I think— Yeah, I think I would say that.

Shawn: So what we try to do is—in the first part (which lasts a little less than an hour)— is we want to know all about you: Grandma and Grandpa; Mom and Dad; upbringing; education; what you were like as a kid; when you were baptized; how active were you? — siblings; thoughts. And that usually takes us, even with people who don't think they have much to say, up to the first hour. You probably will fill it easily.

Denver: Hmmm.

Shawn: After that, we'll come back, and we'll see if— I wanna go— I want you to kind of end up, if you can, Denver, with when you started to say, "Wait a second," and then, "I'm gonna to do something about my view of Mormonism myself." And we'll do Part 2 about what you've done, where you're at, what's happening. And then in Part 3, I wanna do some word association. And there's 40 words, and I'll say it, and then you respond, and we'll use that as a platform to talk back and forth. And in that one, we'll be a little bit— not combative. I could sit here and fight with you on everything you say.

Denver: Sure.

Shawn: I'm not gonna do that. I don't care. I respect your rights to believe whatever you want, teach whatever you want. I really do because I believe you're responsible for what you believe and teach, and your ways may be better than mine as far as I'm concerned. So it's not to attack. But in Part 3, I might say, "Well what about this or what about that?" And you can explain, and we'll go from there. Does that sound all right with you?

Denver: That sounds fine.

Shawn: Okay. So, Denver Snuffer: the man, the myth, the legend. Take it away—about you.

Denver: Well, you mentioned parents. I'm Junior. I was named after my father. My father was a twin. I'm grateful for the fact that he got the name Denver because his twin brother was named Dempsey [audience laughter]. That may have been really problematic, but Denver is okay as a name.

My father is a World War II veteran. He joined the military after Pearl Harbor. As he explained it to me, everyone was pissed off when Pearl Harbor happened, and everyone wanted to go fight the Japanese, himself included. So, he joined to go fight the Japanese, and he wound up going to fight Hitler. And at the beginning of the war, his comment was he had no beef with Hitler. The war was fought without any appreciation for what Hitler was really up to inside the camps.

But he landed on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. He got through as a combat engineer. He was one of the first people on the beach, and his assignment was to blow up the tank traps. But as it turned out, first of all, the water was so rough that morning that none of the tanks made it to shore; and second of all, the tank traps were the only things that were keeping the bullets from killing all of them. So, when the mess unfolded, he wound up as a combat engineer, not blowing up tank traps but blowing up some of the fencing that was preventing them from getting up to combat with the pillboxes.

And he was a very modest man about all that he had been through during World War II. He was also in the Battle of the Bulge but he didn't like to talk about it, so we had to pry it out of him with questions and very often the answers would deflect, but he might give you a sentence here, and he might give you a phrase there, and it was up to you to put it all together over time.

One of the things that shocked me, and I wish he had—well, maybe it was a good thing he didn't live long enough—but one of the things that shocked me was the details of the Omaha landing in *Saving Private Ryan* because some of the things that were depicted in that Omaha Beach scene, I had heard from my father, you know, while he was still living, but they were details that I'd never heard anyone else talk about.

Turns out Spielberg had interviewed whoever he could find that had survived to get the details. There really *was* a GI on that beach whose arm had been blown off who was holding his severed arm with his other arm, and he was walking around in shock. And people saw him. Spielberg picked it up; he put it in the show.

But to me, you know, they made World War II movies (John Wayne and *The Longest Day*). They made a lot of movies in which that generation was depicted in a heroic way.

And I always respected my dad, even when we butted heads. He seemed to me to be a historic figure, larger than life—didn't mean we agreed with one another.

I recall after I had finished law school, I was kind of full of myself. I graduated from Brigham Young University's law school, J. Reuben Clark Law School. And after I graduated, I went back to my hometown to visit my parents and let them bask in the glory of their law-school-graduated son. I was sort of full of myself, as law school tends to make one. And while I was there visiting, my dad took me down to—don't remember which bar it was (I don't think it was the Rendezvous), but it was one of the bars in

Mountain Home, Idaho—to visit with his friends. He wanted to show me off. And while we're there at the bar, you know, he introduced me, proud as he was, law school graduate, and I viewed them as my intellectual inferiors. You know, none of them had the equivalent of a doctor's degree.

We'd sat around and we talked, and over the course of the conversation, what dawned on me was I was talking to people who had lived through more history and had a greater grasp on life and everything that's going on here than I could hope to have because the stress of difficulty. I mean, these people had been through the depression. They'd been through World War II. They'd been through the Korean conflict. They'd seen a popular president assassinated. They'd been through a lot.

And here I was, full of myself because I had a piece of paper. And it was one of those sobering moments that I really thank my dad for because there are people whose lives live in the trenches of this world who rise to greater levels of kindness, understanding, charity towards others, humility, than some of us who enjoy simply the benefit of the environment that they made possible by the sacrifices that they made. It sobered me. It was another one of those moments with my father that I look back on and think, you know, those few moments in a bar in downtown Mountain Home, Idaho probably were the corrective experience necessary to take a law school graduate, full of himself, and put his feet back on the ground.

My father believed in God and was a Mason and tolerated my mother's Baptist faith—even let the Baptist minister come over and eat dinner at our house, as she was wont to invite him over to do. And he was devout in his own way, but he was not churchy. My mom, on the other hand, was churchy. She taught Vacation Bible School. I was enlisted in Vacation Bible School. I got all the indoctrination that one gets as a Baptist.

We were in Idaho. Idaho has an infestation of Mormonism and, therefore, throughout my youth, I was inoculated against the cult of Mormonism. And I knew that if Jesus and Santa Claus are the good guys in the universe, the devil and Joseph Smith are the bad guys, and so I had very little respect for the idea of Mormonism.

I had one sibling, my sister. She embraced the Baptist religion. They always put that call out at the end of the service, you know, while everyone's singing *Just As I Am*. They invite you to come forward and be saved and be baptized, and I felt the tug a time or two, but I always managed successfully to resist the impulse, and I grew up without ever having joined a church. The only church I ever joined was the LDS Church. And we can talk about the process that got me there, but I was an incredibly content kid.

I had a Schwinn Stingray. I could put that thing on its back wheel, and I could ride it like a unicycle in a wheelie all through town. We were a safe community, and the kids were allowed to do what the kids wanted to do, and I spent my childhood roaming free. There were practically no violent crimes that percolated to the attention of kids in my hometown.

There was a guy, though. We were sitting in Carl Miller Park, and someone came riding their bike through the park yelling, "Tom Lynn just killed a Mexican at the Rendezvous!" Well, Rick Beck (who was my next-door neighbor and my buddy growing up)— Rick Beck's father owned the Rendezvous. The Rendezvous was a bar. Carl Miller Park is not that far from the Rendezvous bar, and someone just got killed by Tom Lynn. We knew who Tom Lynn was, too. So we hopped on our bikes, and we rode down to the Rendezvous to see what the crap's going on.

There's a crowd. There's wailing. But we're kids, you know. We don't know any better. We elbow our way to the front, and sure enough, Tom Lynn blew the head off a fellow at the Rendezvous.

My father was chosen for jury duty on the trial of Tom Lynn, and Tom Lynn was convicted, and he went off to the penitentiary. And he finally came home, and he became one of the poker players in the weekly poker game that my dad participated in. Well, so a juror who had sent the guy off to the penitentiary and the guy who had been convicted played poker every week. And one evening at the poker table, Tom Lynn leaned over and put his head on the table, and they thought he was tired, so they dealt him out. He died playing poker with my dad at the poker table.

That was the kind of thing that, oddly enough, you remember from your youth and from the things that went on. But I never felt endangered by that. We rode our bikes off in the morning. We floated canals on tubes. We had our fistfights. We had our pranks. We started fires. We escaped liability for what we'd done in Idaho at that point.

They had a law. Because there were so many kids that were helping farmers, you could get a driver's license at age 14. So at 14 years old (it was daylight only, so you'd only drive during the day), you could get a driver's license, and kids started driving at age 14. And there was no difference between a driver's license and a motorcycle license. So, if you had a driver's license, you could ride a motorcycle, and we did. But I mean, you're looking back on it, you think, no one wore helmets; we rode in shorts; we did stuff that should have killed us, and we survived; but it was, in its own way, idyllic. It was a lot of fun.

Shawn: Fantastic.

Denver: So anyway, there's that.

Shawn: Has anyone written *The Ballad of Old Tom Lynn*?—because that is a story!

Denver: No, that's a country western song.

Shawn: Absolutely! You've heard of old Tom Jones. Well, let's get old Tom Lynn. That is fascinating.

You're quite a storyteller. You're good at that.

Denver: Well, he was convicted. He got beat up by the guy he killed. He left the bar, went home and got the shotgun, came back, called the guy out. When the guy came out, he blew his head off. It was the fact that he left the bar and went home instead of responding in the moment that got him ultimately convicted for...

Shawn: Wow!

Denver: ...for what he'd done wrong.

Shawn: Well, Mountain Home.

Denver: Yes.

Shawn: And you were there through high school?

Denver: I was. Then I went in the military.

Shawn: What branch?

Denver: Air Force. They were peaceable, you know, compared to the Marines. They had a (Gibb Wheeler's older brother, and I want to say it was Tom Wheeler, but it was Gibb's older brother)— He got drafted, and he went to Nam. And he wound up Marine and in the trenches, and very often they'd encounter those tunnels; and he was a tunnel rat. He went in. He came back weirded up. He had some—well, today we'd call it PTSD. But he'd also— He had a lot of battle injuries and what have you, and he was sort of the walking example of why one in Mountain Home does not want to be a Marine and go to Vietnam. And so, he helped inspire a lot of enlistments in the Air Force.

Shawn: I see.

Denver: Myself being one of them.

Shawn: And where were you stationed?

Denver: New Hampshire.

Shawn: Was that eye-opening to an Idaho boy?

Denver: I rather liked New Hampshire. I was surprised, though, that there was a Mormon out there. That's part of the later story, but I spent two and a half years in New Hampshire and then a year and a half in Texas. And then I left and ultimately got admitted to law school shortly thereafter—never returned to Idaho although that was the plan. I got a job offer out of law school that kept me in Utah. I'd never planned to remain in Utah. But yeah, the Air Force and in New Hampshire was an interesting time and an interesting experience.

Shawn: Was that where you were introduced—because you went to law school at BYU—so, you either converted at BYU or...

Denver: No, it was earlier. It was actually while I was on active duty.

Shawn: Oh, tell us about it.

Denver: I was attending night classes at the University of New Hampshire, and a professor who was on loan from Brandeis University, Cal Colby (in the middle of a—it was a business management class), was talking about corporate ethics and corruption and just went off on the Mormon Church which, to the ears of someone that had grown up in Mountain Home, Idaho, and was now safely thousands of miles away from the Mormon infestation, thought the whole idea of bringing up Mormonism in a class seemed so superfluous. It was silly. I mean, okay, Cal—Professor Colby—we'll stipulate the Mormon Church is corrupt. If it exists, it's gotta be corrupt. It was founded by, you know, the devil's best friend. So, I took no exception to the professor's position.

But there was a fellow in the class who raised his hand and took on the professor and defended the Mormon Church, and I thought that was, first of all, bizarre. I mean, what the hell? Are you kidding me? And he got the better of him. He did a fabulous job of defending the faith against the charge of corruption specifically being addressed in the management class.

I made the mistake afterwards— I didn't know the fellow from Adam at that point, but he became a good friend. I made the mistake afterwards of saying that I thought he'd done a great job and, you know, good for him because he'd had the courage to speak up. Undergraduates are very vulnerable to the predilections of your professors, so, to defend and to be contrary, that's fairly remarkable.

The fellow's name is Steve Claproth, and he and I became good friends, but he mistook that for interest, and then they sic these missionaries who pamphleteer and filmstrip you—you probably did that.

Shawn: I did.

Denver: Did you use the filmstrips and the felt board?

Shawn: Oh yeah.

Denver: Yeah, they did all that. And they mistook politeness for interest. I was not interested. If being raised by a Baptist mother and not heeding the call to come forward and be saved had been successfully resisted over the course of 18 years, pamphleteering and filmstripping was not at all likely to excite my interest in Mormonism.

But these guys were so *nice* and so *clean-cut*, unlike you now. I mean, look at you!

Shawn: [Laughing] Look at *you*!

Denver: You're a refugee from the Mormon mission. I never went on a mission.

Shawn: I know.

Denver: Okay, but you did. Anyway, you know how [audience laughter]— You know how that was.

Shawn: I do.

Denver: They were clean-cut. They wore white shirts and ties and suits. And their sincerity just— It *clung* to you; it was so earnest. I hated to break their hearts and tell 'em, "Dude, I think your faith is full of crap!" So, I refrained from that. It was at least interesting.

But I was a long, long, *looonnggg* investigator. It's because of the scarcity of interest in Mormonism in New England that the missionaries persisted for as long as they did. It was nice.

They asked me to read some Book of Mormon stuff. I did as they asked, being polite. They wanted to know the next time we got together, "What did you think? What did you think of what you'd read?" I don't think they were calling me "Brother" yet then. And my response, literally, and I meant it (it seems funny now, but I meant it at the time)— I said, "It's gotta be scripture. It's every bit as boring as the Bible." It had all that, you know, King Jamesian antiquity about it, and it did not grip me.

But by the same token, the things that had gripped me are the kinds of things that I see in here. It's the stories that are told about Daniel in the lion's den, and you've got a picture of David holding the head of Goliath, and you've got Christ with the storm. It's the Bible stories that you learn in your youth that, you know, tug at your heart. Reading the actual scriptural canon, at least at *that* point in my life, was not connecting in the same way that the stories or the interpretation based upon what the scriptures contain meant to me.

So, reading the Book of Mormon was rather the same kind of experience. It's arm's length and not appealing.

Shawn: I'm going to jump in real quick. How about the Gadianton robbers story, or the 2,000 stripling warriors story, or Alma the Younger story? Did they affect you the way those stories on the wall affected you?

Denver: They would eventually, but they didn't at the time because the problem is it's clothed in the scriptural, canonical, off-putting verbiage that, at that point, I did not relate

to. I do relate to that kind of language today, but at that point, I had not acquired yet the tongue for that other language, and it is another language.

But Steve Claproth invited me to a— I don't know if it's called a young men's camp-out or called an Aaronic Priesthood camp-out. I don't know what they were calling it at the time.

But as it turns out, Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, which is about as far away from where we are now to Nephi as where we were in New Hampshire was, away from Joseph's birthplace.

So, he invited me to camp out, and hey, camping's fun. So, I went up to the Joseph Smith [Birthplace] Memorial [in Sharon, Vermont]. They've got an obelisk there, 38½ feet tall, a foot for every year of the life of Joseph. They pointed out the obelisk and its height and the reason for its height. And I was surprised because I hadn't realized that Joseph Smith had lived so short a lifetime.

There was a— Back at that time, the stake encompassed states, so the stake president was the stake president over Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, parts of Massachusetts —*big* stake. I think the fellow was from Boston. His predecessor stake president had been L. Tom Perry. (There's a story about him, too, eventually, if we get there.)

Anyway, the stake president got up and gave a talk, and it was about David and Goliath, one of those old favorite stories from back when. And he filled in details, and he talked about things that made the story come alive even better than had Vacation Bible School. And it surprised me to have Mormons talking about that kind of content in a getaway with the—you know—the young skulls full of mush, being indoctrinated into the vagaries of the cult that I viewed them as. And the talk was actually quite good and touching and held a good moral story.

We spent the night. The next morning the visitors' center was open. As you are looking at the obelisk, it's the visitors' center on the right, not the one on the left. On that one they had a counter back in those days. (They renovate everything, so it's probably now a mega-mall of some kind, probably selling trinkets that are profitable.) But back in those days, there was a counter.

There was a couple of old people behind the counter, what I would now say is a *missionary couple*, but they were manning the desk, and they had literature and pamphlets and crap that I'd been given by missionaries as they were filmstripping and all the rest of that. And there was a red volume called the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, and I hadn't seen that thing, and I asked them what that was. They started to tell me, and then Steve, who was— I was his golden contact. Steve elbowed his way in between, and he proceeded to talk it all up, and he dog-eared the Joseph Smith History (which I had previously gotten in a pamphlet), and he dog-eared Doctrine and Covenants section 76.

I wanted the elderly couple behind the counter to tell me how much it cost to buy one of these things, and they said it was free, and so I got out with my book before they changed their mind and wanted to charge me because I expected all religions want your money.

Anyway, it was actually after the camp-out, after we got back, and after I had taken the time to look at the book that I went to that dog-eared section 76 of the D&C, and I was struck by that. It was not the missionaries; it was not the camp-out; it was not the cleanliness of them all. It was the *incongruence* between everything I thought I knew about Joseph Smith being raised and the content of D&C section 76 that seemed to resonate with good things, virtuous things, answering questions about the afterlife. It just seemed incongruent, and it struck me at that moment.

I'd been an investigator, probably half a year or more. I'd been through all kinds of missionary companions that had come and gone. But the actual investigation of Mormonism in a sincere way commenced then. Everything else had been wasted time. And it was a matter of overcoming a lot of presumptions and prejudice that I'd been raised with that required, you know, sober reflection and taking time, and careful, solemn thoughts which, in a 19-year-old now, was something new for me.

I have to admit that one of the barriers for me was the fact that, however unchurched my father may have been, he seemed to be aligned with my mother in the opinion about Mormonism, and so I didn't want to disappoint him or enrage my mom or piss off my sister. And growing up, my friends were universally aligned in their viewpoint about Mormonism. And everyone looked down on the religion, although there were a handful of Mormon kids that were accepted at school. The religion itself was not well-regarded.

One of the things that Mormons tend to do is to be politically active, and Idaho is no exception. So, the legislature in Idaho, which had a very large LDS presence and, therefore, very large LDS influence, on occasion boiled up into political conflict with Mormonism being one of the issues that divided people into camps. And so, you know, the concern crossed my mind as I was investigating Mormonism that one of the things that would be lost in the transition would be all the friends I valued, family members, my past history.

I mean, Dude, I was *cool*. I was sophomore class vice-president; junior class president; I was a drummer in a rock band. I was *cool*. If you had a party in Mountain Home, you needed to invite me, or it wasn't a *thing*. I mean, and now, white-shirt-clad nerds are to become my compadres, and I'm gonna leave the cabal that I grew up with, and I'm gonna sit among the nerdy? This is the destiny that the religion brings you to? You know, I don't want to be sacrilegious, but you know, "*if it be possible, take this cup from me*"— It's not a lamentation I couldn't identify with. This seemed like a horrible, *horrible* exchange to be made.

In the context of everything in life that you like, enjoy, you find to be desirable, fun, Mormonism was a form of death to everything that had gone before. It required— The

enormity of the sacrifice in the mind of a 19-year-old was practically incalculable. It was — The barrier to entry for me was like trying to leap across the Grand Canyon. *I just did not see myself doing that.*

In fact, one of the things that I concluded was that even if I were to become a Mormon, there was no way I could become a very good one. I hated the idea of being a bad one, but I didn't think I could become like them. They were better than me. They were living cleaner lives, doing cleaner things, and enjoying hokey stuff. And, you know, they hadn't been to the places I'd been; they hadn't seen the things I'd seen; they hadn't done the stuff I'd done.

And, you know, a lot of my Air Force buddies— Coming out of boot camp, it was rare. In the Army they try to keep units together. In the Air Force they just scatter you to the four winds. I got assigned in a squadron in a barracks in which another guy from my flight (that's what they called it in boot camp) was also assigned at the same time, so they made us roommates.

Well, my roommate, Mike, was a— He was a black fellow from Watts. I mean, he'd lived through the riots in Watts. One of the reasons he was in the Air Force was not because he was afraid of the draft. He was in the Air Force because he wanted to get off the streets, and his mama wanted him somewhere safe. And so, he's a refugee from Watts, and I'm from Mountain Home, Idaho, but the two of us really got along well in spite of what you would view as an insurmountable cultural gap between where we reckoned from. Hell, he was just a guy like me, and we had a lot of fun doing the same things. And some of the same things that we did are the kinds of things that they denounce in General Conference.

For some reason (I guess it was because of the streets of Watts), one of the things that Mike liked was cheap wine. You know, you can go down and get a bottle of—there was Ripple, and—

Shawn: Ripple [laughs]!

Denver: And Annie Green Springs and all that crap.

Shawn: Strawberry Hill.

Denver: Yes, Strawberry Hill. They made all that crap for kids, really, and, you know.

So, me and Mike, Jimmy Givens— Jimmy was a black kid, also, from Detroit, kind of a refugee himself. My friends, my buddies in the context, primarily were black fellows. And there was a *serious, serious* racial tension nationally and conflict—racial tension and conflict. And Martin Luther King got murdered. There was just a— There was a problem, and the Air Force was trying to address that at the time by having race relations classes. The race relation class that was being taught, in my view, only made

things worse. I mean, it sort of pointed out what in everyday life could be just ignored. It pointed it out, and I thought they were doing a terrible job.

Well, the squadron had a command in the barracks, and the command in the barracks had a young—oh, he was a lieutenant of either first or second, but who was in charge of that race-relations thing—and he called me down. I was required to go down and report in to the fellow in charge of the squadron, and I thought, *What have they found? I mean, what contraband had they managed to locate up in the room during inspection? How much trouble was I in?* They called me in, shut the door, sat me down. He was very personable. He came around the desk. He sat like we were buddies. He was chatting me up. And the reason he wanted to talk to me was to find out how come I got along with the black guys in the squadron the way I did. I mean, I didn't even think about it. I mean, Summers and me played chess, and we hung out. There was no "getting along." I am; they are; it's a— I didn't know what to tell them.

I mean, here they are, dealing with this crisis. Here they are, trying to help with the crisis. Their attempts at help are only making it worse, and this guy wants me? I'm a *teenager* from Mountain Home, Idaho, hanging out with guys from Mississippi and Watts and Detroit and New York, and we're not *in* any of those places. I can't take them down to the canal and inflate a tube and hop on the tube and go down. And we're not in Mississippi. We can't go catchin,' you know, catfish. And we're not in New York, so we can't, you know, run through the projects. And we're not in Watts, and we can't burn something. We're in New Hampshire, and all we're doing in New Hampshire is hanging out, doing what you do in New Hampshire when you're bored, and you're getting paid by the military, and there's time on your hands.

Shawn: And this was all prior to being—

Denver: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, Jimmy Givens would subsequently become a black Muslim, and I would subsequently become a Mormon.

We used to go drink beer at the bowling alley and get pizza. The pizza was gosh-awful. It was like cardboard with cheese on it—and bad cheese at that—and drink Budweiser. So, we'd been reassigned to different places. We ran into each other after I had joined, and I said, "Well, let's go to the bowling alley," because that's what we used to do.

We went over to the bowling alley, and I was trying to warm up to the fact that I didn't drink. And as I'm about to tell him that I didn't drink beer anymore, he tells me he doesn't drink beer anymore. And I asked him what that was all about, and he said he'd become Muslim, and they don't drink. I said, "You're kidding!" I said, "I've become Mormon, and Mormons don't drink." And he said, "Well, in my religion, you're a blue-eyed devil" because I have blue eyes. And I said, "In my religion you can't hold the priesthood!" And we had a laugh about our respective religions, had a pizza, and drank a Pepsi because they only had Pepsi on base for some reason, but you know—sugar rush. Everyone liked Pepsi back then.

So, are we out of time? Is that...?

Shawn: Well, we're getting close.

Denver: Okay.

Shawn: But— And because we're getting close, I'm gonna jump in and move us forward. So, then what was it that got you, having hung out with some black guys and their friends, and you joined the church then, later, that *banned* the blacks from having the priesthood?

Denver: Yeah, that was weird. That was one of those— Again, it's just one of those—

Shawn: Was there any conflict there?

Denver: Oh, sure. There's conflict in all of this. I did not want *that* to be *my* destiny. In fact, joining Mormonism to me was a form of death. It was literally— The only thing that I consoled myself with was that I wouldn't be a very good one, and it probably wouldn't last, but I felt like I needed to join.

I happened to be alone, which was odd in a military barracks. I was alone. It was quiet, which, again, is odd in a military barracks, and I decided to pray about this whole thing. I'd been asked to do it. I'd been cajoled and harangued and pamphleteered and taught to do it, but I hadn't really taken the opportunity to do it. The story they tell about Joseph Smith praying vocally for the first time struck me as something—well, I hadn't done that yet. And so, alone in the barracks on a quiet weekend evening, I got down and prayed and asked God (over an army blanket, kneeling in the barracks) about the whole of it and whether or not there was anything to this; and if so, whether I could be excused, or I needed to, you know, to rally to the call—what ought I do; and finished praying—and nothing. There was no conduit from heaven that opened up, and there was no, you know, earthquake.

I sat on the bed and just reflected on it all, thought about what had gone on. And I thought about the reasons why Mormonism could not be true from what I knew. I came up with reasons why it could not be true, and as I thought about each reason, in turn, I got an answer to—I *thought* of an answer—to the dilemma, to the problem.

There cannot be any more scripture because whosoever adds to the book, God will add to his condemnation. Whoever takes away from the book, God will take away his part in the Book of Life, so there can't be more scripture which is what Mormonism is predicated upon—except that book happened to have been written chronologically before much of the rest of the New Testament canon. So, that's really not a barrier.

Beware of prophets, you know, false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they're ravening wolves. So, can't I dismiss him as a false prophet? And the

solution is, well, there's no statement that there will never be another prophet. In fact, there are prophets referred to in the Book of Acts.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: There are unnamed prophetesses in the Book of Acts, and, therefore, the end of the ministry of Christ is not the end of the presence of prophets or the gift of prophecy. In fact, the gift of prophecy is named in one of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, so, you know, you can't dismiss it on that basis.

Shawn: But because of time, Denver, the— Doctrinally, I'm getting that in terms of prophets and added scripture and whatever. But did you have any queries and qualms about polygamy? Certainly growing up, if Mormonism was the— If Joseph Smith was the brother of the devil, or whatever that saying was...

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Shawn: ...certainly you'd heard all the dirt. So the polygamy, the blacks and the priesthood, the misogyny that historically has been there, all of that.

Denver: All that stuff, yeah, all that.

Shawn: You had answers for that as well?

Denver: I didn't ask necessarily those specific questions. I asked questions on a big picture about the foundation of the possibility of a new revelation itself. And literally, I spent a couple of hours doing that—question and then thought of an answer, question and thought of an answer. After a couple of hours of that alone, meditatively, in my room, the last query that I came up with was: *Well, how do I even know there is a God? And that's the ultimate question, and how do I know that?* And the thought came in response to that, *Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two hours?* And that brought me up cold because my conclusion was: If that is how God communicates, and if God communicated with me, then I had the responsibility to respond to that communication because I would like it to continue. I would like it not to end.

But the price that would be required to have that continue seemed to be far greater than was reasonable or rational. It seemed like I was literally giving up my world in order to respond to that. But my conclusion was: If that's an answer from God, and He's made Himself known now to me in the context of this inquiry, then I need to respond favorably to that answer and go ahead and become baptized. And so, feeling like I literally was giving everything I had on the altar, I went ahead and got baptized in the Atlantic Ocean on October the 10th, 1973. Oh, excuse me, I said October—September the 10th of 1973, September 10th. We're in October now. And that is also a significant date, and we can talk about that eventually.

Shawn: And with that final thought from Denver, we're going to pick it up in Part 2 next week where we're going to hear about what his—briefly, what his membership and his activity and marriage and kids (I don't know if he has them; I know he has a wife)— And then we're going to see when that changed and what started happening. And so, join us then. Remember, put your comments down below. Let us know what you think, questions you might have. We'll pick them up on the phone and talk about those when you look and watch tomorrow.

2019.10.08 Heart of the Matter Interview, Part 2

This is the second part of Shawn McCraney's interview of Denver Snuffer for the Heart of the Matter podcast, which was recorded on October 8th, 2019 in front of a live audience.

Shawn: Denver Snuffer. Last week we heard about your life in story form. It was a great prose, it was narrative; it flowed from one interesting tale to another and brought us to the point where he was baptized in September of... '72?

Denver: '73.

Shawn: '73. East Coast, Atlantic Ocean.

Denver: Atlantic Ocean.

Shawn: What I want to do on this part, if we can, is I'm going to try to— When you interview someone you don't know, you learn how to approach that person in the second part and third part, and so I'm going to kind of move us along at a pace where we can get to more information because we've got a lot to cover.

Denver: We do!

Shawn: We do. All right, so you were baptized. Tell us about how long it was until you met your wife, and what you did between that time.

Denver: Well, one of the differences after baptism was— Where before, reading scripture had very little appeal or connection to me, after baptism the scriptures came alive to me. It seemed to me that what the New Testament was talking about as history...

Shawn: I want to ask you again about your wife, though.

Denver: ...was living.

Shawn: You're not answering—you know you're not answering.

Denver: No, no...

Shawn: We need to keep this thing so people will watch it.

Denver: These two go together.

Shawn: I know, but...

Denver: My zeal...

Shawn: Yeah...

Denver: My zeal turned me into a golden-contact-generation facilitator for the missionaries. Where the entire New England States mission had been relatively dead, I had the missionaries teaching *everyone*. I had dozens of people who they were teaching. *And* they were baptizing. And one of the people that I got interested in the church, interested enough to ultimately be baptized, was a gal that I wound up later marrying.

Shawn: Yes!!

Denver: I baptized her.

Shawn: Excellent!!

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: That is a beautiful story!

Denver: She's not my present wife.

Shawn: Oh, dang it!!

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Come on, man! Okay. No, it's okay.

Denver: So, yeah.

Shawn: So, you've been married twice?

Denver: Yes. She subsequently divorced me and left the church.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Yeah, left me.

Shawn: So she never had the truth?

Denver: Well...

Shawn: I'm just kidding.

Denver: Yeah, but I baptized her. I got orders transferring me to Texas, away from New Hampshire, and I knew that if I left— She's my, you know, my product, my conversion

evidence. And about that time Spencer Kimball gave a talk that said any two people can be married if they'll live the gospel. So really, it doesn't matter who the hell you marry if you live the gospel. That was bad advice, but I took it in my zeal.

I got a fellow who was Jewish to join the church. I got a number of people, that subsequently I stayed in contact with, to join the church. The ward in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, visibly grew as a result of the zeal. I was obnoxious. I was just **on fire!**

Shawn: But we know that early converts to *any* group are always the ones they put in for recruitment because you're most on fire, and so that's normal.

Denver: It is.

Shawn: We get that, right? So, move us along. You got married, you got divorced—quote, within a 'short period of time?'

Denver: Yeah. I wound up in Texas. We had our first daughter in Texas. We had two daughters, two sons. And she ultimately— After law school, she divorced me and she left the church—and I had four kids. I married my current wife. She and I have had five more children.

Shawn: Wow!

Denver: But she raised nine, so...

Shawn: Wow!

Denver: So yeah, she's the mother of nine. She grew up in the LDS Church and lived in Sandy—grew up in the town we currently live in.

Shawn: You're kidding?

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Nine kids.

Denver: Yeah!

Shawn: So when you met—what's her first name?

Denver: Stephanie.

Shawn: Stephanie.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: When you met Stephanie, your oldest child was how old?

Denver: Oh, see *now* you're requiring me to remember things that only mothers...

Shawn: You're remembering the name of guys in bars who said hello to you!

Denver: But ages?!

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Ages?!!

Shawn: All right, around...

Denver: Really!

Shawn: Around— Were they still in high school?

Denver: Yeah. She was she was in junior high and she was the oldest. And then the youngest was Benjamin. He was in kindergarten.

Shawn: How'd you meet Stephanie?

Denver: She had worked at my law office. We were growing and we were hiring. And there was an office management class that was taught in the local— It was a high school program, but they drew students from a variety of high schools and she was one of the hires from that program. Another hire out of that program is still working for me— Lisa. She came in and has been with me for like— I've been practicing law 38 years, and I think about 35 of those I've had Lisa with me. Anyway, Stephanie was a University of Utah student. She was a year away from graduating, and she'd been talking about going on an LDS mission when she graduated. One of the jokes was that she had had 1,500 first dates, but she didn't have a second date. She rather intimidated...

Shawn: Oh, wow!

Denver: ...boys.

Shawn: But not men.

Denver: But she didn't intimidate me. Anyway, I found myself divorced. She invited me to a Thanksgiving dinner with her family, took pity on me. You know, that was nice. She was the only person I had known for *years*. And dating after divorce is a— It's all phony. I mean whoever you're...

Shawn: Dating's all phony from *any* age.

Denver: Yeah, but they're going to put on something...

Shawn: But you can start at 13!!!

Denver: Yeah, well, there's that. But...

Shawn: It's the same game!!

Denver: She'd been at the office for three/three-and-a-half years at the time.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: And so I knew her. I knew her on a good day, I knew her on a bad day. And why not date someone you know instead of dating someone that's going to, you know, do their best to fool you.

Shawn: It sounds like you got a gem.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Any woman who would take on four kids, raise them, and then another five...

Denver: Yes.

Shawn: Hats off!

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Shawn: Great! Fantastic! I should be interviewing Stephanie too.

Denver: She would be a better candidate for a whole lot of reasons.

Shawn: So you raised your nine children. You're an appellate attorney. Is that...

Denver: I just finished arguing before the Tenth Circuit, but I do trial work as well.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: So, and you're raising them. Does she work with you while raising the kids? Are you active in the ward? What jobs are you holding?

Denver: Well, okay, there's that. You know I'm not Mormon *now*.

Shawn: Yeah, I know.

Denver: Yeah, okay.

Shawn: But you were when you married Stephanie.

Denver: I was.

Shawn: And she was too.

Denver: And we got married in the Salt Lake Temple.

Shawn: Salt Lake Temple.

Denver: Yes, yes!

Shawn: Did you have the four kids sealed to you?

Denver: They were sealed to me from the prior, you know...

Shawn: Right.

Denver: No reason to have them sealed to her that we could think of. I suppose there was a time when we could have done that. I can't get in a temple these days.

Shawn: Yeah, yeah. I bet.

Denver: Persona non grata.

Shawn: Yeah. So, you're raising the family. How was— Were you active, you and Stephanie? Are you going to the temple monthly, or quarterly, or like that?

Denver: Yeah, we were. We were active, faithful. I think I was a hundred percent home teacher for the last 15 years of membership. I taught gospel doctrine. I was a ward mission leader in Sandy, Utah, which is tantamount to a do-nothing job because no one joins the church in Sandy, Utah. They made me the ward mission leader, and for the first time in seven years, they had baptisms while I was on that assignment.

Shawn: So your zeal continued on?

Denver: Well, I'm not sure that it was— It was contemplative. If you're going to believe in a faith, then that faith ought to be as carefully and continuously examined as you can. I taught gospel doctrine for about 25 years. I never taught the same lesson twice. I wanted to get into the material deeper, each time that you go round. And so the lesson that I would teach—the fourth time you go through the material—was considerably more in-depth than what it was taught, you know, four cycles earlier when you were going through that material. To me, it was always a matter of trying to understand more

deeply, more profoundly, more carefully. And in that regard, you need to be willing to find things that you don't want to find. You need to confront things that you don't want to confront.

The exploration into Mormonism has been exhilarating and disappointing, challenging and reassuring. It's been a bundle of conflicts, and it's been marvelous throughout. And I enjoyed immensely the entire time that I was active in the church. I was *thrown* out; I didn't leave voluntarily. The current president of the LDS Church came to my stake and called a new stake president—because the old one defended me—called a new stake president, handed him my membership records, and said, "This man needs to be dealt with. The committee's decided that this man needs to be dealt with."

Shawn: Before you go forward on that, Denver, take us back to the one of the— Give us a main thing, for our audience who doesn't know you, of one of those things that was difficult to find in the constant teaching, and searching, and preparing that you were doing—one of the first things that was really brutal to see the reality of it, and you said, "Wait a second."

Denver: There are a number of them. There was a disconnect, across the board, at the end of the life of Joseph Smith and then when the election was held in Winter Quarters in December of '47. There was a disconnect between those. When I became a Mormon, I read everything I could get my hands on—all the biographies, all of the histories, everything there was from early church history, everything B.H. Roberts put out there, all of the biographies.

I had a command of Mormon history—in the way that the church presented its history and the apologists presented the history. But D. Michael Quinn wrote about early Mormon history in a way that was, to me, heretical and contradictory. He was telling a different narrative than the narrative that the church was telling, and he made me mad. But because I was always searching, I read his book. And then I looked at his bibliography and his footnotes. And then I searched to find the source material to try and show, to myself, why Michael Quinn was being *unfair* and *biased* in the way he was presenting this material. That he was not— He was a critic, he was not a historian; *this is unfair*. But the more I looked, the more I found I agreed with what Michael Quinn was saying and the more problematic the orthodox histories were. And I have taken some of those issues farther than I think Michael Quinn has taken the issues, and so he and I have some disagreements about things that I probably have disagreements with most Mormons about. I just did not think that the church was truthful. For a whole lot of reasons, the church was not being truthful about its history. Now understand, I'm not trying to rock anyone's boat.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: I'm not trying to say, "Hey, let me come bitch-slap you because you ain't right and I am!" That was not my objective. I had approached, I took— We rented a motorhome. We went back to the Nauvoo temple dedication—well, it was the open

house. We didn't stay for the dedication. You had to have tickets for that and I didn't have the pull to get them. We went back—rented a motorhome, took my kids, we parked on, is it Mulberry? The Main Street there? Mulholland. We parked on Mulholland, and one of the evangelical folks had rented a shop and they were giving out anti-Mormon stuff in the shop on Main Street. And I sent my kids in and I said, "You kids go in and you get every bit of anti-Mormon stuff you can find in there, and and bring it in here in the motorhome." So they went in and they harvested what they could. They brought it back, and I said, "You go through all this stuff, each one of ya, and you find where they've made mistakes. And if you can't find they've made a mistake, bring it to my attention and I'll go over it." Because I wanted them to see.

We drove down as a family during General Conference, to drive through and look at the signs of the protesters during General Conference. You grew up in Utah; you're insulated. I joined the church in New Hampshire. I believed, in Texas that was another— There's a lot of stories out of Texas about Mormons and how we interface down there. I *wanted* my kids to encounter the opposition, the push back, because if you've got a faith that you haven't examined— I would rather have a child awaken to some truths and depart from the faith, at least temporarily, and come back to it, than I would have a kid that simply salutes and says, "Yes, sir!" to an unexamined faith. And so I wanted them— I want to struggle with it; I want them to struggle with it.

So, as an aid— I have one son who went on a mission. The one son who went on a mission came home from his mission and fell away from the church. And I wrote a book that was designed to help him understand the value of the faith that he'd been raised in, as an exercise in pure, religious devotion as opposed to respect for an institution. In some respects, you have to destroy the respect for the institution in order to penetrate to the level where there's value, there's truth, there's holiness. And so I wrote a book that was intended to heal the broken Mormon heart, and to allow them to say, "Yeah, there's problems in this institution, but there's no reason to throw away those things of value, and truth, and goodness that you can find within it." So, the book was written primarily for a struggling son, and then for whomever else there may be out there that could benefit from it.

Shawn: What's the name of the book?

Denver: *Passing the Heavenly Gift.*

Shawn: I think I've seen it. Was that part of the reason Nelson said...

Denver: Yes, that was *the* reason I got kicked out. They wanted that book suppressed; they wanted it taken off the market. Well, the book percolated for a bit and it had an effect on my son—it was very positive. It also had an effect on those who were troubled that was very positive.

The stake president, who was given the assignment to get rid of me, took that book and gave it to 20— He bought 20 copies and he gave it to 20 men inside our stake, none of

whom were at all an appropriate audience to read that thing. None of them knows there are problems in Mormon history. They're just going along fat, dumb, and happy with whatever's being dispensed each Sunday. And to find out that there's trouble in paradise, I mean, it shook them to the core. And so these people, unprepared to hear anything about this, are given a book that's shaking to the core. And they find out about murders, and they find out about deceit, and they found out about treachery, and they find out about dishonesty, and they find out about lies. They find out about things that you will only find if you go search for it, or if you happen to wind up in a position where someone's trying to proselytize you away and they want to present you the problem; so now it's dumped in your lap. None of these were candidates for that book. All of them read and all of them came back with the same consensus, "Oh, this book is horrible. Oh, this is terrible."

Well yeah, if you think that what you're getting is pure and undefiled, that book will upset you. But if you think what you've got is something you're prepared to walk away from and abandon, because you feel betrayed, that book will help you. It will provide you with a way to have faith in spite of failure, to have hope in spite of setback.

Brigham Young turned Utah Mormonism into a trap. It was a horrible period of time. The Mormon Reformation and the Home Missionary Program was literally designed to determine whether or not the church should kill you. Brigham Young did not believe that the failure was at the leadership level, he believed the failure was at the rank and file. And that the reason all of the cattle died when they took them to Cache County, and the winter was so bad, was because the members were sinning. And as a consequence of the members sinning, God had punished them by destroying the cattle. It never occurred to him that maybe his leadership was flawed. He never questioned that. I think Brigham Young had a mental breakdown when the 'Battle Axe of the Lord' didn't respond to Johnston's Army, and he was actually dispossessed to the governorship.

I presented a paper on that, and I did that at Sunstone; and one of those papers I presented at Sunstone is in a book called *Eight Essays*. I just want to make sure... no... "Other Sheep Indeed," no... it's not it. It's called "Brigham Young's Telesial Kingdom." It's not in this book of essays, but I brought you this book that includes several of my Sunstone presentations and a couple of other things that I've written. Chapter 8, which is the eighth essay in this book, is called "Problems in Restoration History." And I brought you three books.

Shawn: Thank you.

Denver: This one is a series of essays that has been recently published, gathering together things I've written over the years.

This one's called *A Man Without Doubt*. *A Man Without Doubt* presents three failures that Joseph Smith confronted. And in response to each of the three (he wrote his lengthiest three efforts to try and help people), I give an introduction and a set up to

describe why the document got written, and then I get out of the way and let Joseph talk. And it goes to show that Joseph Smith's biggest nemesis were his own followers.

And then this book is called *Come Let Us Adore Him*. The cover of this book is a sketch by Leonardo Da Vinci, incomplete, but a drawing that he made of the Nativity. And I thought, "What a perfect cover," because this book is an incomplete sketch of the Savior. But you can tell the subject matter of the Nativity from what Da Vinci *had* done, and you can make it out in rough form. I took, in *Come Let Us Adore Him* (a book that was written while I was still an active member), and I selected from the life of the Savior those incidents in the Gospels that have never been adequately addressed, in order to understand the personality of the Lord—the ministry of the Lord, the meaning of things that he had done. And so while it is incomplete, it really does—in my attempt—try to introduce the Lord to people in a way that that makes Him seem a far more resilient, far more firm minded, far more authentic character, that really did respond to the burden of prophecy and fulfilling the burden of prophecy.

I got into a lot of trouble because I tried to deal honestly with problems in Mormonism. I know that there are people who want to dismiss Mormonism altogether, for a whole host of reasons. But there are people that want to dismiss evangelical Christianity, Catholicism, Islam. What I found is that if you take all of the the disagreements, the level at which we argue back and forth about issues, and you say, "Okay, that exists and that's true enough," *but* what is it when evangelical Christianity approaches the idea of holiness, of goodness, of God and man's relation to one another? What is it that evangelical Christianity has to offer that is the highest, and best, and most pure, and most desirable? What you'll find is that in Catholicism—what is highest, most noble, what is best, what is most desirable—and in evangelical Christianity, it's the same. The same is true of Mormonism, and the same is even true of the deepest Islamic thinkers. In fact, at its highest level in the search for light and truth and goodness, you can find it in the Bhagavad Gita. You can find it in Buddhism.

Shawn: And what is it? What's that common thread?

Denver: Christ said to His disciples—and it was in a harrowing moment: He had just announced that one of them was going to betray Him, and He had just sent Judas on his task. And in *that* moment, before He goes out in the Garden to suffer, He says, "By this shall men know that you are my disciples, that you have love for one another." Okay? So, is it an act of love for me to search for and to find the things that I can agree with and that I treasure, that *you* believe in and that *you* treasure? Is it an act of love for me to come and argue and denounce?

I understand that people defend the idea that by denouncing, we're really helping to save because we need to rebuke them. But Christ's interface with the critics that *He* had was almost uniformly tolerant, and benign, kindly, and attempting to get them to see something higher and better—right up until *He* chose the moment (I defend that in this book, that Christ chose the moment) for His sacrifice. He went in to cause, at the Passover, the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb by His "Woe unto you scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites!" by comparing them to whited sepulchers. He went in and He controlled the moment of sacrifice because it was necessary that the Paschal Lamb be slain on the Passover.

And so, His provocation controlled timing. But up until the moment of the provocation, you know, we found someone that was taken in adultery. Well, He doesn't deal with that other than in a kindly way, to force them to look into their own conscience. And looking into their own conscience, they back down. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar? Well, show me a coin. Whose image is on this coin? Well, give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, and give to God the things that belong to God. Those are not the words of a hostile, street-preaching evangelical with a fist in your face, those are the words of someone that actually is trying, in a loving and kindly way, to reclaim someone from from error.

And I love to be corrected from error, but many times people trying to correct me have not done the work I've done. I would venture to say, if anyone has written or read a history of Mormonism that was written before 2010, they're way behind in understanding what the current state of Mormon history is. Most people read and rely on second and third-hand sources. I have devoted the last decades to looking for original journals, original diaries, original content, contemporaneous newspaper accounts; searching for the source material.

Historians write fiction. They try to smooth over the events to try and make a narrative, to try and give you the moral of the story. When lives are lived without a storyline, they're lived without the plot being developed. They set out to achieve something headed in this direction, and that's their goal. But through a bunch of missteps, misfortunes, oppositions, failures, they wind up over there. So the historian comes along and says, "Here's the story of their glorious trip there," when the life that was lived was frustrated; it was hedged up. They lived their lives with blinders on, stumbling through circumstance-and-predicament after circumstance-and-predicament. And to ignore the reality of what they went through is to ignore what, really, the lessons are.

I suggested in a talk I gave a couple weeks ago at a conference that people read the account in Exodus and only look at Moses' words. Just read what Moses says—ignore the rest of the story and isolate what Moses has to say. This is a man overwhelmed, intimidated, frightened—judging his own inadequacy, protesting to God about his unfitness, his unsuitability—about the difficulty of the challenge; about his own reluctance. *That's life*. The problem is we pick up the scriptures and we do to the scriptures exactly what has been done to Mormon history.

When you and I talked about doing this interview, I said, "I think every Christian should study Mormon history, every Christian should get deep into Mormon history." Because they'll realize there's an institution, a *trillion*-dollar institution—a political powerhouse, an economic engine, a social force in the entire world—sitting here, built upon a whole bunch of misrepresentations, falsehoods, and skewing of the events. If you were to study carefully the content, in order to be able to see the difference of that, a Christian

(if they're being fair) would then have the problem of going back, and saying, "What might I learn, if I had available to me the source material to do the same thing to the evolution of the Christian Church? And how might I reconsider, a little more humbly, my own dogmatism about my state?"

And if you're Jewish and you go back to the period of Ezra and Nehemiah—the incidents immediately preceding the Babylonian captivity, the discovery of the scroll, the reading of the law—what you realize is that Judaism was in tatters at the end of the first temple period, and it got rebuilt and reconstructed. And it doesn't matter, *it doesn't matter* how many of the scholars' tools get applied to try and ferret out, from the clues that we have left, the content of the the old canon and the veracity of the new canon. The fact is you can't do with those what I am able to do with Mormon history because I have far more available, first-hand resources from which to conduct my reconstruction of the Mormon experience. But by analogy, every lesson you learn along that reconstructive effort should lead to the humble acceptance of the fact that the form of Christianity currently believed, by the entire Protestant world, *did not exist* in any form for 1,500 years. It's an invention, a relatively recent one, that is the fruit of the effort that was made by Martin Luther in putting his life on the line to rebel. And ultimately, much of evangelical Christianity is the product of that founder, Roger Williams of Rhode Island.

But in Mormonism, I have the ability to look and see where the fingerprints are. I still have access to source material from which I can actually say, "I know what's going on down there is based on myth and dishonesty." And I can somewhat reconstruct a more accurate version, and vision of what it began as, from the available source material.

I've got the Ante-Nicene and Pre-Nicene fathers' works; they're a valuable resource. We've got the lectures that were done by Martin Luther; we know what drove him. We don't have access to the papal archives; we don't know what they have suppressed. We do know that there were early teachings that divided, at about 1,000 A.D., the Eastern Orthodox from the Catholic world; and that they represent a preservation, in part, on the eastern side, the things that were neglected and lost on the western side, and vice versa. But we come onto the scene at a point in history in which it's *arrogant* to say, "I can tell you what pure Christianity looks and feels like," because we've come so late to the party.

The one thing I can know for certain is that one of the evidences of actual Christianity is the *love* that people can have for one another, across *all* the rubble, across *all* the ruin, across *all* the disagreements. And if we can begin with the highest, most noble aspirations of loving and caring for one another— Christ chose, deliberately, a character that would be considered odious in the Good Samaritan. He was not only odious socially and politically, in the story he would have been odious economically. And here you've got someone that the Jews had this religious disconnect, and yet, the one who helped him overlooked his Samaritanism, overlooked his predicament.

"What was he doing on the road if... He should have been smart enough to travel in a pack... He should never... It's his own fault to fall among thieves! He's a foolish man, he

got what he deserved!" There's none of that. There's no, "You're a foolish man, you shouldn't be Jehovah's Witness!" "You're a foolish man, you shouldn't be Catholic!" "The ministry and Catholicism has turned into rampant pedophilia: you should be *anything but Catholic!*" "How can you be *that?!!*"

Why am I trying to inflict pain upon a Catholic who's doing his best to hold on to his faith, instead of inspiring him to look for something noble and good and virtuous that's exemplified in his faith—like praising Mother Teresa, and saying, "She deserves the sainthood that your church is going to visit upon her?"—because *he* exemplifies the kind of human caring for one another that Christ came to deliver. *And* Saint Francis, I mean the current Pope—everything the current Pope is doing or not doing (notwithstanding, he chose a name for which I have abiding respect; and he earned my respect as a consequence).

Shawn: I could personally listen to you. And I understand why you have people who listen to you and follow, because you have a great perspective—which, I agree with everything you said. I have no problem.

Denver: No.

Shawn: The show is called *Heart of the Matter* and I need to get, for our audience, to the *heart* of what this all means. And you're a great teacher, and you're laying out principles here that are established in the history of Christianity and Mormonism. But what does that mean? Because on one hand, you're saying we're wasting our time poking on the Catholics, and this and that, but *you are* poking on the North Temple Mormons. You do go after *them*. So the love thing, it seems to be, apparently, somewhat lost between you and North Temple. And so I agree with you that, look, let's just let people believe what they're going to believe, let's point out the positives—all that you said—but what are you about now? What are you doing? What is happening? What's the threat? Why do they consider you a *threat*, besides the obvious?

Denver: Yeah. When I— Most of what I have written was written at a time that I was a faithful member of the church, therefore, most of what I've written reflects the viewpoint from inside faithful Mormonism.

Shawn: Can you tell our audience what you've written? I'm sorry to interrupt your thought.

Denver: The first...

Shawn: How many books?

Denver: Well, seventeen volumes of material, but in addition there's— They asked for, and I gave permission, to gather collected works of blog posts and other things. And so, there's a number of those volumes that are... I think five of those, so if you count them, like 22 volumes.

Shawn: And how do people get those?

Denver: Oh, you can buy them on Amazon.

Shawn: Just look up Denver?

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Twenty-two volumes on Amazon.

Denver: Yeah, they're all there.

Shawn: All right.

Denver: The breach came when *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was written. Again, it was still written *inside* the Mormon world. It was *after that* (and I got kicked out) that I felt no need at all to pull punches, and so what was written after that— I've been asked, "Why don't you go back to that first book, *The Second Comforter* (which is the short name. The long name is *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*— which as a former Mormon should should mean something to you)."

Shawn: It rings a bell.

Denver: It rings a bell. Or at least three knocks. (Audience laughter.)

So *that* book was written to try and inspire people to seek for, and obtain for themselves, revelation. Look, the Joseph Smith story, the Book of Mormon, the testimonies of the missionaries— When I came into Mormonism, I thought all those good people were visited by angels and experiencing miracles; and my expectation was that that was commonplace. I thought that's what Mormonism was: it was a revival of the original New Testament religion with all of the accouterments that occur in that New Testament religion.

Shawn: Road to Damascus. You're waiting for it.

Denver: The whole thing.

So, when it was within the first year of being baptized and the scriptures were opening before my mind, that having an angelic visit—which happened—I thought that was commonplace, that happened to everyone. That's, you know, that's what Mormonism is. It's, you know, the veil gets thin, you go through, they come through, you have fellowship on the other side.

It was really not until I got out of Texas to Utah, into the Brigham Young University Law School, that associating weekly with, you know, the hometown crop of Mormonism out

of the mission field, that it began to dawn on me that extraordinary experiences were not expected—and actually weren't even welcomed. The miraculous was deferred to the hierarchy; and the hierarchy was responsible for dispensing that to you and me. And so, what *The Second Comforter* (the first book I wrote) was attempting to do was to testify and to suggest the miraculous—the thinness of the veil, the proximity of angels—needs to become commonplace in Mormonism.

Shawn: Let me stop, just for a second.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: You just dropped a *huge* bomb.

Denver: Oh.

Shawn: *Gigantic* bomb.

Denver: Which was?

Shawn: That you were visited by an angel. You went like *this* to respond to that.

Denver: Oh.

Shawn: *But*, maybe it's that to you, "Oh yeah, of course. I visit with them weekly, you know." *But*, to most people— That's not a reality for most people. I'm not saying it should or shouldn't be, I'm just saying most people don't seem to have that reality. So, can you explain a little bit about that? Or do you— Maybe what the North Temple guys say, "It's a little too sacred, I don't discuss that?"

Denver: No. I've never bought in to that idea. But there is an idea that I do buy into, and the idea is that Christ did a variety of miraculous things—always charging those to whom the miracle had been given to tell no one about it. There's another comment that He makes...

Shawn: But we know that was because He was, like you said, orchestrating His death, and had that...

Denver: He was, He was. But there's another comment that He makes, and I put these two together, not— (It's a long story why I put them together, but I put these two together), He says it is a wicked and an adulterous generation that seeks after a sign. I believe that the more you talk about the miraculous, the more you attract a certain personality. That is, in Paul's words, they have itching ears. They really want a tale; they really want the fantastic. When the burden of Christianity is the daily life, it's treating one another kindly; it's loving those that are in need; it's doing things for others. And so, I tend not to speak about the miraculous, primarily because I don't want people that are eager for *only* the miraculous, because it's the wrong sort, and it's not the burden...

Shawn: But Denver, the first book you wrote is about...

Denver: Yes, the miraculous—in an effort to try and get others to experience it, not to boast of myself.

Shawn: Right. I know. I'm not finding you boastful, I just want to know...

Denver: But I'll tell you what happened in that first visit, because it really reflects poorly on me. And I have no problem telling the story because it shows what a poor candidate I am for doing any kind of work on an errand from God. I can still close my eyes and see everything about it. It made *that* indelible of an impression upon me at the time. I was caught up— I know that the scriptures speak using a phrase, 'I was caught up to an exceedingly high mountain.' I think I understand what that phrase means because I was, in fact, caught up. I could see the circle of the horizon of the earth in the distance.

Shawn: So you just crushed the flat-earthers right there!

Denver: Yeah. I could see, and I was standing on an actual surface.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: And there were actual walls, and there were paintings on the walls, okay? And I'm taking this in. And there's a personage there. I could sketch him if you gave me— Well, I'm not going to do that. (I thought she was going to hand me a pen.)

Shawn: (He thought you were bringing him a pallet!)

Denver: Yeah, I could sketch him 'cause I can still picture him. Okay, he had a beard, he had hair, but it was not, like, long and flowing. It was reasonably well groomed, and, you know, not shoulder length but not collar length either—white hair, white beard, elderly, as somber a personage as you would ever encounter. And he said to me exactly this: "On the first day, of the third month, in nine years, your ministry will begin; and so, you must prepare."

Shawn: Wow.

Denver: That's exactly what he said. Okay, so, here's *my* attention span—I hear that and I think, "I wonder why the walls are transparent? Why would you have a wall if you can see right through the thing? And why are they painting? Don't they have photography? And why is it that I know *that* painting I'm looking at is Moses? Because I *know that face is the face of Moses!* And no one's ever shown me a picture, but that's Moses—and he's bald. I had no idea Moses was bald. Because one of the criteria for the high priest— A defect included baldness. That's weird! And where are we?"

So, this is where *my* head is at, and I've just had an angel give me— I didn't ask, "Prepare? Wh...what? How? Mini...ministry? Wh...whaat?" And the man literally waited. He wasn't going to force anything. He had a message, he had the content, and he gave it to me. It was up to me then to inquire, and I didn't inquire. I'm acting like a tourist. It's only weeks later, I mean— Then I was dismissed, I mean, and as I was dismissed I noticed, as I departed, that there was someone arriving. And I thought, "Does heaven operate like, you know, a bus terminal where there are people coming and going all the time? 'Cause that's interesting." And I believe that as I departed, that the direction that someone arriving came from was earthward, and therefore, coming up.

But the whole thing was singular. I didn't talk about it, but I did write down an account of that. And it was only weeks later that it occurred to me that that was an opportunity to learn a whole lot, but I didn't ask a single question. In fact, I was so distracted that I didn't— I got out of it a message that I didn't understand, that deserved inquiry, that deserved *some* amplification, explanation, elucidation—*something* other than those words because I didn't know what to make of those words. And as I thought about it in the weeks that followed, all I had were questions. So when I had questions then I made it a matter of prayer—and I got nothing.

Shawn: We're out of time.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Nine years, three months, first day of the third month...

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: What date? What date—what is that, or what was that?

Denver: Oh, it's a good story, but we'll...

Shawn: But I just want to know that day to whet our audience's appetite.

Denver: Oh, it was the day—after the year I thought it was—in which the Sunday School president, the bishop, came to my house and called me to be the Gospel Doctrine teacher for the first time. And I taught gospel doctrine for 25 years after that. Yeah.

Shawn: So that gives us some idea.

When we come back with Denver, we're going to have more exchange on some *words* that I want to throw at him, and just let him say what he thinks about these words. And then we're going to hear him tell about what he's— What's really happening now with what he's doing *today* within the faith—and I'll call it the faith of all faiths—within the faith. What is he doing? And what does it mean to people who are seeking?

Really appreciate you taking the time. Appreciate your audience's respect. We've had some audiences not respectful. These guys are good, so that best reflects well on you in some ways.

Denver: That's good. That's good.

Shawn: Yeah, it is good. And so let's keep going, and we'll come back and see you next week here on *Heart of the Matter*.

2019.10.08 Heart of the Matter Interview, Part 3

This is the third and final part of Shawn McCraney's interview of Denver Snuffer for the Heart of the Matter podcast, which was recorded on October 8th, 2019 in front of a live audience.

Shawn: All right, welcome back. We were just talking, Denver and I. One thing we have in common (we have a lot of things in common, actually), but one thing is we never change our clothes! Thank you for that joke, Denver.

Part 3— Part 1: We heard about Denver's life through story, really. It was a lot of different, sort of chronological, a little bit disparate—but stories that led up to his conversion and baptism in 1973 and into the Mormon Church.

And then we talked a little about (in Part 2) about his getting married to his wife of all these years, nine kids between them and together. And then we talked about Mormonism and about sort of how he got the hook and yanked offstage a little bit. We talked about that in Part 2, so if you're just catching up with us today, we're—or tonight—we're gonna talk a little bit more specifically. And I am *begging* for truncated, succinct answers.

Now, this is a man of words, and he's eloquent and intelligent, so intelligent that the empty— He just says things in a way that really paints the picture, but our low-attention-span audience doesn't necessarily always get that. So, I'm hoping we can do this:

Now, I have four categories. These are the categories, Denver: *social issues, Mormonism, doctrinal basics, and Denver Snuffer*. 'K? So, you choose the category. I have about ten questions in each. That shows you how short you have to be, and I want to hear what you believe, think, teach, share on the concept presented.

Denver: Okay, what were the categories again?

Shawn: *Social issues?*

Denver: Nah.

Shawn: *Mor*—that would be last then—*Mormonism?*

Denver: Sure, let's do that.

Shawn: Thoughts on, first of all, *Joseph Smith*.

Denver: Misunderstood, far more personally insecure than people make him out to be; far more respectful and dependent upon Emma than the LDS tradition would ever

acknowledge; and in many respects never felt comfortable with the role that he was assigned.

Shawn: Excellent, and the brevity almost makes me cry.

Denver: Yeah, I know. It does me, too. [Laughter]

Shawn: *Brigham Young.*

Denver: An ambitious man who managed to see, in the construct that Joseph bequeathed him, the potential for monetizing it (in what we would call today *monetization*); who successfully developed it into an empire of control and dominion that today reflects *far more* the Brigham Young version of Mormonism than does it reflect the Joseph Smith version.

Shawn: Translation for our audience: He's a dude that's fallen off a tree to make money.

Denver: Yeah, he's the first multi-millionaire west of the Mississippi.

Shawn: Excellent.

Denver: And he was a carpenter from New England!

Shawn: Right.

Denver: It's like you elect someone to Congress, and they come back—22 million in their pocket.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: How'd that happen? You make him church president, and he becomes a multimillionaire. How'd that happen?

Shawn: So, it's obvious, between Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, you see a lot going on.

Denver: Joseph Smith had a pending petition in bankruptcy when he died. Brigham Young died a wealthy man. Yeah.

Shawn: *Priesthood.*

Denver: *Fabulously* misunderstood. *Completely* misused by the Catholic precedent to subjugate and to control that left so indelible an impression upon the minds of the Christian world that that abusive view echoed down right to today. Priesthood in the form that Christ exemplified it is a call to *service* and *subservience* and not a call to...

Shawn: Be served?

Denver: Yeah, what we've turned it into. It (priesthood) is synonymous, in my mind, with abuse and, primarily, male abuse.

Shawn: Okay, so just curious— Just to take that out a little farther, do you believe in a priesthood which is based or exemplified in *service* that both men and women bear?

Denver: I've redefined the concept, and I—you don't read what I've written, so you wouldn't know this—but I've redefined the concept of priesthood as *fellowship*.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: I think women can have fellowship with one another, and that's a form of *priestesshood*. Men can have fellowship with men; that's a form of priesthood. Men can have associations with angels; that's a form of priesthood. And I think the way to conceptualize priesthood in its best form is as an *association* between sisters or an association between brethren.

Shawn: Fascinating, fascinating. *Water baptism*. (I have heard, just to let you know, that you do perform these, and I've heard, *often*.) So, water baptism.

Denver: Water baptism— And I've said that I think having a living ordinance should be done in living water, that you ought to go out into a river or a lake, a stream, a body of living water in which nature created it, not going inside a building in a tile font and be baptized. I think living ordinances should be by immersion in living water, and it ought to be in a facility that God created—to *remind* us that this is something intended to draw us closer to God, to be born again. Anytime you find living water, as you come out of the *water* from baptism, you see new *life*. You see the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom. I believe in baptism by immersion, and I think it ought best be done in living water.

Shawn: Okay. A couple things—one, I'm sure you know that the *earliest* church fathers believed in living water. In fact, that was one of the main things, but the question I have is can anyone do these? You believe in immersion. Can a teenager baptize a woman or...

Denver: Yeah, one of the things that I have recommended— In the Book of Mormon, there's this example of Alma who had been a servant in an unrighteous king's court. They're called *the wicked priests of King Noah*. He was one of the wicked priests. He gets converted by Abinadi, as you know. He goes out, and he starts his own thing. Well, before he performs a baptism, he prays, and he asks God for the authority to baptize, and he gets an answer that gives him the authority, in answer to prayer, to baptize. P

I've recommended before you baptize anyone, pray and ask God to give you the right to baptize and get from God, as Alma did, the *yea*, the *yes*, and then perform baptism— and yeah, anyone.

Shawn: So, authorize it. So, what you have done there, and I love this— C.A.M.P.U.S. stands for Christian Anarchists [Christian Anarchists Meeting to Prayerfully Understand Scripture], and I won't go into it, but I love the fact that you leave it in the hands of the person who says, *The Lord has said I can*.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: And you let them take that responsibility on because ultimately, it's between them anyway.

Denver: Yeah. In fact, the more you can push responsibility onto the individual, and the less you try to aggregate power to yourself— It's a toxin. It's a toxin to the person getting it, and it's a toxin to the person that is giving it. People need to be responsible to God directly.

Shawn: I love that.

Denver: Man.

Shawn: I love that. That's beautiful. *Sabbath day*.

Denver: Yeah. Dude, that would require an hour of talk to...

Shawn: Come on, you can summarize it!

Denver: We're commanded to keep the Sabbath day holy. I recommend that you do something on the Sabbath day always to remember God. If you find yourself in a predicament where, due to the circumstances of life, you're doing things that you would rather not do on the Sabbath, then do them cognizant in remembering God. You can serve God even if what you do on the Sabbath is work as a mechanic. Just do what you do for the benefit and the glory of God.

Shawn: Is the Sabbath day—and I don't want to belabor this— Are we talking about Friday night to Saturday night, or are we talking about Sunday?

Denver: That's the problem because that requires a long explanation, but...

Shawn: In you, does it matter?

Denver: I'm content with Sunday Sabbath. I understand why some would say it ought to be on Saturday. I believe that the answer to the question goes all the way back to the

Fall and how everything got pushed forward. And I think Christ's resurrection on what had become the *first* day of the week was really restoring the early Fall...

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: ...because they didn't have the Sabbath at the beginning. They were kicked out of the garden. And then Christ's resurrection authorizes the celebration of the Sabbath on Sunday as opposed to Saturday. But look, keep a Sabbath day holy. Yeah.

Shawn: So, we could say you're Sabbath fluid.

Denver: I'm Sabbath fluid. [Laughter]

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: That sounds cultish.

Shawn: Yeah, well, we have gender fluidity. I figure we can have Sabbath fluidity.

Denver: Sabbath fluidity.

Shawn: All right. *Tithing*. Gotta give it to me straight, Brother.

Denver: I believe that you have a responsibility to care for yourself, to care for your children, to care for your wife and that the payment of tithings is not to be done before taking care of everything that's necessary for food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education; that whatever is left *over*, you tithe on that.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: You don't tithe on your gross.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Appreciate that approach *far* better than the evangelicals in this valley who pitch the old LDS struggle: *And the Lord will bless you. Give us the money you would have paid on your electric bill.*

Denver: Yeah! Yeah! And God gave you the money to use for your *electric* bill!

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: And you're using it to support... Yeah, it just— It makes no sense.

Shawn: *Word of Wisdom.*

Denver: Okay. The Word of Wisdom was not given in defined terms. It was given in colloquial language. The Word of Wisdom had no meaning until the high council at Far West interpreted what they thought the Word of Wisdom meant. At a *later* time, Hyrum Smith was asked about the meaning of the Word of Wisdom, and Hyrum Smith, respectful of the order of things, repeated what the high council at Far West had said.

I believe the Word of Wisdom actually *recommends* beer—barley drinks.

Shawn: Sure.

Denver: Mild barley drinks—what's it talking about? At that point, it meant beer. I believe that hot drinks are *not* coffee, tea. I believe hot drinks are what people at the time—we now identify this as an Indian word, *firewater*—I believe that what it's talking about are those drinks that when you take bourbon, or you take some hard liquor, and you drink it, it burns your throat.

Shawn: I've never heard of that.

Denver: I think the hot drinks is referring to hard alcohol. Wine in the sacrament is *commended*. It's the only liquid that's mentioned for use in scripture—wine for the sacrament; and I believe that beer is just fine. I think hard liquor is probably hazardous. (And a good friend of ours died from liver failure.)

Shawn: Sure.

Denver: And it would be very hard to accomplish that with beer, but you can certainly achieve that with vodka.

Shawn: So, would it be safe to say that you really don't appreciate hard alcohol based off the Word of Wisdom? But do you give the liberality of people who are participating?

Denver: It's a *word of wisdom*...

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: ...that is given, not by commandment or constraint. I think it's unwise, and I think I know from personal experience in my youth that hard liquor tends to make one act foolishly.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Yeah. My father...

Shawn: Not me, but everybody else, it does.

Denver: My father and Wayne Water's father met for the first time after the two of us had been picked up. He, Wayne, was guilty of a DUI. I was just along for the ride, but, yeah, hard liquor will make one behave foolishly.

Shawn: *Russell M. Nelson.* And I have to put a rule on this. You don't get to say, "Quick!"

Denver: Yeah. No, look. I think he's the victim of a system that he inherited that he does not see any way to execute his role other than in conformity to the system that he inherited, and he would be *far, far* better off if he said the *system* is not the *gospel*.

The gospel is not necessarily confined. We do not need to be slavishly following an *order* of things. The truth will set you *free*, and tradition— In the Book of Mormon, tradition is a negative. *Every time* the word *tradition* is used in the Book of Mormon, it is used in a negative way except on, I think, two (and it may be three) occasions where it specifically identifies the tradition as being good. Otherwise, the default for tradition is always evil.

Russell Nelson is leading an organization that has been out of control, probably since 1890. And I picked that day because that was when the lawyer wrote Official Declaration 1 that Wilford Woodruff published in order to satisfy the Tucker-Edmonds Act [Edmonds-Tucker Act] and to extract the church from the loss of their property.

You can't serve God and Mammon, and right now a lot of hard choices *ought* to be made. Mormonism would thrive if they made the right choices, if they were willing to lay aside the traditions and the things that cultivate and curate the wealth. Forget about the world; the world's headed for destruction anyway.

Shawn: Ooh, we'll have to talk about that.

Denver: The more you hold on to that, the more disappointed you're gonna be at the outcome. But the things of eternal life—they'll be with you forever.

Shawn: Last one: *Communion*.

Denver: Oh! In the sense of the sacrament, *sacramental communion*, I believe that that ought to be celebrated every Sabbath (but as often as someone feels inclined to do so) and that it ought to be breaking of bread, the taking of wine. And I think that wine was intended to be part of the sacramental observance because a little bit of wine, for most people, will put you in a more meditative state, in a more reflective state.

We're very harried in our every day. Our minds are busy running from place to place. We have short attention spans. Wine has a way of slowing you down a little and letting your attention span expand a little, and your reflection become a little more deep. I think communion in that sense— I see no problem if someone wants to have communion

celebrated as a sacrament every day. But I also think there's a communion between people, a fellowship.

Shawn: Okay, yeah.

Denver: Yeah, a sharing of ideas. There are a lot of things that everyone holds in common, and there are so many things that we can fight about. I don't think we please God when we decide, Ah, what we're going to talk about today is what we fight about. There ought to be a lot more (used to be!)— They invited ministers to come to the tabernacle and to preach in the tabernacle to a Mormon audience.

Shawn: D. L. Moody!

Denver: Yeah! Van Der Donckt, the chaplain of the United States Senate.

Shawn: Wow.

Denver: And B. H. Roberts!

Shawn: Wow.

Denver: They gave lectures...

Shawn: Did that happen there?

Denver: Yeah!

Shawn: That's where we get the...

Denver: Yes!

Shawn: ...Van Der Donckt?

Denver: Yes! That's from the tabernacle!

Shawn: On materialism?

Denver: Yes!

Shawn: Wow!

Denver: That's tabernacle! Yeah.

There was a time when Mormonism was confident enough that it would allow someone to come in and criticize. Mormonism today has no confidence to let a critic come in and criticize 'cause it *scares* them.

Shawn: This is an aside. I don't know your age; you look young but gray. But the question I have is: Do you remember the days when priesthood meeting (I was really— I was a kid, about eight), opening priesthood meeting was like a debate! *I don't like that candidate!* Another person would say, *Oh I...*

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: ...*I think he's great!*

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: They were *open!*

Denver: It was lively. See, what happened is that Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie, his son-in-law, *wanted* to stabilize Mormonism. I think they were far less concerned with getting it right and far more concerned with just stabilizing it. They were opponents of that, and I loved that era.

Shawn: That was a great era.

Denver: That was fun.

Shawn: That *ends* your first category, Mr. Denver Snuffer! We have the *basics in doctrine, yourself, or social issues.*

Denver: Wait a minute. Are we going through all of them?

Shawn: Yes!

Denver: I chose one...

Shawn: This is interesting!

Denver: ...I chose one in the expectation that that would be it.

Shawn: Your expectations were incorrect, sir. [Laughter]

Denver: So, this is all double jeopardy. This is all— Yeah, we don't ring the bell and say, *Okay, you've made it to the end.*

Shawn: No, we knock three times, remember?

Denver: Yeah. Man. So, what was the first one 'cause we may as well do...

Shawn: *Social issues.*

Denver: That's the one I like least, so, yeah, let's go there.

Shawn: *Marijuana.*

Denver: It's funny. One of the fellows who was going to meet me here is not here because he has to harvest his marijuana crop. He has a license (this is weird, okay?). He lives in Utah. He's been licensed by the state of Utah to grow a crop of marijuana, which he has grown and is now harvesting because it's supposed to snow tomorrow, and he's gonna turn it into CBD oil that's legal. And how weird is that?

Shawn: It's weird.

Denver: I mean, seriously. Look, I...

Shawn: Herbs?

Denver: ...I think—yeah, I get all that—but I think smoking stuff is ill-advised to your lungs. (You know, edibles over in Colorado might be an answer for some people.)

I do think that there's therapeutic uses of a whole variety of things. I learned from a fellow whose daughter's in med school that one of the very first heart medications that they developed for blood thinning came from using a poisonous snake venom to adjust it for dosage that will allow the blood to be thinned in order to help heart patients prevent further damage. If snake venom can have a therapeutic use, then it's likely that just about everything in the hands of someone that knows what they're doing can have a therapeutic use. We react hysterically because someone abuses something without ever considering that maybe further use ought to be experimented with to find out where it fits.

This creation was fine-tuned by God who put man as the culmination of that creation, and everything—*everything*—was given for the use and benefit of man in the Garden of Eden. Now, he was kicked out. The *kind* of environment became progressively more hostile, but that doesn't mean that everything in the garden didn't exist for the use and benefit of man. We just abuse stuff.

Shawn: Like your views; I really do! *Government.*

Denver: The United States has one of the greatest governmental structures ever created, and it is populated, at present, by scoundrels and knaves and dishonest and just wretched individuals. *Fortunately*, we have egomaniacal leaders occupying all three branches of government which is exactly what the Founding Fathers anticipated would happen, and so, we get a daily vaudeville show.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: I mean, it's slapstick humor what's going on back in Washington.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Are you telling me that that both political parties don't realize there's an immigration problem that could be solved? Why are we ignoring a problem when we're importing disease? Why can't someone that has a disease that would like to come here go through a system that welcomes them but cures their disease before they set them loose in the general public? Some people say, Well, we want to welcome them, and some people say, Oh, this is a danger; we have to have it regulated. Why can't we both welcome them and regulate it and do it in a way that protects the people that are here and aids the actual people that are coming in?

Our government right now is utterly dysfunctional, and we're the beneficiaries of that because they leave us alone.

Shawn: So, you have obvious ideas. Let me get more to the point on that one, government. *What is your thought on the separation of church and state?*

Denver: It was always intended that the state not be allowed to meddle in the church, but I think that churches were always expected to speak up and to have a voice. I think churches *ought* to speak up.

I think there are a lot of issues that affect churches and the values of the churches. And when you say that you have to gag the churches, then are the only voices that are permitted in the public discourse the secular voice, the atheist voice? Why is the atheist voice more pure and worthy of being heard than the religious voice if you're going to open up the First Amendment for everyone to speak? It just— It makes no sense. We've skewed it. Churches should be as vocal as they want to be. Atheists should likewise be as vocal as they want to be.

The only thing that shouldn't happen is that a government should not say, This religion is destined to prosper and succeed, but that one is destined to ruin in taxation. They should be hands off. The government shouldn't control that.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: But if churches have the ability to win the political argument and to elect people to Congress that represent their views, churches should have the right to rally and to elect.

Shawn: With the continued support of tax-exempt status?

Denver: I think so because anytime you say you will forfeit your taxes in... The power— Oliver Wendell Holmes said the power to tax is the power to destroy. The power to destroy when it comes to churches— You really have to take a tax-free approach.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: You just have to.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: Otherwise, government can destroy it.

Shawn: I see. Excellent. *Abortion.*

I think I know what you're gonna say on most of these, but let's just get it on the record.

Denver: Yeah. I think you're taking a life.

Shawn: Okay. *Homosexuality.*

Denver: I think it is the— Ultimately, anyone who does not have children— I don't care what their orientation is. Having a sexual union between the man and the woman that produces a child, no matter what it is that drives your libido, is part of what it means to be human, made in the image of God, and to experience, in this life, part of what is our destiny.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: And, therefore, I understand that there may be people who find that challenging. Nevertheless, I think they will find greater joy and happiness in having and raising a child than they can in a union that will deprive them of that.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: So, I mean, I don't want to throw rocks at anyone. What I would like to do is encourage them to contemplate the value and the godliness of the union of the man and the woman and the product of progeny.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: *Capital punishment.*

Denver: Because I have been a lawyer and seen innocent people be convicted, some — At least one fellow is in jail right now for a crime he did not commit that we're doing what we can to try and change that. I hate to have finality like execution when you have the potential for error. If you *know*; if the person confesses, I don't have a problem with an execution although if there's no proof to support his confession, and all he's doing is using you to commit suicide, I got a problem with that.

But there's a serial killer I heard about driving into work today. He's confessed to...

Shawn: Ninety-four.

Denver: ...ninety— Yeah, and he's got proof, and they found bodies where he said they'd find them. I don't have any problem with execution.

Shawn: That's no connection to blood atonement.

Denver: Oh, goll!

Shawn: I just have to ask! You got to clear up the mystique, Brother.

Denver: Yeah, Yeah. I think the whole notion of blood atonement is asinine. The Apostle Paul said he was guilty of murder.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: I mean, the whole concept was he committed a sin, but most...

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Christ's blood can't reach, so we gotta shed your blood.

Shawn: Right.

Denver: Ah, yeah, that's nonsense.

Shawn: I'll just throw this one out there. We'll end it with that one. *Evangelicalism*.

Denver: A recent innovation, largely dependent upon the constructural framework that Martin Luther came up with, which itself was, in a way, to escape Roman Catholicism without, you know, trusting that Catholicism's excommunication of you will consign you to hell. I mean, evangelical views were inevitable, and I think they are supportable by the biblical text, but they are really recent. Here, the evangelicals are the only ones that got it right?

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Then we've got like 1750 years of Christians that are consigned to hell because it didn't *exist*. I mean, look, given the chaos of what Christianity came to in the wake of Catholicism and Martin Luther and Knox and Calvin, evangelicals are probably putting a better face on the ruling of Christianity than most. And I have a lot— I harmonize with a lot of what the evangelical world has to say.

Shawn: Not on my list, but just between, you know, you and I, have you done much reading of Erasmus?

Denver: No! I should do that.

Shawn: Yeah, really interesting.

Denver: Okay.

Shawn: We have two categories left, my friend, and I know the one you're *not* gonna pick unless you want to get the pain out of the way. We can do *Denver Snuffer*, or we can do *the basics of doctrine*.

Denver: Well, let's do *the basics of doctrine*, and then— Aren't we out of time? [Laughter]

Shawn: No. I know you're hoping for that. We're not letting that happen.

Denver: I need to... [Denver gestures *stretching out* space between his hands. Laughter.]

Shawn: Yeah, you're good at that! All right. *God the Father*.

Denver: God the Father is clearly cross-culturally recognized as an existent male deity that, in Jewish tradition and in Egyptological depiction and in Hinduism, offered the promise of a redemptive God-Son who would come to rescue mankind from a predicament. P

And I think that God the Father in our current scriptures, biblical and Mormon, seems distant and disconnected; and yet, God the Son comes in and says, I do what the Father tells me to do. I'm a reflection of Him. I'm here as His, essentially, His surrogate. When you see me, you've seen the Father. P

And so, we have this disconnect between us and the Father that Christ was trying to disabuse us of to try and make the Father seem just as loving, just as sacrificial, just as kindly as is the Son. And we've lost that. P

One of the fascinating things that Mormonism has is that Christ in the Book of Mormon repeatedly refers to things He's doing as what the Father told Him to do; and in dialogue in the first books of Nephi (First and Second Nephi), the Father's voice is actually heard. I mean, Bruce R. McConkie, when trying to stabilize Mormonism, says that God the Father never talks to mankind except to introduce His Son. P

This is [imitating B. R. McConkie]... Actually, I think I can do that voice. *This is my beloved Son...*

Shawn: It's called... [copies Denver's gesture, *stretching out* the space between his hands].

Denver: *...in whom I am well pleased; hear [ye] him*—Bruce R. McConkie (Matthew 17:5; Matthew 9:4 RE). But he's *wrong* because the Book of Mormon says,...

Shawn: Right.

Denver: ...in the first-person voice of the Father, a lot of things that aren't *This is my beloved Son; hear him* (Luke 9:35; Mark 5:5 RE).

Now, I could go on...

Shawn: You can.

Denver: ...about that, but they seem to be growing increase...

Shawn: Yes and no, quick yes or no. *A body of flesh and bones?*

Denver: Glorified body...

Shawn: Okay. Glorified body of flesh and bones?

Denver: Yeah, within...yeah! Look, when you talk about that...

Shawn: Denver, yes or *damn no!* [Laughter]

Denver: In order to know the biology of a resurrected being...

Shawn: You're killing me...

Denver: Yeah, okay. Yes.

Shawn: Okay, thank you. *King Follett Discourse. Once a man?* Yes or no.

Denver: Well, if you define Christ as God, absolutely, God was once a man.

Shawn: No, I'm not talking about incarnation through Christ. I'm talking about the Father. Yes or no, darn it! Come on! My mom is waiting for me for dinner! [Laughter]

Denver: Is your Mom still— Are you still living in a basement? What's up with you, Man? [Laughter] Is this religious gig so poorly paid?

Shawn: You think I would live in a basement? I live *here!*

Denver: Oh. Well, I hope they shut down the...

Shawn: It's the only time I get sleep.

Denver: ...the cabinet plant next door.

Shawn: Are you gonna give me one on that? *God the Father, once a man.* Yes, no?

Denver: I believe that God has made it possible for people, as is stated in Revelation, chapter 3, to sit on a throne as Christ sits on a throne with His Father; and that, as a consequence, the deification of man (which is an Eastern Orthodox preserved doctrine) is true.

In terms of the genealogy of God the Father, you know, we can go round and round on that without ever getting an answer...

Shawn: I don't want to go round and round.

Denver: ...in the King Follett discourse.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: But yeah.

Shawn: Okay. You're too wily of an attorney to know how to just manipulate the hell out of me, so I'm jumping categories, and we're going like this down the thing. *Are you a prophet?*

Denver: The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, so everyone ought to be a prophet.

Shawn: So, that would be a yes.

Denver: Everyone ought to be a prophet.

Shawn: Are you a prophet in the sense of the missionaries going door to door in, say, like unto Moses?

Denver: No, I don't have a podium, and I don't have a tabernacle, and I don't have a temple, and I don't have an organization.

Shawn: Less specifically. Do you receive revelation for people?

Denver: I receive revelation.

Shawn: For others.

Denver: Some people have thought what I had to say significant enough that they use it in their own lives.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Do I have the ambition of trying to lead a group of people? If so, my ambition is to lead them to become prophets in their own right.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: All right, fair enough. The next one: *Satan*.

Denver: Because of a revelation, I happen to know that *Satan* is a title, and what it means is *accuser*. And we can be Satan, as Christ said to Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan* [See Matthew 16:23], when Peter was trying to convince the Lord that he didn't need to go undertake the sacrifice; and I think Satan is a role any one of us can occupy as soon as we want to become accusers of one another. And you know that— The opposite of that is what Christ talked about, loving one another.

Shawn: Okay, so, it's more of a principle, concept, rather than an entity.

Denver: I think anyone can become an accuser...

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: ...and an adversary, and many people do.

Shawn: *Hell*.

Denver: I think there is such a thing as torment and regret, but I think that the inflictor of that torment is ourselves.

Shawn: So, not literal flames.

Denver: No, no, no, no, no, no pitchforks, no horned heads and pointy tails and...

Shawn: That's only the Mormons.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Just kidding—total joke because people used to say we had horns. Geez, you guys at home— I know what you're thinking. Anyway, *have you seen Jesus?*

Denver: Well, yeah, and a little bit of a description of that is given in the book that I gave to you.

Shawn: Okay, good.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: All right.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: *Different from the angel or the angel...?*

Denver: Oh yes, yes, yes, yeah.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: *Are you the head of this dispensation?*

Denver: Well, the way you define *dispensation* requires that you understand the term. Do I have a dispensation? Has the gospel been dispensed to me from heaven so that I'm not dependent upon something including the words of an old book to know God? Yes.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Does that mean that now I get to run a multi-national corporation? No. I'm doing my best to try and preserve faith in Christ at a time when, because of everything that's going on in our current environment that is so corrosive, it is increasingly more difficult for people to have faith in Christ. P

But I know He's real; and I know that He died for the salvation of a fallen world; and I know that He's going to come to judge it and redeem it; and that between now and then, faith is going to be increasingly more difficult to hold on to. And I hope to do what I can to have people preserve their faith in Him and stop squabbling with our fellow believers. Yeah.

Shawn: In the context of asking that question, Denver, ...that Joseph was the head of that dispensation, you know, where we have to pass through the sentinels, and you got to see him, Brigham Young, and all that. The question is: Can people enter into—and we're going to get to heaven next—but enter into heaven without your approval?

Denver: Yeah. Well, I would hope, yeah. I would *hope*.

Shawn: So would I, but you never know on this day. Some people might say, *No they've got to come through me*. I just want to know.

Denver: Yeah, yeah, that— To me, that's kind of a silly notion.

Shawn: Is it?

Denver: So, I mentioned before, Saint Francis...

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: ...and that the current pope took the name of Saint Francis, and that endeared him to me. Saint Francis believed in the Sermon on the Mount, and he wanted to start a Catholic order in which they *lived* the Sermon on the Mount. He was initially turned down because the pope didn't think anyone could do that. And so, he went out, and he got a group of followers, and they lived the Sermon on the Mount; and they came back, and he got his order.

When Saint Francis was dying in his final illness in the last weeks of his life, he said angels came and ministered to him, okay? Joseph Smith's older brother Alvin died. As Alvin lay dying, he was talking about the angels that had come into the room and were ministering to him.

Those two illustrations are what I believe happens with the Christian journey and the Christian redemption. There are a lot of people who live very good lives who, in the waning— When they were stoning Stephen (in the Book of Acts), Stephen is standing there in the final moments of his life being brutally slain, and he says, *The heavens opened to me, and I see the Son of man on the right hand of power* [See Acts 4:10 RE]. He beholds the heavens open.

These are the kinds of people that died with a firm expectancy that they have salvation because something occurred before they departed. A lot of people think that that's an event that needs to occur in the life of a Christian soul when they're 14 years old or 12 or 50 years. P

I think for most people, they *do* have that experience, but it's in the waning moments of life, and I think that a lot of people experience that here in order to have the right to inherit it there. And some of that last-minute babbling that you hear from the dying souls or the mentally-impaired that are talking about babblings that sound religious, there's something more going on. And I think God's mercy extends far and wide and is experienced by many, many souls outside of the confines of denominationalism.

Shawn: Totally agreed, and that's a beautiful hopeful thought that you have. *Second Coming*.

Denver: Ooh! An absolutely...

Shawn: That's a thumbs-up?

Denver: Yeah! It's an absolutely firmly predicted, inevitable event. If everything that was said in scripture concerning our Lord and concerning the prophecies that have been and are being fulfilled are true, then, without any doubt, there will be a Second Coming; and Christ will come to take possession of this world that He created— *belongs* to Him!

Shawn: Right!

Denver: He'll reclaim it!

Shawn: Right! *Do you subscribe to the highest degree of the celestial kingdom? Are the three kingdoms part of your theological makeup?*

Denver: I believe in the idea of progression.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: I believe in the idea of being *added upon*. Yeah. There's a lot more to that story than just— And the idea that you're gonna finish this world; and you're gonna depart; you're gonna arrive somewhere; and that that's where you get to, you know, build your condo on the beach and remain forever...

Have you ever read Mark Twain's short story and act, *An Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*?

Shawn: I don't believe so.

Denver: It's freakin' hilarious, and it's pretty good.

Shawn: I'll have to read it.

Denver: It's pretty good, yeah!

Shawn: A couple more, and we're done. *Are you a cult leader?* You have to have heard that from somebody.

Denver: Well, it's actually kind of silly when you think about it. Yeah. Look. I say what I say openly. I advocate in favor of faith. I advocate in favor of truth. I don't think that history should be skewed in order to prop up a false proposition. I think that sometimes the study of history is painful and requires you to come to a reckoning about what's going on or what went on. And I don't doubt that you can (if you define the term carefully enough) say that I lead a cult, or that you lead a cult, or that Mormonism is a cult, or that the Roman Catholic Church is a cult. But, in the sense that there's some kind of secretive...

Shawn: Right!

Denver: ...you know, sexually aberrant...

Shawn: Right.

Denver: ...criminally deviant—all of those things usually go with the idea of cultism—no, I try to be as open and as forthright and as forthcoming as I possibly can be.

I do speak very little about the miraculous and the otherworldly because I think it attracts the wrong kind of people. I would rather teach in order to have people have their own experience and to enjoy their own communion with the heaven. And then, they've got it for themselves. They don't need me talking that stuff up. I think talking that stuff up — It really skews people's perception of you, the way they interact with you, and it limits their own growth. *They* need to grow. Everyone needs to become prophets in their own right.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: One last question with...it tags onto that last one 'cause...and then...thank you for answering it. It's— I *hate* it because you get called a cult leader if you do anything, *anything!* They just... *You're a cult leader!*

But, the question is: Typically and historically, we see that leaders of groups— They fall for gold, glory, or girls. That's, you know— We've seen that historically through almost *every* group, *almost* everyone. They fall for one of those.

And I don't think you're having a problem with the girls, and I don't think you're having a problem with the gold (at least as far as I know), but the *glory*— Are people allowed, that are in your group, to disagree with you and remain loved, and can someone— Like here, we have people who say, *You know, Shawn, you're crazy; I don't believe that.* You say, *So what, stay here.* You have that same approach?

Denver: Yeah! And, in fact, there are a lot of things that go on that I disagree with, and I just hold my tongue. There are things that get discussed that I know if I weigh in, I can get my way, and I think that's bad for me, and I think that's bad for them.

Shawn: Yeah!

Denver: I have a very different view of what Joseph Smith was, and what he accomplished than most ex-Mormons. I think the trajectory of Joseph Smith's life— He died at age 38 and a half. He was still a young man. When you go back to— One of the letters that you'll find in here is the one he wrote from Liberty Jail. You have this priesthood structure, control, hierarchy. You have all of this stuff being constructed in the religious development that Joseph Smith undertook.

Then you have things literally fall all apart at Far West. Three witnesses abandoned him; members of the Quorum of the Twelve abandoned him; members of the Quorum of the Twelve signed affidavits that helped put him in jail. The hierarchy had been decimated by opposition and infighting, and he wound up in jail because of that.

He's in jail, and he's writing a letter, and in his letter, he puts something that completely reverses everything that had gone on before. *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by gentleness and persuasion and pure knowledge* (See T&C 175:31; 139:6 RE).

Joseph Smith's ark, which tended towards the authoritarianism, began to be dramatically reconsidered during the imprisonment in Liberty Jail. What he wrote in there absolutely eviscerated hierarchical control, and when he gets to Nauvoo, and he gives the talk to the Relief Society in Nauvoo, he says, *You are depending too much upon the prophet, and you are darkened in your minds because you're neglecting the duties that devolve upon yourselves.*

Well, if we're students, and we're careful students of history, and we can see what's going on in downtown Salt Lake right now; and we know that *that's not going to yield* the kind of righteous, self-sufficient, self-confident Christian souls converted to a living faith that would go to their death because in their hearts, they harbor the conviction that what they're doing and what they're living is, in fact, pleasing to God—then you *can't*—you can't take away from people and aggregate to yourself the authority or the control.

The thing I try consciously (and that I've asked my wife, and *she* tries constantly to remind me of) is it is not a virtue or an advantage to be the one in charge. It's a virtue, and it's an advantage to be down laboring alongside and helping lift others. It's an advantage to try and teach and preach in a way that will make them better people for your having been there. And if you've managed to move people along so that *they* can reach a state of harmony that we would call Zion (or City of Peace), and you're not there, but you helped facilitate it, then you've done something for which God will give you what you're due, whatever that may be. You trust Him. You leave it in His hands. But to say, *I need to be the mayor of Zion* is— It's Nauvoo all over again.

Shawn: Sure!

Denver: Joseph Smith's experiment in restoration efforts to try and bring about the kingdom of God (the Lord's Prayer asks that His kingdom return) didn't work! It didn't work.

And the Book of Mormon says *this* land shall not have kings on it. I don't want to be a king. I would love to be a servant in the service of the Lord and to elevate others.

Shawn: I've really enjoyed this. I have a new appreciation for you as a person. And your thoughts—I think they're great. I think they're— If they are what you claim them to be— I always have to have that caveat 'cause I don't know you personally, but in terms of what you've communicated, it's been excellent. And I think you give people hope, and you seem to want to help them to stand on their own two feet, to know the Lord and walk with Him in that way. And I really appreciate you taking the time, all this time, to do this. Thank you for...

Denver: You bet, and yeah, you'll probably figure a lot more out about me in those, particularly the essay books. And let's *not do* this again!

Shawn: All right! [Laughter] We will *not*. But I do have *one* favor: a message for the audience. That's the camera. They really want to see you, what you have to say.

Denver: Yeah. Look, there is absolutely no reason to be afraid of the truth. The truth will not harm whatever you're doing, and that includes what's going on in downtown Salt Lake. It may require that you change the nature of the message. But the truth will not harm you. The more of it that you can deal with...

We tend to think that the opposite of faith is hatred. It's not. The opposite of faith is fear. Fear is what produces a lack of confidence that produces evil and hatred—*fear*.

Stop being afraid of the truth! Christ said the truth shall make you free, and He meant that. It's true. You don't need to carry the burden around of trying to hide or conceal or mislead. Just be forthright, honest. And the fact that you're a weak man— All of the heroes of the Old Testament were weak men.

We don't lose our faith in God because David betrayed one of his generals, ultimately sending him off to be murdered in order to hide his adultery. We don't hide that. Our opinion of David is altered as a consequence, but our faith in God is not; the same of Peter denying the Lord— That is *not* evidence that Peter wasn't commissioned and sent forth with a message. It just meant that he wasn't as strong as he would like to have been, or perhaps that we would like to have seen him be. But none of us are, either.

None of us have ever been strong enough to carry the burden that was necessary for our own redemption. That's what Christ did for us. So, confessing your own inadequacy is simply another way of reminding us that we're all dependent upon the Lord. So be truthful!

Shawn: Praise God! Denver Snuffer, we will see you next week here on Heart of the Matter.

2020.03.22 The Heavens are Open (And Therefore, We Have Work To Do)

General Conference Address
March 22, 2020
Hurricane, Utah

I want to thank the committee that organized this conference. They've learned that adversity is one great cure for monotony as you struggled to make things happen despite all that's gone on. There are a lot of people who are necessary right now to make this thing go out, broadcast over the Internet. They're unseen. Some of them are here, and some are at remote locations. I wanna thank all of them for their contribution and all the volunteers who have worked to try and make this happen.

Yesterday, there was a get-together in a city park where a few of us were able to hear and partake of the sacrament, listen to Rob Adolfo talk for a bit, share some feelings with one another. I met a young lady named Mandolin. Her mom introduced her to me, and I thought, "That's a great name. I've never met anyone named Mandolin." So, I violated all of the protocols that everyone's respecting, and I gave the little girl a hug; and I assume that's at my peril, not at her peril [audience laughter]. So—

It's been 200 years since the First Vision took place. John Lefgren and John Pratt (both independent of one another) were trying to fix the date on which that occurred—John Pratt using calendaring to try and find an alignment of dates, and John Lefgren investigating weather reports that would conform to the description that Joseph Smith gave of that morning on which it took place. And independent of one another, they both reached the conclusion that it was on a Sunday, March 26th of 1820. So, we're rapidly coming up on that date.

Thousands of people, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people (maybe more) have had the opportunity to have the veil lift and be in the presence of the Lord or in the presence of the messenger who speaks in the first person in the name of the Lord. But comparatively few are ever told, as Joseph was told, that God had a work for him to do.

What distinguishes Joseph—in the First Vision—to me are two things: First, when he prayed and he was bound up by something that he called *thick darkness gathering around [him]* (Joseph Smith History 2:4 RE), he didn't submit, he didn't surrender, and he didn't accept that as the message God intended for him. But calling upon God, he persisted through that.

I've mentioned before there was a shouting Methodist tradition that typically would acknowledge **that** as a divine message. They go out, they pray, they shout to Heaven, they get bound up. And when that happens, then they've got their witness from the other side, and they know they've come in contact with God.

Joseph, for some reason, did not accept that. He pressed through, he persisted; and calling upon God, He was delivered from that—at which point he saw what was, initially, a pillar of light that troubled him until he saw that the treetops were safe from contact with it, that he might survive contact with it, also. And it gradually descended, and he saw personages within it.

The second remarkable thing about Joseph is that God had a work for him to do, **but** he ends the description of the First Vision with: *many other things did He say unto me which I cannot [reveal] at this time* (Ibid, vs. 5). Joseph **knew** a great deal more right at the beginning than he **understood**; and Joseph gradually **understood** more than he was able to **teach**. At about the time that Joseph reached not just the height of his comprehension but the height of his capacity to be able to teach, he was taken from us. We lost him.

So, God had a work for him to do, but the work that he had to do never did get completed, which is why, then, the Restoration needs to pick up and continue.

Well, a new Restoration has begun preliminary to winding up God's great work. God is very active at present. Being chosen to do God's work does not make us godly, virtuous, or better than others. Every individual must be godly and practice virtue, and even then, we're no better than any other people. The difference consists in God's willingness to direct us **forward** as **He** completes the promises and covenants He made to the Fathers. It's **God's presence**, not **our worthiness** which distinguishes us.

In the last few weeks, a great alarm has been raised about a viral pandemic. It illustrates something about all nations and institutions. Although they may **seem** durable, they are **all** vulnerable and **easily destroyed** by very simple means. Like locusts destroying the crops of Egypt in the story of Exodus, great societies are shaken through the smallest of means. We know there will come *an overflowing scourge, for a desolating sickness shall cover the land* (T&C 31:7), for the Lord has told **us** beforehand so that when it comes, we'll not be overtaken. This **current** unrest illustrates what will happen one day soon. Being **forewarned** gives us the opportunity to prepare.

But our society suffers most from evils we inflict upon ourselves. It's estimated that in January and February of this year, the greatest cause of death in the United States has come from one of our great evils of abortion. An estimated 141,000 abortions in those two months **added** to the estimated 51,000,000 who have been slain since 1973. **Abortion** is the leading cause of death in the United States. By tolerating this mass killing, we're not unlike those who anciently killed their children, sacrificing them to the false god Molech. The Lord **repeatedly** condemned that:

And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Again, you shall say to the children of Israel, Whoever he is, of the children of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that gives any of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones...

Stoning with stones was intended to be an expression of community condemnation to require that everyone participate, everyone know, and everyone witness the horrendous act of putting someone to death under the law for this kind of an offense. This is in the book of Leviticus.

And I will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people because he has given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do in any way hide their eyes from the man when he gives of his seed unto Molech and kill him not, then I will set my face against that man, against his family, and will cut him off and all that go whoring after him to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people. (Leviticus 9:16 RE)

This was an act of killing children for worship of a false god. There's very little difference between that act and the idea of exercising a fundamental right enshrined as though it were a sacrament.

In the book of Kings, it's repeated: *that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech (2 Kings 7:10 RE)*. And Jeremiah: *to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not (Jeremiah 13:4 RE)*.

We've slain—as a society in the United States—over 51,000,000 children. Where is the alarm? Where is the upset? Where is the shutting down of business and the cutting off of travel in order to preserve **those** lives?

What kind of a society allows killing 51,000,000 innocent children to continue uninterrupted for over 47 years? As we've been told, *Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatever is less than these [come] of evil (T&C 98:2)*.

It's not honest, it's not wise, and it's not good to uphold leaders who celebrate the murder of children as if it were a sacrament to be protected, sacrosanct, and constitutionally protected. It **is** something that will cause the greater society, eventually, to mourn.

We have elected and upheld men and women who have tolerated this obscenity for 47 years. The United States **will be punished** for this. By and by, you will see the *chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed has made a **full end of all nations** (T&C 85:3, emphasis added)*. That full end of nations will include the U.S. And so, we have an opportunity to prepare if we will heed the Lord's counsel.

Anciently, Enoch was shown in a vision in which he *beheld Satan, and he had a great chain in his hand, and he veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced (Genesis 4:15 RE)*. The *chain* and the

veil of darkness over the earth at that time were lies and deceit that covered the earth. Men spoke lies **continually** to one another and falsely accused one another. God told Enoch, *They are without affection, and they hate their own blood* (Ibid, vs. 17).

Many false spirits, false ideas, and lies are spread among us. There are too many for me to be able to respond to them all. You have the Scriptures. Study them, pray continually, and walk uprightly. Never compromise **your** virtue nor allow **your** thoughts to go unguarded. Understanding the Scriptures will fortify anyone from today's lies. Political leaders, entertainers, news reports, and even scholarly studies distort and mislead. We live in a time similar to Enoch's. The world is chained by lies.

The Jews claimed that they were Torah-observant and that that would be enough to save them. They asserted, *Good Master, we have Moses and the prophets; and whoever shall live by them, shall he not have life?* (Luke 9:10 RE). But Christ responded, *You know not Moses, neither the prophets, for if you had known them, you would've believed on me; for, to this intent they were written* (ibid, vs. 10).

They accused Christ of violating the Torah by healing on the Sabbath (see Matthew 6:10 RE). But Christ disputed their Torah teaching, saying, if an ox fell into a pit, it would be lawful to rescue the ox on the Sabbath (see Luke 9:4 RE), asking if a daughter of Abraham should not also be rescued on the Sabbath (see Luke 8:32 RE) Christ also compared healing a son of Abraham to make him whole with circumcising on the Sabbath. The Torah-observant Jews approved of Sabbath-day circumcision.

As a practical matter, it is impossible to follow the Torah without a temple and sacrifice. But Christ fulfilled the law's required sacrifice, and therefore, the Law of Moses ended. The Roman destruction of the temple made observance of that law impossible to continue.

Between the 11th and 13th centuries, the Crusades brought a stagnant Christian Europe into contact with Islamic culture. Baghdad was a cultural and literary center where great philosophical works that had been lost to Christianity were studied. The works of Aristotle and Plato were preserved and transmitted to Christians from contact with the Muslim world. Europe gained learning in mathematics, astronomy, and Christianity, or excuse me, and chemistry from the Muslims.

Musical instruments (including the violin and guitar) are derived from Arabic instruments, the rebec and the oud. Distillation, including alcohol, along with cultivation of cotton, rice, sugar cane, the silk industry, paper, the suction pump, and the spinning wheel came to Europe through contact with Islam in the Crusades.

The 14th century Renaissance was the result of light and truth flowing into benighted Christian Europe from an enlightened Islamic civilization. Catholic Christianity had oppressed the continent and kept people in darkness. When that world was

enlightened, civilization changed, and with greater light and truth, Catholicism's oppressive domination was challenged through the Protestant Reformation.

The theological, social, and educational revolution underway during this time period produced several esoteric traditions. Ideas were imported into Persia from the Far East. Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Taoist ideas refreshed Islamic thinkers and, in turn, filtered into Christian and Jewish European circles.

Freemasonry and the Kabbalah both were developed as a result of events in this 11th to 14th century period. Other esoteric traditions were also invented. They all claimed to have much more ancient origins than when they were actually developed.

The Catholic Knights Templar Order was founded in 1096 and destroyed in 1307. Freemasonry claims some relationship to the Knights Templar and, in turn, to the temple of Solomon. Those claims are not true.

The Kabbalists claim to have learning that can be traced back to Abraham. It is more correct to say they can trace their notions to the Far East than to Abraham. Their claims are untrue and are among the superstitions Isaiah prophesied against. This is Isaiah: *You, LORD, have abandoned your people, the descendants of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs* (Isaiah 2:6 NIV; see also Isaiah 1:6 RE).

Kabbalah began to be developed by the Jews in Spain after contact with the Moors. None of the Kabbalist claims about the antiquity of their beliefs' origins are true. It is another mingling of the doctrines of men with Scripture. Despite this, some thought-provoking and interesting things are taught by Kabbalists.

Today, you will hear voices trying to use Kabbalist ideas to claim the Law of Moses has always been and is still binding. They advocate the idea that there are levels of meaning to the law, and the highest meaning is where enlightenment and understanding of God is to be found. These are interesting ideas, but they are not ancient. They are Middle-Age notions derived from contact with Islam. And so, we see irony again playing out in the Jewish-Islamic relationship in which Jews, claiming superior enlightenment through the Kabbalah, owe an unrecognized debt to Islam.

Christ interpreted the Law of Moses to require charity, even if doing so appears to violate the commandments. Christ showed that God cares for those who are hurting, injured, or in need. Therefore, any commandment from God should be understood in light of that merciful objective. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the vices of the world* (Epistle of Jacob 1:7 RE). There are two challenges to this. Caring for those in need is one, but keeping ourselves unspotted is a second.

As for the first, those who follow Christ have an obligation to care for one another. There are single mothers and children with substantial ongoing needs. They need help with food, clothing, housing, and medical care. These are basic needs calling for our help.

Vulnerable people in humble circumstances should not be asked why they are in need. It does not matter. We have no right to judge them. Our obligation is to help them. The Good Samaritan helped the man in need without judgment. His response was based **only** on the need he saw: *When he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds* (Luke 8:8 RE). This is the behavior our Lord encouraged. *Go and do likewise* (Ibid).

Religion requires us to:

Succor those that stand in need of your succor. Ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need...ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say, The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand and will not give him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just. But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done, he perisheth for ever and hath no interest in the kingdom of God. For behold, are we not all beggars? (Mosiah 2:4 RE)

The light of Christ is withdrawing from the world, and darkness continues to spread. If you have the Spirit, you can see clearly the steady decline of light in the world. It's obvious. The increasing darkness will eventually result in the wicked slaying the wicked as has happened in two previous civilizations on this land.

The Book of Mormon describes how this happens: *The spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them and Satan had full power over the hearts of the people, for they were given up unto the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, that they might be destroyed* (Ether 6:17 RE). *God will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous* (1 Nephi 7:4 RE). He has declared, *The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me* (T&C 157:65).

But being among the peacemakers and being among those who are **not** covered in darkness requires practicing charity towards those who are in need. It enlarges your heart. It increases the light within you. It makes you **feel** better when you minister to and help those who are in need. All of that is godliness.

Now as for the second, **no one** is entitled to assume they have the right to be idle while imposing on laborers to provide for their needs. When seeking assistance from others, always consider this principle: *You shall not be idle, for he that is idle shall not eat the bread, nor wear the garment of the laborer* (T&C 26:10). No one should judge or

dismiss your needs, but as the recipient of help from others, you should always evaluate **yourself** by this standard.

In keeping unspotted from the world, it involves a true principle that adultery and sign-seeking go hand in hand. Among all mankind, John the Baptist was chosen to baptize the Son of God, yet *John did no miracle* (John 6:30 RE). Signs do not produce faith but **follow** faith. Even Christ could do no mighty works among those who lacked faith. There are signs that do follow faith, and I've witnessed many of them. But I speak little of them because sign-seeking attracts the wrong kind of follower. Even Christ would not accept loyalty from such people.

The idea that signs must be open for the world and spoken of frequently is a false idea. Sign-seekers are unable to have faith unless they repent. God is not fooled by pious pretensions.

Righteousness is required for God to gather a community into Zion. We have a law given to us:

And now behold, I speak unto the church: you shall not kill, he that kills shall not have forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come. And again, you shall not kill; he that kills shall die. You shall not steal, ...he that steals and will not repent shall be cast out. You shall not lie; he that lies and will not repent shall be cast out. You shall love your wife with all your heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else, and he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repents not he shall be cast out. You shall not commit adultery, and he that commits adultery and repents not shall be cast out; and he that commits adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsakes and does it no more, you shall forgive...but if he does it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out. You shall not speak evil of your neighbor or do him any harm. You know my laws, they are given in my scriptures. He that sins and repents not shall be cast out. If you love me, you shall serve me and keep all my commandments. (T&C 26:6)

These are minimal standards required of us all. They are not constraints but the only way to have freedom and enjoy a peaceful community. Commandments are a **gift**. Obedience to commandments is the only thing that allows mankind to live in harmony.

There are two opposing forces at work, and God's light still remains productive and positive. Because there is a necessary opposition, darkness and light are both growing.

There are very good things happening in the world. We are witnessing technological progress bordering on the miraculous. People around the world are rising from poverty at a faster rate than at any prior time in history. More patents are being issued at a quicker pace than at any time before. Agriculture is more productive. Medicine is finding more cures. Stem cell therapies are in their infancy and showing extraordinary promise. This could and should be a golden age for mankind. But at the same time we're

witnessing extraordinary progress in material benefits, we're also seeing an increase in oppression, despair, drug dependency, violence, and suicide.

The gulf between **actual progress** and **social despair** is illustrated by the political debate involving global warming. The United States has reduced its greenhouse gas output by 12% since 2005, the largest reduction of any nation in the world. The United States is leading the world in reducing greenhouse gases, accomplishing far more than any other nation. At the **same** time, the United States has increased oil production by 80% and natural gas production by 51%, making it energy-independent and an exporter of oil and natural gas, the world's largest producer of energy.

China is the worst polluter and produces nearly double the amount of greenhouse gases as the United States. As the U.S. continues to **decrease**, China's greenhouse gas **increase** is growing at a rate of about 2% per year. Therefore, if you care about this issue, you should advocate for moving all the commerce, manufacturing, and production that can be moved from China to the United States in order to reduce greenhouse gases.

But for political reasons, manufacturing and production in the United States is being condemned by emotional, loud, angry voices who are silent about pollution coming from China and India. Every company that moves its manufacturing to the United States is helping to reduce greenhouse gases.

Political dialogue is so angry, so emotional, and irrational that everyone should take notice. Why has political dialogue become so angry? Why is there so much despair?

Christ spoke against disputing this way:

There shall be no disputations among you....he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. (3 Nephi 5:8 RE)

No matter how you measure progress, material progress is growing at an astonishing rate, more than in any prior generation. Despite this, there's greater mental illness, depression, despair, and drug abuse among the most prosperous societies today.

It is in the minds and the hearts of men where darkness grows. A great fog of lies spreads over the earth again today. There's decreasing light because of false, evil, and destructive ideas. Life expectancy in the United States has declined for the first time largely due to two causes: suicide and drug abuse. There is a crisis of depression, loneliness, and mental illness underway. Pollution of our minds is a far greater threat than anything we see in the physical environment.

The Book of Mormon warns about our time. It describes pollutions of both the environment and the spirits of mankind that we now see:

*Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands; and there shall also be heard of wars, and rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places. Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be **great pollutions upon the face of the earth**—*

So, now he's talking about pollutions which he will **illustrate** in the words that are coming up, **pollutions** that you're going to see in the last days. And these are the pollutions about which he was concerned:

There shall be murders, and robbings, and lyings, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations — when there shall be many who will say, Do this or do that, it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But woe unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say, Come unto me, and for your money you shall receive forgiveness of your sins. (Mormon 4:4 RE, emphasis added)

Today's greatest pollutions are lies, deceits, and advocating all manner of abominations **as if they were good**. Abusive and wicked practices are now advocated boldly and incorporated into our entertainment media and culture—**fearlessly**. Their advocates have no shame, no fear of judgment, and no concern for godliness.

The needs of the poor are often forgotten—and their direful circumstances **used** by political leaders **only** to advance their power and control. The sick and infirm have become a political opportunity. Governments face increasing perplexities and fail to address them with common sense. The world's leaders welcome perplexities to increase public distress because they hope to ride that increasing public distress to increased political power.

Christ described our socially bleak times but told us not to be discouraged because of it. He told us to look up, for the time of redemption is promised when a generation sees these signs:

*In the generation in which the times of the gentiles shall be fulfilled, there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth, **distress of nations with perplexity, like the sea and the waves roaring**. The earth also shall be troubled, and the waters of the great deep, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken; ...when these things begin to come to pass, then **look up**, lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draws near. (Luke 12:17 RE, emphasis added)*

We have a sideshow going on in this nation's capital and even worse foolishness in the governments of other nations. The people of some nations starve because their leaders believe military power matters more than their citizens' hunger. Taxes are squandered, speech is suppressed, citizens are killed, and leaders pursue foolishness and vanity rather than benevolence and kindness.

Despite the present distresses, we are expected to uphold the government for the present. As our Scriptures explain: *We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law* (T&C 146:32).

And in another place the Lord stated:

I, the Lord, justify you and your brethren of my church in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land. And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this comes of evil. I, the Lord make you free; therefore, you are free indeed, and the law also makes you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. [And then He adds what I read before.] Honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, ...good men and wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatsoever is less than these comes of evil. (T&C 98:2)

Governments and churches are both subject to corruption. *We have learned by sad experience...it's the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen* (T&C 139:5).

The genius of the U.S. Constitution is that it **presumes** ambitious and corrupt men will rise to power. It both limits and then fragments government authority. The Constitution sets restrictions on what the government is permitted to do. Then, as a further precaution, it divides power between three branches and makes a system of checks and balances so that ambitious and corrupt men who rise to offices will have only limited means to act.

Rhetoric stirs emotions that erupt like storm waves crashing against the cliffs. Isaiah described how mankind now behaves: *Woe to the multitude of many people, who make a noise like the noise of the seas, and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters, but God shall rebuke them* (Isaiah 6:13 RE). **This** was the **image** that Christ used: *Upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity, like the sea and the waves roaring* (Luke 12:17 RE).

Much of the toxic pollution spreading despair and anger is through social media. Our computers and smartphones are filled with the fog of lies. People who are lonely and isolated post pictures with false captions to inspire envy and respect. Others believe these false images and become unhappy with their own circumstances.

Lies are now political capital for **all** parties. Democracies vote liars into office, and once elected, leaders keep their supporters committed by lying to them yet more. Dictators lie to their citizens to manipulate and control them. Churches and businesses are being swept into the polarizing political fights that demand you either accept their political viewpoint or suffer boycotts, condemnation, or false accusations.

Loud-but-small minorities use social media to exert a wholly disproportionate influence over society and over government. Churches **foolishly** fear offending in this partisan climate and surrender to the intolerant demands of destructive agents.

Churches do not preach repentance for fear of offending. A person is more likely to receive praise for denouncing the Bible than for denouncing sin. The Bible was once the primary text used in public education in the United States. It was once common sense to do unto others as you would have them do unto you (see 3 Nephi 6:8 RE).

The fog of lies and the foolishness of society should not make you despair. Instead, now is the time for us to hope for a better world. It should make us want to help establish a better society.

Guard your children. Let them know that the primary content of social media, news (and even in education) are falsehoods. You are responsible to teach your children.

Fleeing Babylon will require us to part ways with her. Our departure will require that Babylon be paid. We will have to *render [unto] Caesar the things [that] are Caesar's* (Mark 5:41 RE) before Babylon will permit us to depart in peace.

Honoring, obeying, and sustaining the law require that land used for a Zion community must be acquired through legal purchase. People cannot just take what they want. Property needs to be acquired in the way the law will respect—and no one can challenge our right to occupy and use.

For Zion, land must be redeemed in the way the Lord has instructed:

Let all the churches gather together all their moneys. Let these things be done in their time, lo, not in haste, and observe to have all things prepared before you. And let honorable men be appointed, even wise men, and send them to purchase the lands. And every church in the eastern countries, when they are built up, if they will hearken unto this counsel they may buy lands and gather together upon them, and in this way they may establish Zion. There is even now already in store sufficient, yea, even abundance, to redeem Zion and establish her waste places, no more to be thrown down... (T&C 101:16)

That direction was given in 1833. The men of that generation failed. Today, women are gathering the money for this purpose. I have more confidence in today's women than yesterday's men.

There is land given to us by covenant, but no one is any more justified in taking that land without purchase than was Abraham. Abraham received a promised land by covenant from God, yet he still had to purchase it from the owners before taking possession. The account of him purchasing a burial site for himself and Sarah is in the Old Covenants, Genesis chapter 8, paragraphs 9-10 and 20. I'm not gonna read those, but they'll be in the transcript [paper] of the talk, as if I read it.

Like Abraham, we are commanded that we must purchase the land on which Zion will be built:

Behold, the land of Zion; I, the Lord, hold it in my own hands. Nevertheless, I, the Lord, render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. Wherefore, I, the Lord, will that you should purchase the lands, that you may have advantage of the world, that you may have claim on the world, that they may not be stirred up unto anger. For Satan puts it into their hearts to anger against you and to the shedding of blood. Wherefore, the land of Zion shall not be obtained but by purchase or by blood; otherwise, there is no inheritance for you. And if by purchase, behold, you are blessed, and if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you and you shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall stand to receive an inheritance. (T&C 50:7)

Whenever there are people who are God's, the Lord instructs **them** to build a temple. One day soon, there will be a command to do so. When the command comes, it will need to be accomplished in an orderly way required by society.

Some have questioned why a temple should be considered when there are so many unmet needs. The answer is that the Lord expects it, the prophecies require it, and we cannot avoid building it if we are obedient.

There's so much more we need to know and do before we will see Zion. This creation was ordained through natural laws known and understood by God. He will establish Zion through natural means. Barren places, depleted of micronutrients and microorganisms, will blossom as a rose through the work of competent husbandmen. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were given the responsible *to dress it and to keep it* (Abraham 7:10 RE). To return the earth back to Eden, we will be required to likewise *dress it and to keep it*.

It will be through natural means that we will realize the promises made by covenant with us: *I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me* (T&C 158:13-14).

We are promised the earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, but that will not be accomplished without us acting the part of the husbandman. There will be a great work required to renew the fertility of the earth. But we can, with God's direction and blessing, accomplish that work, *that you*

may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world, that you may come up unto the crown prepared for you (T&C 70:4).

The Doctrine of Christ is simple. It has a negative and a positive declaration. First, the negative declaration: *This is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away (3 Nephi 5:8 RE).*

Second, the positive declaration:

And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me — and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the holy ghost beareth record of the Father and me — and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men everywhere to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. (Ibid, vs. 9)

This doctrine will save **anyone** who follows it. But it is a mistake to assume that Christ's gospel does not contain more. The fullness of the gospel of Christ is vast.

It includes this truth about God: *I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw. Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, and I have not written but a small part of the things which I saw (1 Nephi 3:31 RE).* That which was not written by Nephi is part of Christ's gospel. You have not yet received them, but that does not change it from being part of Christ's gospel.

Moroni wrote the prophecies of Ether and recorded: *I was about to write more, but I'm forbidden; but **great** and **marvelous** were the prophecies of Ether (Ether 6:4 RE, emphasis added).* Those prophecies of Ether are also part of Christ's gospel and are presently not restored.

The children of the Nephites were taught by Christ in a pillar of fire, and afterwards, these children bore testimony to their fathers:

It came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things. And the things which they did utter were forbidden, that [they] should not any man write them. (3 Nephi 12:2 RE)

Those marvelous things are part of Christ's gospel but are forbidden from public knowledge. It will require a similarly sacred space to restore **this** part of Christ's gospel.

As Christ ministered to the Nephites, He prayed to the Father. What He revealed to that audience was unspeakable, forbidden from our Scriptures.

He went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father, and tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear, and do bear record, and their hearts were open, and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man. (3 Nephi 9:5 RE)

Those words are also part of Christ's gospel, and He has the right to teach them. But they are not part of the public revelation available to man.

When Moses asked for greater understanding of all God's works, he was told:

And the Lord...spoke unto Moses of the heavens, saying, These are many and they cannot be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me for they are mine. And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come. And there is no end to my works, neither my words. (Genesis 1:7 RE)

The endless works and endless words of the Lord God are also part of Christ's gospel. It is foolish to assume even a small fraction have been recorded.

John testified concerning his own record of Christ: *In addition to this account, many other things [which] were done by Jesus, which, if they were all written, that library would fill the entire cosmos* (Testimony of St. John 12:22). All of the things done by Christ have not been written, yet they are still part of Christ's gospel.

Christ's statement of His doctrine is short, simple, and complete. But Christ's gospel has **vastly** more.

As I've said previously, you should hunger and search for understanding. This is all of Christ's doctrine. There is no more doctrine. But this is not all of Christ's teachings nor all His tenets; these are not all of Christ's precepts or His covenants. This is not all of Christ's commandments; this is not all of His principles, but it is all of His doctrine.

Christ posed this question to all of us through the Book of Mormon: *Wherefore murmur ye because ye shall receive more of my word?* (2 Nephi 12:9 RE).

He explained, *Because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another, for my work is not yet finished, neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and for ever* (Ibid, vs. 10).

Many great and glorious things pertaining to the Kingdom of God are reserved for God's house.

In the Glossary of Gospel Terms, the "Mysteries of God" are explained in this way:

That knowledge which is hidden from the world and only made available through revelation to the faithful. Much of such knowledge may be learned but it is not to be taught. One will have to apply the process of learning the mysteries in one's life if he or she intends to learn the mysteries themselves. The scriptures tell us how to get the "mysteries of God." Learning these mysteries is the fullness of Christ's Gospel. There is a system by which men learn the mysteries of heaven and are saved. That system is set out in Alma 9:7: first, angels are sent to prepare men and women; second, they are allowed to behold the Lord's glory; then they converse with the Lord, at which point they are taught the things that have been prepared from the foundation of the earth for their salvation. All this is driven by the man or woman's faith, repentance, and holy works. Joseph Smith said, *I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness.... [As for myself] it has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for my hearers.* This is the Book of Mormon theme. Search deeper, and find God. *Ask that you may know the mysteries of God.* That is a commandment. Although given to Oliver Cowdery, it is a principle that is applicable to all of mankind (see T&C 3:3). The claim that one should stay away from the mysteries of God is false. Refusing to follow the command to *ask that you may know the mysteries of God* (JSH 13:23) denies the power of godliness and opposes the doctrine of salvation. It is anti-Christ. "We make our own mysteries; we are not meant to be kept in darkness, and the mysteries of heaven will be unfolded to us as [soon as] we make an effort to understand them." Christ said that *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* are understood only by those who have been initiated and given that understanding (see Matthew 7:2). Mysteries can also be defined as solemn ceremonial ordinances or rituals which take place in a special setting. "Mysteries (from the Greek, *mystērion*, μυστήριον)...[are] confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals.

This is the real reason why God requires that a temple be built. A temple ordained by God, built by His command and according to His pattern, will be a repository for teachings, precepts, commandments, tenets, and covenants that are not public but are all part of Christ's gospel.

Like true temples built in the past, there will be places for general assembly where everyone will be invited to come and worship. There will be other places for fewer people to assemble where not everyone will be extended an open invitation to come. There will also be some places forbidden to the public where God alone determines who will enter.

There will be no **temple recommend** to enter the innermost courts of God's house. No one will be required to pay to enter. The only requirement will be God's approval, through revelation, to identify those He will invite. I assume that as soon as any soul is prepared to receive what God freely offers, God will extend His invitation.

The house of God is a place of learning. It is *a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God* (T&C 123:3). God will determine how His house will be ordered.

But the Doctrine of Christ is the foundation, and without it, understanding the mysteries of God is **nothing**. Paul says: *And [although] I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing* (1 Corinthians 1:51 RE).

The Doctrine of Christ commands that whosoever believeth in Christ and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in Christ and is not baptized shall be damned. If followed, the Doctrine of Christ leads to that illumination of mind and spirit called *fire and the Holy Ghost*. It can purge and cleanse, enlighten and instruct. It can make you **one** with God the Father and Christ, His Son:

I say unto you that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father. And whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also, and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the holy ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the holy ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me, for the Father and I and the holy ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. (3 Nephi 5:9 RE)

We must obey the Doctrine of Christ to qualify to build His house. Scripture confirms that not every one who would **want** to build a house of God is **allowed** by God to do so.

King David gathered everything required to build the temple of God but was forbidden from accomplishing it because he had been too violent a man to be permitted:

David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God; but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, You have shed blood abundantly, and have made great wars. You shall not build a house unto my name because you have shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. (1 Chronicles 10:15 RE)

To qualify to build an acceptable house to God requires that His instructions and commands be followed. Therefore, any land for that purpose must be acquired by lawful purchase.

I know of no way to flee Babylon other than to pay her what she values. She values money above all else. Babylon believes you can buy anything in this world with money. It is by **giving** to Babylon what she values that we prove our heart is not set upon her. Hearts set upon Babylon mourn parting with her money. We should willingly give **her** her due, and redeem the land to build Zion.

There is a lot of opposition to even the preparatory work. There are many false spirits distracting and hindering the efforts. Accusers and opponents rail against this effort. They're like the ancient dissidents who complained:

And the whole multitude of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill the whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 10:2 RE)

If the invitation to build a house of God by a kindly Lord is not attractive to you, then don't contribute. Do not give this work a second thought. But when the time comes, do not gather together with those who are delighted to answer the invitation to prepare... [long pause]

...because that preparation for the Lord's return in glory must take place.

In the wisdom of the Lord, unfair and harsh condemnation of this work is permitted to expose for our view those who will always be disruptive to a community. They need to be identified so they are not gathered. Accusations, condemnation, and lies are welcomed at present. They not only tell us who acts the part of Satan but also capture those who are easily taken by the adversary. Accomplishing what the Lord invites people to do is hard enough with the humble and meek. It becomes impossible when the hard-hearted are whispering accusations and insults (as Wormtongue), hindering the work.

Those who oppose the effort often do so while quoting Scripture as if they occupy a higher ground. If they do occupy a higher ground with better understanding, then they ought to leave, establish their model of a city on a hill, so we can all learn from their example. They do not undertake such an effort because they know they only quote Scripture to condemn, judge, and dismiss—never to govern their own accomplishments. They're darkened in their minds and in their hearts, and therefore, like everyone's common enemy, they use Scripture as a weapon to cut, criticize, and condemn. They are Satan, an accuser of the brethren. As we've been warned, that spirit should be cast away from our conversations, our meetings, our gatherings.

There is an example in the Old Covenants of a lying spirit permitted to influence Israel as testified of by Micaiah:

He said, Hear therefore the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

If you read *The Second Comforter*, you know what's going on in a vision like that of the heavens.

And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up, and fall, at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, With what? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You shall persuade him, and prevail also; go forth and do so. Now therefore behold, the Lord [hath] put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning you. (1 Kings 5:7-8 RE)

This is Micaiah telling the king what's going on, that all the prophets that are telling him, "Go, go. Go do it. It's gonna turn out just fine" are being misled by a lying spirit. The king rejected Micaiah's prophecy, followed the lies told him by the deceived prophets, and was slain in battle.

Lying spirits are not confined to events and times of the Old and New Covenants. They are active any time the work of God is underway.

We are promised that eventually we will have revealed the contents of a sealed book:

The book shall be sealed, and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people; wherefore, the book shall be kept from them. But the book shall be delivered unto a man, ...he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those [that] have slumbered in the dust, ...he shall deliver these words unto another. But the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book, for the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof. (2 Nephi 11:19 RE)

This promise has been used repeatedly to impose lies on believers. False spirits led Christopher Nemelka to claim he had the sealed plates. Then later, another deceived party produced the Mentinah Archives. And now, Mauricio Berger has claimed that he can provide the promised text.

Here is what the sealed record will reveal:

*And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared, Behold, thou shalt not suffer **these things which ye have seen and heard** to go forth unto the world until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh. Wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and shew it to no man. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up that no one can interpret them, for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot...read. And behold, these two stones [which] I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye...write. For*

*behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded. Wherefore, I will cause, in mine own due time, that these stones [which] shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write. And when the Lord had said these words, **he shewed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also...that would be. And the Lord withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.** For the Lord had said unto him in times before that if he would believe in him, that he could shew unto him all things, it should be shewn unto him. Therefore, the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could shew him all things. (Ether 1:15 RE, emphasis added)*

That's **what** it's gonna contain. Here is **when** they will be revealed:

*They shall not go forth unto the gentiles **until** the day that they shall **repent of their iniquity and become clean** before the Lord. And **in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father of the heavens, and of...earth, and all things that in them are.** (Ibid, vs. 17, emphasis added)*

So, ask yourself:

- Do the Gentiles now qualify?
- Have they met this standard?
- Have the Gentiles repented of their iniquity and become clean before the Lord?
- Do the Gentiles now exercise faith in the Lord even as the brother of Jared did?
- Have the Gentiles now become sanctified in Christ? or
- Do the foolish Gentiles still fall victim to lying spirits that interfere with and compromise the work of preparing to establish Zion?

Economic realities and legal obligations must be dealt with. The path to Zion does not go **through** consecration. Consecration comes **after** there is a Zion. Even Father Abraham did not live the law of consecration. He was sanctified and qualified to receive all the blessings of the Fathers and now sits on a throne, but he paid **tithes** to Melchizedek.

When Joseph Smith restored Enoch's record (now found in Genesis), Joseph learned about the last days' Zion. It revealed, *And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart, and...one mind, and [dwelt] in righteousness, and there [was] no poor among them* (Genesis 4:14 RE).

I do not believe this was their ancient goal, but it was a byproduct. Such a society cannot be organized but can be gathered. Individuals rarely are able to persuade one another through arguing to expose the other man's error.

Even among people who keep their eyes on the Lord and pay no heed to their neighbor's failure still must grow to become:

- People who refuse to judge and belittle others;
- Those who are humbled by the opportunity to build a house of God;
- Those who refuse to become an accuser.

Even among humble people the Lord can use to restore His house, there will be many things on which to disagree. Therefore, we should ask ourselves:

- What if I don't need to always be right?
- What if you don't need to be wrong?
- What if we don't need to debate?
- Can people with different backgrounds be of one heart?
- Can we have different ideas, value one another, and be of one mind?
- Is it possible to disagree with one another about meanings of Scriptures and still dwell in righteousness?
- Can we explore, consider, and respectfully discuss incomplete or inaccurate ideas?
- What if *no poor among us* includes sharing the wealth of diverse and interesting ideas?

This path of sober, thoughtful, open welcoming of differences is the only way first steps can be taken. We cannot jump into Zion. We must crawl there on bended knee, asking the Lord to bring us there. He's given us a blueprint in the Answer and Covenant. His word to us is:

You think Satan will be bound a thousand years, and it will be so, but you do not understand your own duty to bind that spirit within you so that you give no heed to accuse others. It is not enough to say you love God; you must also love your fellow man. Nor is it enough to say you love your fellow man while you, as Satan, divide, contend, and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do my will. How you proceed must be as noble as the cause you seek. You have become your own adversaries, and you cannot be Satan and also be mine. Repent, therefore, like Peter and end your unkind and untrue accusations against one another, and make peace. How shall there ever come a thousand years of peace if the people who are mine do not love one another?...

*I speak of you who have hindered my work, that claim to see plainly the beams in others' eyes. You have claimed to see plainly the error of those who have abused my words, and neglect the poor, and who have cast you out — to discern **their** errors, and you say you seek a better way. Yet among you are those who continue to scheme, backbite, contend, accuse, and forsake my words to do them, even while you seek to recover them. Can you not see that your works fall short of the beliefs you profess?...*

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity

and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. (T&C 157:10,18,53, emphasis added)

Joseph Smith inquired about consecration, and he received an answer. But the answer did not produce a community dwelling in righteousness, of one heart, one mind, with no poor among them. They failed, and all subsequent attempts have likewise failed to produce Zion.

The early attempts at consecration ended, and the Lord rescinded the law of consecration. In a council meeting on March 6, 1840 in Montrose, Iowa Territory, Joseph Smith announced to the Church, the Lord rescinded the law of consecration:

He said that the Law of consecration could not be kept here, & that it was the will of the Lord that we should desist from trying to keep it, & if persisted...it would produce a perfect abortion, & that he assumed the whole responsibility of not keeping it until proposed by himself. (*JS Papers, Documents Vol. 7, p. 215*)

It had to end because consecration is **never** the starting point. Consecration is the **result** of a society's evolution. And no society is prepared at present to evolve quickly into that state of harmony. It is inevitable when people live in righteousness. But, even then, it is distant and will follow time, experience, careful and solemn thoughts, and love unfeigned.

The Lord has explained this principle: *Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld* (T&C 61:4). This important principle is to be followed by those who gather. Between now and that day, there is **a lot** of preparation needed.

Like Abraham paying tithes, we can also rise up to be God's chosen people before living consecration. Consecration is a byproduct, never a goal. The fact that Abraham paid tithes and did not live consecration should make clear that there is a long way to go before consecration will be attempted. Having all things in common should be understood as the byproduct of a different culture. We cannot live it and should not attempt it until we are **in a different culture**. Those who raise up to restore the Order of Heaven will find that they have enough concern for their fellow-citizens to have no poor among them.

Because tithing funds are used to help one another, no one gains power through tithes. The well-off **lose** power, and the poor **benefit**. As it is put in one revelation, *the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low, for the earth is full and there is enough...to spare* (T&C 105:5).

When tithes support ministers, wealth accumulates, and the condition foretold by Mormon happens: *Leaders of churches and teachers, in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches* (Mormon 4:4 RE). This is happening in all of Christian **and** Restoration churches, faiths, and systems. Because we have no structure that allows this to happen, it cannot take place among us. This brings me to the conflict between **order** and **variety**.

The idea of **order** suggests ideas and some words that come to mind when we think of order:

- uniformity,
- disciplined,
- standardization,
- coercion,
- authority,
- subordination,
- force,
- regimentation,
- restraint, and
- equality.

All these ideas can be negative, particularly when they suppress the souls of men and inhibit independent connection to God even if some can be positive. Yet we do need order, and without it, we descend into conflict. The idea of order is important, but it must come from within the hearts and minds of an ordered people.

Externally imposed order will crush the souls of men. The *Holy Order* to be restored is *after the Order of the Son of God*—meaning that it will be based upon service to others, meekness and humility toward God, and intelligence based on the light of truth.

Many corrupt societies impose order. But those societies who use external means to achieve order are the most repressive and abusive on earth.

Freedom and individuality produces great variety. Variety suggests ideas, and some words come to mind when we think of variety, including:

- creativity,
- variation,
- divergence,
- inventiveness,
- originality,
- separate,
- inequality,
- dissimilar, and
- conflict.

In many ways, some of these ideas can also be equally negative. Variety can conflict with order. But the souls of men crave variety, and nature testifies that variety is part of

the glory of God. God promotes variety. Zion will have to allow the freedom for individuals to bring their unique gifts and develop the beauty within their souls.

The necessity for order and the freedom to have variety can produce endless conflict, but both are required for Zion.

There's a great work that at this moment is still undone, a project that remains for a faithful people. It will require revelation from heaven to be able to accomplish, and therefore, it will require people willing to receive new revelation.

Although we may understand some few things about the Lord's plans, what we know at present is relatively small in comparison with the fullness of the revelations yet to be restored.

Incomplete understanding has never prevented mankind from obeying God. From the beginning, righteous men and women have pleased God by doing what He asks of them even though they did not yet comprehend the reasons behind the commandment:

And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, [asking], Why do you offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not but the Lord commanded me. ...the angel [spake], saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father who is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, you shall do all that you do in the name of the Son. ...you shall repent...call upon...the name of the Son for ever more. And in that day the holy ghost fell upon Adam, which [bears] record of the Father and the Son... (Genesis 3:3-4 RE)

Ignorant obedience (perhaps decades or centuries) in the absence of the Holy Ghost falling upon him was the prelude that led Adam to receiving the gift. Even those taught by Christ could not understand His message. The accounts of Christ's life in the four Gospel books mention frequently that His followers did not understand what He told them. Here's one example:

Then he took the twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished, for he shall be delivered unto the gentiles, ...shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on; and they shall scourge and put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, neither remembered they the things which were spoken. (Luke 11:1 RE)

Adam was the first Patriarch over humanity and stands at the head of his posterity, governing in the Family of God beneath only Christ and God the Father. Yet, when he lived and obeyed God, there were commandments he was given that he did not understand. He was puzzled, but he obeyed.

Christ called twelve disciples and kept them as His closest pupils during His ministry. Yet despite walking continually with Him, there were things He taught them they could not understand. Righteous men and women have followed and pleased God despite their ignorance.

What is more important? To be a person of great understanding or a person of diligent obedience?

Building Zion is daunting. Take a moment and ask yourself what it would take to build a functioning community. Any community for any people will require **a lot** of the same things to be addressed. For example: housing, streets, water supply, waste disposal, and some form of energy. No matter how rudimentary an infrastructure a community may have, there must **always** be one.

Without a clean water supply, people get sick or die. But a water source for a community does not mean they have clean, potable water that can be consumed. Clean water requires filtering or processing to remove contaminants and unwanted organisms.

If one person drills a well and recovers clean ground water for his residence, that does not mean there is a water supply for a community. If every resident requires their own well, then the costs for a water supply will multiply far beyond the cost for a community water supply that shares costs among many residents. Communities almost always pool resources to develop a city water system.

Wastewater needs to be handled in a sanitary way to prevent outbreaks of diphtheria, cholera, and typhoid. One solution for a sanitary wastewater system is for an individual residence to have a septic tank. In a community that lacks a sewer system, septic tanks are required for every building that has a bathroom. But that increases costs for each house far above the cost required to build a shared sanitary wastewater system. This is why communities almost always pool resources to develop a city-wide wastewater system.

Roads are also generally maintained by a community in which shared resources allow the cost of a road system to be borne by all members of the community.

A community's energy needs are not always met by gas or electric power. There was a time when many houses were heated by coal or wood. Although rare now, these sources can still heat homes and provide heat to cook.

A community that is not planned and carefully developed can quickly become unlivable, unhealthy, and unsustainable. Planning and thus implementing the plan should not involve haste and hurry.

It seems to be common sense that if a community is to include people with widely varying resources and abilities, the first steps should be taken by those with both the resources and the ability to accomplish the first preparation to benefit others who will come later.

If that's common sense, then it is not discrimination or unfair for those with the means and inclination to sacrifice their resources to be the first who labor to make a land ready for others who will be invited later. Staging in an orderly way is the only method any community is or can be built. It is the only practical way to carefully build what must be built.

And now behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints — that they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which brings pestilence (T&C 50:6). If land is not prepared beforehand, confusion and pestilence go hand in hand. Cholera, diphtheria, and typhoid all can and **have** returned today in this nation.

Forbes Magazine reported:

Los Angeles has a growing problem with diseases borne by both flea and feces. An LAPD officer was just diagnosed with typhoid fever along with two more from the same workplace displaying symptoms. Meanwhile, cases of typhus, caused by a different bacterium, have soared in California from 13 in 2008 to 167 in 2018. In addition, there have been outbreaks of hepatitis A, tuberculosis, and staph in L.A. and other West Coast cities. (Chuck DeVore, Typhoid Fever, Typhus & Tuberculosis: Are L.S.'s Medieval Diseases Coming to Your City? June 4, 2019)

We need to be wiser than the society in which we presently live. We can build a new society that will eventually have people who are at peace with one another, living in righteousness, and having all things in common, but that is still years ahead.

As mentioned earlier, the Lord has taught this principle: *Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld (T&C 61:4).* This begins with preparing a place for gathering. And there will be required:

- a water supply;
- a wastewater system;
- roads;
- some form of energy;
- a temple for meetings, instruction, and conferences.

These things are necessary to come first and will make water commonly and equally available, hygiene commonly and equally available, movement through open roads and trails commonly and equally available, and access to heat and light commonly and equally available.

We take much of these things for granted, but these things currently tie us to Babylon. There are great calamities soon to befall the world. God's people are to escape *the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that you may stand independent above all*

other creatures beneath the Celestial world (T&C 70:4) by the work they have accomplished beforehand. God will instruct, but we must do the work.

There will be many skills needed. Blacksmiths, carpenters, farmers, ranchers, electricians, plumbers, roofers, and every practical skill will be needed. Many skills are lost to urban dwellers. We need to recover those lost skills.

The route to equality is forged through united effort to accomplish the instructions we are given. Unity will lead to equality.

Anyone uninterested in helping prepare a community of equals will naturally and inevitably not have prepared a place for them to gather. As Amulek put it, *Ye cannot say when ye are brought to that awful crisis that I will repent, [and] that I will return to my God* (Alma 16:37 RE) because it'll then be too late. So, we have work to do, and it will need to be done in an orderly way.

I know of no people who are trying to bring Zion today. There have been and are utopians who band together to share resources. Utopian societies are usually missing a religious foundation. Their groups, more often than not, result in aberrant sexual sin, drug use, and disobedient conduct offensive to God. However hopeful a beginning these communities may have, wickedness cannot be peaceful for long.

We are asked to prepare so we can begin to found Zion. But preparing or even beginning is not the same thing as accomplishing. Whether anything can or will be accomplished must be **proven**. It cannot just be claimed. Braggarts do not impress heaven and have no claim to any title or status they have not first lived.

The Lord is offering an opportunity. He's promised to labor alongside to help us reach the prophesied Zion. With His help, Zion is possible. But we can fail—and Zion be left for another people in another time.

The greatest false spirit of all is the one that inspires you to accuse your brethren, condemn your sisters, and judge others unfairly. This is Satan. We cannot be Satan and also be the Lord's.

I believe we will see Zion established. Sadly, I do not think all can be gathered. Those who find fault now will surely find fault when people start to sacrifice and hard work is expected. It makes little sense to assemble the discontent, angry, and bitter souls into a community seeking to find peace. *Zion shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another* (T&C 31:15). That promise of the Lord's cannot be fulfilled by people fighting a *war of words and [a] tumult of opinions* (Joseph Smith History 2:3 RE). It was such fighting about religious differences that inspired Joseph Smith to ask God for answers. His inquiry led to the Restoration. But Joseph's Restoration has now lapsed into infighting and dividing into separate sects. Our modest return to restoring is not yet free from a tumult of conflicting opinions.

Preparing people to welcome God remains the Restoration's great objective. That will require all of us to humble ourselves before God and eagerly respond to the opportunity He offers us. Prayerfully choose a needed skill and learn it. Spinning thread, weaving fabric, producing paper, making cheese, drying fruit and vegetables, beekeeping, and egg production are all useful for an isolated community, particularly if the larger, more complex society falls into disarray and is unable to provide goods and services.

We have a daunting challenge before us. It will require minds, hearts, hands, and backs to accomplish it. Preparation needs to begin now. It will be followed by an orderly gathering, not in haste but with guidance from above.

I close these remarks in the name of Jesus Christ.

2020.03.22 Youth General Conference Q&A Session

Denver and Stephanie Snuffer

March 22, 2020

Hurricane, Utah

Denver: There were some questions that got submitted beforehand, and there are also questions coming in live. I'll take one that was submitted beforehand.

"Why are there no female writers in the Scriptures? Why are there no accounts of women receiving their Second Comforters? Thank you for the opportunity to ask questions."

Well, number one, we don't always know who wrote down the Scriptures. We don't know who the scribes were. In fact, it's likely, in particular in the Book of Judges, that some of the accounts are clearly reliant upon women to provide the information. And in the Book of Luke, the *only* source that could have provided information about the private contact between Mary and the angel—that is the source that Luke relied upon for his account—would have been Mary. And so, did Luke have access to an account written by Mary? Did Luke interview her? There's a lot we don't know about the generation of Scripture and who the scribes were. So, the question assumes something about which we don't have enough information to say Scriptures aren't the product of a woman's effort or a woman's writing.

Okay, so—

Stephanie: Okay, I'm on the— I'm looking through some of these, so I'll be looking down. We're going to divide some of them up, and some of them just won't get answered, 'cause that's the way the world works. So— And some of them will be addressed not necessarily answering questions, but just getting some insight about some other things.

So, the first one talks about families—parents, families...being dedicated to the LDS Church and think they're apostates...not arguing, but you can't talk spiritual things and, you know, can we get our families back? And then it follows up with an actual question that I'm not going to answer.

But what I am going to talk about is if the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon at Bountiful, Gospel principles are not good enough for you to talk with your family members about, then you're focusing on the wrong things. Because if all you're talking with your family members about are the things that divide you, like which conference you go to or which leader you follow, then that onus is on you. So, I would suggest that instead of worrying about the things that you don't have in common, that you talk about the things that you do have in common.

I spend an enormous amount of time talking with people I know and love, who are on all spectrums of their traveling back to God, about Gospel principles because we have

those in common. And that would be my suggestion—and that goes for your family members, for your friends, for the people you still go to church with, for the people that you used to go to church with.

The missionary effort you're engaged in just does not stop, didn't stop, and shouldn't stop when you decided to worship somewhere else or when somebody decided to make you worship somewhere else. Bring it back to what you know, bring it back to what you have in common, and stop thinking you're better than they are. 'Cause we're all working towards the same goal, we're just doing it in a real— We might be doing it in very different ways.

Denver: This reminds me of an incident that happened. Rob had his daughter, his youngest daughter, on the back of his motorcycle. I think I had Nathan on the back of mine. A group of us were on our way out to Sturgis, and we were south of Newcastle, Wyoming, at a gas station where we were getting some water to drink, and on our way there. And there's a fellow who was there sitting on the benches next to us outside, getting a little bit of rest from the ride. He was from Colorado, and he was a welder, 'kay? So, Rob's a construction contractor, I'm a lawyer, and this guy's a welder; and we're all at the same gas station at the same time on our way out to Sturgis. We have absolutely *nothing* in common except the motorcycles and the Harley rally out in Sturgis, South Dakota—and that was enough.

We had a *great* visit. He told us stories that were pretty funny. And I noted that he lacked some hygiene attention that I expect to be usual and customary, and he probably thought I was a bit dainty for a biker. But it didn't matter! We had one thing in common, and that was enough. And for those moments in that gas station in Wyoming, probably 15 years ago now, we were buddies. If you've got something in common, that's enough.

Stephanie: Was that when Jessie drank out of the water bottle?

Denver: Yes, and that was *the guy* whose water he drank! So, I'm not telling the rest of that story.

Stephanie: Yes, exactly! Yeah, do not pick up water bottles that you do not know who they belong to.

Denver: Yeah.

Stephanie: Okay, I got one here. An eleven year old who feels like the future is pointless... This breaks my heart. (Oh sorry, Reed—whoever—I just smacked the thing.) "I want to have dreams and goals, but everything is changing and unpredictable. How am I supposed to care, or what should I care about?"

So, we have kids. You know, I have older kids—not an eleven year old anymore, but kids who want to grow up and have kids. And I want to see my grandkids grow up! And you know, we had an earthquake in Salt Lake on, whatever, and it was *super freaky!*

And then, on top of Coronavirus, we're all sitting around going, "What the, what the, *what* is going on?!"

So, the day of the coming of the Lord is unknown. Scripturally, it is known *only* to our Creator. So, sitting around—and I don't mean to be flippant, especially to this beautiful eleven-year-old question—but sitting around, and worrying, and wondering is...it's not healthy. And it doesn't help. And so, the only thing I *can* say, because I can't answer to how much time is actually left—and neither can he [indicating Denver]—is "*act as if*." That's the thing I want you to remember: Act as if. *Act as if* you're going to go to school when you're not quarantined anymore, and then go to school. *Act as if* you're going to graduate from high school. *Act as if* you are going to go on to college, and get a degree, and get married, and have kids, because the likelihood of that happening for many of us is pretty high.

There is no answer about when things are going to end. You can pay attention to the signs, and you can look around and you can see things happening, but if you let that stop you from *acting as if* you're going to finish middle school, and then go to high school, and then go to college, and get married, and have kids, and have grandkids, then you're going to sit in a place of despair and frustration and pointlessness. And I *do not* recommend that. It is not a good place to be.

So, the other thing I would say to this particular question: Talk to the people you love. You don't have to sit with this being fearful and being afraid and being worried. And if you don't have people around you who are hopeful, then expand your circle a little bit and find some more people who are willing to be hopeful and encouraging, and help you see that every day you have is a gift from God. So, *Act As If*.

Denver: Hmmmm.

Stephanie: Do you want to do one?

Denver: Yeah. "For women who are alone, do you have any thoughts about having those with authority bless over the phone or the Internet?"

I don't have a problem with that. Peter didn't lay hands on anyone when he walked by and healed the person in the gate to the temple. I think you could. If you're at a remote location and there's no one there with authority, I think you could bless the Sacrament over the Internet. I think you can give a blessing over the Internet. I think you can do it having the voice alone, because the intent—

Christ did not go *to* the house. The Roman said, "I'm not worthy to have You enter in my house, and it wouldn't be kosher for You to come into my house. Just speak the word, and my daughter will be healed." And He spoke the word. And then, as he's returning from the conversation with Christ, news comes and greets him on the way that tells him that his daughter was healed. And he asked, "When did that happen?" And it was in the self-same hour as when he was visiting with the Lord (see Matthew 4:2 RE).

I don't see any reason why people of faith today can't operate on the same basis that we see in Scripture—Peter and the Lord, both.

Stephanie: He knew Him.

Denver: "How can you tell if you have truly forgiven someone?"

That was one that came in that I thought you ought to answer.

Stephanie: Oh. How do you tell if you've truly forgiven someone?

Denver: Yeah.

Stephanie: Didn't that— That corresponded with another one that we were talking about. Basically, you're not worried about it any more. I don't know, is that too simple? I figure—

Denver: You forget about it.

Stephanie: Yeah. I figure if you've forgiven someone, you— If you've actually forgiven someone— In the context of this question, if you have actually forgiven the person that you're thinking about in this question, you wouldn't be asking the question. So, I don't know, too simple?

Denver: Yeah. I can't remember *one single thing* my wife's ever done that's wrong.

Stephanie: Stop! That is just utter trash!

Denver: She remembers *everything*.

Stephanie: I do, I do. Do you want to tell them why? Tell them why.

Denver: No, I think it's okay. I'm not going to.

Stephanie: Oh, you're not going to tell them why I remember? Whatever.

Denver: Okay. "In the account of the transfiguration of Jesus and His second visit to the Nephites, the text makes comment about the whiteness of Jesus' raiment—in the later account, the whiteness of His disciples' raiment. Will you share with us an increased understanding about the explanation of a demonstration of Jesus' disciples having no sin—why it would be important to point to 'raiment?' Clearly, it's an illusion to being clean and victorious over sin..." and then, so on.

Anyway. Yeah, I can point you to something. There's a— You can find it as a recording, but it's much, much better as a transcript of the paper itself, called "Treasures in the

Heavens," written by Hugh Nibley. If you hear it as a recording, you're just going to assume he's talking. If you read it as a transcript, you're going to realize that more than 45% of the words of the entire article are quotes from early, but obscure, Christian sources.

The "Treasures in the Heaven," among other things, is a white robe that was laid aside before you come to this earth, that is kept in safe-keeping under the throne of God—that is yours to *lose*, here, or to *reclaim* if you do what's required, *and* to have more added to it if you are true and faithful and you give diligence and heed.

And the article is actually, I think, relying upon obscure Christian sources because they were considered sacred, and they're not widely disseminated. They didn't make their way into Scripture. But you'll learn a lot about sacred clothing and ascension and purposes of a temple. "Treasures in the Heaven"—interesting article. You can get it on — I found it on the Internet just by searching, 'Hugh Nibley Treasures in the Heaven.'

Stephanie: Me, too.

Denver: Yeah.

Stephanie: Do you want to do another one, or do you want me to?

Denver: No, I've got to see what I'm looking at.

Stephanie: Alright. This one came in this morning. "Why doesn't God talk about science in Scriptures? I have learned about symbolic things in my chemistry, microbiology, and astronomy classes that denote there is a God, but I've always wondered why the laws of nature and scientific ideas are never discussed."

So, we're going to break this one up. First thing I would say is, I don't know, I tend to think that science *is* God. Now I know *scientists* don't think that, and they're looking for ways to disconnect science and God. But I happen to believe that if there was no God, there would be no science, and they wouldn't have jobs. And so, to me, there is no separate— There is literally no separation. So, the fact that this person is *finding* God in microbiology and chemistry and astronomy is no surprise.

The second thing I would say is I am finding science in human growth and development. I am finding sci— Did I say "science" or "God"?

Denver: You said science, but you meant God.

Stephanie: Oh, no, I'm not finding science. Well, I might be finding that too, but that's not what I meant. I am finding *God* in human growth and development. I am finding God in counseling theories and practices. I am finding God in substance abuse principles. I am finding God in every textbook I am currently engaged in. So, I would say, much like Jeff said earlier, God is everywhere. And the fact that we should never limit our search

for God, or even our presumption of finding Him, to Scripture—which is a wonderful place to find Him—but if I can find Him in substance abuse practices and principles, you can certainly find him in astronomy and microbiology. And then you—

Denver: Yeah. But all things bear testimony of Christ—*all things*. Whether they are on the earth or under the earth or in the earth or above the earth, all things bear testimony of Christ. The Scriptures say so. You think about the caterpillar that's a pest, that's something to wreck your garden, that goes into a cocoon—and then it comes out of the cocoon, and it's now something that helps fertilize and pollinate. And it leaves its grubby, earthly confines to become airborne and colorful, and a contributor to life and to your gardening. It's the same animal. And tell me *that* isn't a testimony of Christ. All things bear testimony of Him, and science simply ratifies that.

Stephanie: Do you want to do that one?

Denver: "'Thou shalt not kill; he that killeth shall die' (see T&C 26:6 RE). Are we required to be pacifists?"

No. I mean, the Book of Mormon— How many war chapters are there in the Book of Mormon? I mean, it's a guide to the method by which violence is to be accomplished. You *protect* the innocent. You use violence to defend families and children and to prevent offenses and abuses, but you don't use it to abuse. And if the person that is the threat, as they do in the Book of Mormon, agrees to lay down arms and no longer be a threat, then there's no reason to continue onward. You meet with force that which is destructive, only at the level required to—according to the Book of Mormon—to deal with the threat. And upon the threat having been dealt with, then you stop.

Clark Aposhian—who is the big gun-rights advocate, and teaches the self-defense, and gets everyone their concealed weapon as a consultant for the Utah legislature—says that you fire your first warning shot into the torso of the person, and you continue to do so until he's "*utterly neutralized*." And you leave no witnesses other than yourself about what happened there—at least when he taught me the concealed carry permit. But that seems a little non-Book of Mormon-ish.

Stephanie: Okay. All right, this one, "Will you—" This is for you. "Will you explain the difference between the 'Kingdom of God' and the 'Government of God'? And what does it look like to get into the Kingdom?"

Denver: In one sense, they're synonymous, but the term— The usage of the term is a little different when you're talking about mortality. You can have the Kingdom of God any time God, as *the King*, is speaking. So, as soon as God is speaking and there are people that are giving heed to what the King is saying, they are subordinate to the King, and therefore, *there* is the Kingdom of God; it exists.

The 'Family of God' is really a Holy Order, requiring ordinances and things to take place. And in the *afterlife*, the 'Government of God' or the 'Kingdom of God' and the 'Family of

God' are all synonymous. In *this world*, the Family of God doesn't get truly organized but on rare occasions, but the Kingdom of God has appeared a number of times. The Kingdom of God was with John, as Joseph put it, while John was crying repentance in the wilderness and people were coming out to him—*there* was the Kingdom of God (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pg. 271). And the Kingdom of God was here when Joseph was talking because God was administering, in effect, what was taking place; and so, you had the Kingdom of God. The Family of God is another challenge, and it's a little more rare.

How about this one: "The Scripture Glossary says, 'Because the Father's power was what came through and because the Father had attained to the resurrection, it was impossible for the Father's plan to fail. The Father had already taken care of redeeming all the creations under His hand' (see T&C: A Glossary of Gospel Terms, "Surety, Christ As"). If a creation can be redeemed by the Father, through the power of the resurrection He has already attained, can you help me understand Christ's motivations for creating and coming to redeem this world, aside from personal growth?"

Joseph touches on this stuff in the King Follett discourse, in which he talks about Christ attaining to the exaltation, to the throne of the Father, so that the Father can go to yet another *higher* exaltation. Well, it is never possible for the works to fail, because the glory and the power of the Father was given to the Son so that this creation could be made through the power of the Son as the *Creator*—because He had to be the Creator in order to be the Redeemer. So, the Father's power through the Son creates this universe, and the Son, by His sacrifice, redeems this universe. But it *could not* fail, because if Christ were to fail, it was the power of the Father, and He had the power then to redeem.

It's *always impossible* for the works of the Father to fail, which is why when Christ is bearing testimony (He's teaching the Nephites), He's always saying, "The Father told me to say this to you. The Father told me to command you. The Father told me this is the doctrine. This is the doctrine my Father gave me. This is the doctrine; it's the only doctrine that will save." When He introduces Himself to the Nephites, He refers three times in one short paragraph—three times—by identifying who He is by reference to the Father: "I've suffered the will of the Father in all things. I've glorified the name of the Father. I've taken upon me the sins of the world in order to do the works of the Father" (see 3 Nephi 5:4 RE).

The Savior is an extension of the will of the Father. But fidelity and strict compliance with the works of the Father were done, in order that Christ may *then* sit on the throne of the Father, and the Father can move on to a higher exaltation—because *that is the plan of salvation*, and Christ represents the prototype of the saved man.

What *we* saw Him do on *this* world was the final step in the process of qualifying to *attain* to the resurrection, do what the Father did, and sit on the throne of the Father. That was the last step to be taken—we got a chance to witness it here. But the Father had done that before. And the Son will then, sitting on the throne of the Father, continue

the works that He saw His Father do in others. And ultimately, the plan continues, worlds without end. But read the King Follett discourse, it will help you. (For one possible source, see www.byustudies.byu.edu/content/king-follett-discourse-newly-amalgamated-text.)

Stephanie: Okay, do you want me to do one?

Denver: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You can finish this. I'll just sit here.

Stephanie: Okay, then we're done.

Denver: No, do another one.

Stephanie: Okay. It says, "In your—" He would never answer this one. "In your opinion, is it better to pray for a soulmate, to pray for someone that would be a good mate, to try and date like-..." (these are one, two, and three) "...to try and date like-minded people, or to just live our lives as good as we can and see what happens, or five, something else?"

Denver: I'd say, five.

Stephanie: Five, something else?

Denver: What are *you* saying?

Stephanie: I say all of them, to some extent.

Denver: Dude. She had 1500 first dates!

Stephanie: No, I only had 500 first dates.

Denver: She had innumerable first dates! I was the only one who ever took her on a second date.

Stephanie: Totally, that is not even true.

Denver: 'Cause I'm a brave soul. So, you would say some of all of this?

Stephanie: I would say a little bit of all of this, okay? And I'm going to speak from the perspective of a mother, alright?

Yeah, life is a little more complicated than it used to be in terms of, I don't know, finding someone whose values you share. I know in our family, we've sort of transitioned. It's more important to find someone whose values you share than whose religion you share, okay? I'll go that far. And, it's... I think... (I had such good things in my head a minute ago. I think you distracted me.)

I don't personally believe in soulmates—although, he is definitely mine. I don't think we should settle for someone that's *just* a good mate, because I think God cares more about all of us than just— 'Good' just sounds so much like 'adequate,' you know? And we should be striving for more than adequate.

Certainly, hanging around and being with like-minded people is a good idea, but 'like-minded people' does not mean they either have to be *this* thing or part of *this* group or part of *this* group. You can find like-minded people in a lot of places that aren't part of your *groups*, if that makes any sense. You just have to be willing to sort of stretch yourself a little bit. And then you should *always* live your lives the best that you can, and see what happens.

God loves you more than you will ever—more than you *can ever*—comprehend. And He wants your happiness more than you can *ever* understand. And it's easy to think *that* when you're a parent, because my sort-of mantra is "He loves them better than I do." And if He loves them better than I do, then I know that if they are genuinely pursuing the best that they have, at any given moment, that He will bless them for that. And so, that is the advice I give to my kids who, you know, they're out looking for good mates, soulmates, like-minded people, and trying to live the best lives they can too. So, do a little bit of all of that, and have faith.

Denver: There's also that comment about 'some people are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it' (see T&C 139:15 RE). If you share values, and you value truth and they value truth, eventually you can help them find truth.

Stephanie: Uh-huh, yeah. I'll go to this next one. It's a little bit— It's a little bit similar. It's less about finding a mate, but—

"I'm currently in college...have lots of friends that question my beliefs and ask many questions of me. Since I'm still trying to learn the contents of the Scriptures and be taught the truth, I feel like I don't know enough yet to be a teacher. Do you have any advice for how I can try to bring my friends closer to God at this point in my life? Should I even try, or should I wait until I feel like I have sufficiently learned enough to teach?"

A couple things— I mean, I always go back to the admonition to Hyrum, which is somewhere in the T&C (used to be in the D&C), where, you know, 'seek first to learn my words before you go out and try and teach them' (see Joseph Smith History 14:14 RE). That's always a good mindset to have. But if we all wait until we know enough, we'll all just be standing around with our thumbs in our ears—nobody ever going out on a limb to teach anybody anything. So—

Denver: I don't think the thumb goes in the ear. I think—

Stephanie: Yeah, well.

Denver: I think some other part of the anatomy.

Stephanie: Yeah, I know, but I chose the ear. *I chose the ear.* So, because I may think it, [whispering] *I just don't say it.*

Denver: You just don't say it?

Stephanie: [Whispering] *I just don't say it.*

So, I would say, again, do it all. Continually seek. I mean, I'm 50-some-odd years old, and I can't tell... I don't even think I read the Book of Mormon first through, completely through for the first time until I was in my thirties, okay? Which is not— I'm not bragging about that; I'm just saying you're never done learning. And there's never— There's *always* time to learn. So yes, please continue to read the Scriptures and learn the truth, and surround yourself with people who can teach you the truth. And then, when you have the opportunity with your friends to bring up subjects or have conversations about religious principles, Gospel principles, God, the universe, or anything like that, do so at your level.

The other thing that this question says: "Do you have any advice for how I can try to bring my friends closer to God at this point in my life?"

"Try to bring my friends closer to God," I think, is a wonderful question. "Try to make my friends believe what I believe" is not a good question, 'kay? We're not trying to make anybody believe what we believe. That sort of is not necessarily— That's not well received. Trying to bring people closer to God can, and will probably, be received by everybody.

So, my answer to this question is make sure you know what you're trying to get your friends to do, and just gauge it based on what you know right now. And be willing to have conversations about God, about Gospel principles, about the bigger, deeper meanings of what goes on in the universe. Those kinds of things will just bring people closer to God naturally. And it beats the heck out of BuzzFeed...and whatever other— Twitter? (I do know these things; I'm not acting like I don't.) But yeah, talk about Godly things, and that will just naturally bring people along.

Denver: There's also a lot of videos that have been put together that are out there and available, and are conversation starters. There's a first and a second seven-part video. They're short videos—you know, four to six minutes long—on the Protestant Reformation and the Restoration. And there's a third video series, the first one of which just got released on the Equinox, dealing with the continuation of the Restoration. There'll be a seven— There'll be a total of seven of those, as well (see www.learnofchrist.org).

And there are a lot of recordings—the Restoration Archives has a whole host of recordings that are either good to listen to, good to use as a basis for conversation, or something that you can ask your friends to look at (see www.restorationarchives.com).

Stephanie: Actually... And they're great; really, they are. And they're short, and they're easy to understand, and they're a good, general-Christian-belief-in-God way to learn things that aren't so entrenched in a specific religious movement or something.

Go ahead.

Denver: So here's one: "How do I know it's not just wishful thinking when I hear the Lord say, 'Your sins are forgiven?' How do I get past the distrust in my own ability to reach God and believe that He can reach me?"

Well, first of all, the adversary doesn't forgive sins. So, if you're hearing a voice that's forgiving you of sin, that's undoubtedly a benign, good source because the adversary's not interested in that. The problem that you've got is that then you decide not to cast it out of your memory, but you want to continue beating yourself over it. Lay it aside! Just forget it! If I— "I the Lord forgive whom I will forgive," and "He remembers it no more" (see T&C 45:9 RE). If the Lord's not going to bear it in His remembrance, why are you? Why do you want to contextualize yourself in that way? Why do you want to think of yourself in corrupt terms?

I'm thinking about all the great stories in literature where people in horrible circumstances managed to escape those circumstances, and go on to be good and virtuous and noble. And then you think about the Count of Monte Cristo who escaped, but never *ever* could get beyond his plot for revenge, his desire— I mean, he could and should have moved on in a wholesome way, and he moved on in a vengeful way. It's one of the great themes of problems in literature.

Move on; forget about it. The Lord remembers it no more; you ought not entertain it.

Stephanie: That one, then that one?

Denver: "Will animals play a role in Zion?" Well, yeah. Yes.

Stephanie: I'm taking *my* dogs.

I'll do this one. You can add Scripture to this if you want to.

So, "I've been told that pride is the worst sin, but this confuses me because murder takes away others' free agency, which I always thought is worse."

So, I have had ongoing ideas in my head for the last several years about just trying to make sense of things that I see or believe, and try to synthesize right and wrong down to, you know, six principles. It's not working, but whatever. And so, I'm going to say... I'm

going to agree that pride is— I'm going to agree with this, that whoever's told you that pride is the worst sin, that currently is my understanding—my personal understanding. And I'm going with that because pride is the umbrella under which *everything else falls*.

I watch a lot of TV. It's kind of an escape; I like it. And *pride* is what leads to murdering someone. And pride is what leads to wanting political power. And pride is what leads to. So, I'm hanging onto the fact that pride is the worst sin, or the umbrella under which all other horrible sins fall. So, my challenge would be: Figure out how pride is working in your life. 'Cause I doubt you're murdering people, but I guarantee you, it is holding you back. So, that's my answer.

You have a scriptural answer to that? Or you just want to move on?

Denver: No, there's a whole bunch in the Psalms and in the Proverbs—mostly Proverbs—about that stuff.

So, here: "In T&C 31:6-8, the Lord told his disciples anciently of events that would take place when the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled...includes the following:

When the times of...gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness...it shall be the fullness of [the] gospel, but they receive it not, for they perceive not the light and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

And in that generation shall the times of the gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be men standing in that generation that shall not pass until they see an overflowing scourge, for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. But my disciples shall stand in holy places and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices, and curse God, and die.

"What does the Lord mean when He says, *But my disciples shall stand in holy places and shall not be moved?*"

He's talking about Zion. If— It's that same— This T&C 31:6-8, keep reading. When you get to verses 14 and 15 of that same thing, the only people that shall not take up arms will flee to Zion, and the terror of the Lord shall be there.

There's an incident that happens when Christ is arrested in Gethsemane, when they come with their swords, they come with their lanterns, and they come to take Him (see John 10:1 RE and Testimony of St. John 10:1). And He, after suffering what He'd suffered, stood up before them. And they're looking for Him, and He identifies Himself to them: "I am He." I mean, He's submitting. They're confronting the guy that they went to look and find; He's standing there in front of them, identifying Himself as the one. And they stumble, and they fall backward. I mean, if you take a step backward and there's another guard behind you, you're going to fall; and they fell down. It's one of those Monty Python moments.

But, why do they cower? Why is the presence of the Lord intimidating to those that had come armed to arrest him? It's because no matter what you may think, there is something palpable about righteousness. There is something *tangible* about the righteousness of God, the power of God, the presence of Holiness; and it is frightening. That incident that's described about judgment in Mormon, where the people are in this agony in the presence of a just and holy Being? The just and holy Being is doing *nothing* except being there for them to behold. But they feel by the contrast of a just and holy Being with themselves (see Mormon 4:6 RE).

I mean, there's one of the revelations that we have in *our* Scriptures, that aren't in anyone else's, about how at the Second Coming there will be people who are still laden with sin. And they know— Ministers will *know* that they've ministered falsely. And people will *want* to have their sins forgiven, and they will be *asking* people to baptize them. But this is not the day for repentance—this is the day for judgment, and they have to be turned down (see T&C 160:1-4 RE).

Why, if they've been religious? *Why*, if they are a minister? Because ministers, who ministered falsely, are among those that are convicted of their sin at the Second Coming. Why would you be a minister, and now with the return of the Lord and the presence of the Lord, wishing yourself to be hidden from His presence? It's because there's *authenticity*. It's real, and it's palpable to the program of the Lord and the forgiveness of the Lord. And it *cannot* be *faked*; it cannot be imitated. Because coming face to face with Righteousness is so tangible a reality that you may as well have a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day, because *that* is holy ground, and you go not up against that. Not because they're armed and they have snipers. It's because it's dreadful; it's frightening. It's something where you do not want to be in the presence of *that* Light and Truth, because you prefer darkness.

I've already... I've already—

Stephanie: All right. Okay, do you want to do this one?

Denver: What is it?

Stephanie: "The three trees on the front of *Preserving*— Do you know?"

Denver: Oh, yeah. No, those are for self-discovery.

Stephanie: Okay.

Denver: There's stuff that no one's ever figured out yet.

Stephanie: I know, I know. Okay, I'll do this one—another eleven year old who worries about everything. What is up with our worrying eleven year olds? Stop it! Just stop it, stop it, stop it!

Okay. If you're focused on worry, you're going to worry 'cause you can't *not do* something you're focused on. Okay, I don't know how— I don't know, I'm not exactly sure how to explain this to an eleven year old, because you're in fifth grade. You should worry about your bike and your friends and your—

Denver: Well, if they ride a bike, they get the target acquisition/target fixation.

Stephanie: Okay, hold on.

Denver: It's a real deal. Tell them not to— Yeah, use that.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, okay! All right, here's the thing. I'll tell you about riding my bike. If you're riding a bike—it goes for mountain bike riding, skiing, motorcycle riding—it's called target fixation, okay? So I'm riding my...let's do my mountain bike, okay? I'm riding my mountain bike down the mountain, and I see all the rocks that I want to miss. If I look at the rocks I want to miss, I'm going to hit the rocks I'm trying to miss. It's a real thing. If I fade out the rocks I want to miss and look at the path I want to take to miss my rocks, I'm going to stay on the path, away from the rocks I'm trying to miss.

Denver: You look where you want to go.

Stephanie: You look where you want to go. *You look* where you want to go. You want to go *away* from worry. You want to go *toward* the things that bring you peace. You want to go *toward* the things that bring you joy, that make your life happy, and that help you focus on the positive instead of the negative. *Look where you want to go.*

Denver: If you're riding on a rural roadway on a motorcycle and you confront a curve, a turn in the road, the way to keep your bike in track is to look at the end of the curve— because you will adjust the arc of your turn to arrive at the spot you're looking at without trying to *steer your way* through the thing. You look where you want to go; you look at the end of the curve. You arc the bike to conform to arriving at *that* spot, in that lane, in that track. You look where you want to go.

Stephanie: You look where you want to go.

Do you want to do that one?

Denver: Well, I don't have my glasses on.

Stephanie: You've got to put— Keep your glasses on!

Denver: No, wait. No, I'm done. I'm through.

Stephanie: Then I'll answer one more.

Denver: I'm going home.

Stephanie: Okay. Good.

Denver: What is it?

Stephanie: This one.

Denver: Oh! That's even the best way! *You* need to answer that.

Stephanie: Yes?!

Denver: Well, yeah.

Stephanie: Okay. There's a question: "Will patriarchal blessings be given by our biological fathers?"

Sure!

Denver: It's the only way it's done in Scripture.

Stephanie: Go ask your dad for a patriarchal blessing. Sounds *awesome*.

Denver: It's the only way it's done in Scripture.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Denver: Almost always it's done by the oldest one in the patriarchal line. And after that person has been acquainted with someone *throughout their life*, and as they are approaching death and moving into the things that matter most—and in *those* circumstances they bring them back, and they give them their final blessing. It's the way it happened ever so frequently in the Old Testament *and* in the Book of Mormon. And that's a better source than it is through some institutional program, in which they train people and give suggestions of a list of criteria that ought to be followed in order to make sure the programs of the Church continue. It's rather like the prayer circles that have become an instrument for advancing an agenda, in temple rites in the LDS Church, instead of something spontaneous that is heartfelt and may actually stand a good chance of getting the attention of heaven and getting a response.

Stephanie: Okay, I'm going to answer three more quickly. I can do it quickly, I promise.

"How do I turn down friends who invite me to do Church-related things without hurting their feelings?"

I'm not really going to answer this. I'm going to ask a question back—a couple questions:

- Why do you want to turn them down?
- And is this not a good way to maintain friendships and relationships, for people who may need what you have to offer at a later time?

So, that's on you. And to answer the question legitimately, you are not responsible for their hurt feelings. Be polite, be gracious, say, "Thank you, but no." And you cannot help someone else having hurt feelings; that's just the way life is.

"I am a fifteen year old who plays online shooting games with my friends. (For shame! [Sarcasm.] No...) I get torn on spiritual focus or being worldly with my friends. How can I choose God and still be kind of a normal teenager?"

Well, you can. Go ahead, play your shooting games; it's fine. Balance is awesome. (*I say, play your shooting games; it's fine. I don't know what your parents think. That's not my call, okay?*) You know, if you're finding other ways to be godly and to connect with God, and you feel like your life is pretty balanced, and you're— I mean, if you're torn because you're feeling guilty, because someone is making you feel guilty, I can't answer that. If you legitimately want to know, my answer would be, "Have a good, balanced life."

The measure in our house was, "Does it grieve your spirit?" If something you are doing grieves your spirit, then you probably want to steer away from that no matter how many of your friends are doing it, or who's doing it, or what it is, or what the people around you think is right or wrong about it. If it *grieves your spirit*, then I say give it up. But in terms of balancing your life between God and being a normal teenager, I'm pretty sure you're already doing that.

"Is it a sin to feel proud about your relationship with God, proud of your family members and loved ones, or of your work done towards growing closer to God?"

I'm going to go out on a limb here and say if it's *pride* you're feeling, yeah, it's probably a sin. So, re-evaluate what it is you're thinking. Was it Alma, who trumped...and wanted to know... Do you know? You know what I'm saying, don't you? What's the Scripture? What's the Scripture...

Denver: No, give me a little more than "Alma," because Alma said a *lot* of stuff.

Stephanie: Anyway, help me! Help me, help me! What was it?

Audience comment: Oh, that I could speak with the trump of an angel.

Stephanie: Yes! Oh, that I could speak with the trump of an angel (see Alma 15:12 RE). Then it's like he catches himself—

Denver: Yeah, but I sense... Yeah.

Stephanie: He catches himself—because all of a sudden he feels like he's being too prideful about what he's saying.

Denver: Yeah. If you feel happy, if you feel satisfied, if you're grateful, that's not pride.

Stephanie: Yep.

Denver: If— The difference would be, "I and my family are better than other people." That's not it at all. I think I addressed that in the talk just a few minutes ago. But if what you're feeling is, "I'm so grateful to be in this family. I'm so grateful to have the blessings that God has bestowed upon me. I am so pleased with the circumstances in which I find myself, and it humbles me"—that's not pride.

Stephanie: Right.

Denver: That's gratitude.

Stephanie: Right.

Denver: So, I mean— Was it a fifteen year old?

Stephanie: No, I don't know. This is the...yeah.

Denver: We have a lot of emotional-vocabulary ignorance among the youth that confuse them about what it is that is really going on. The word 'pride' is a negative, but the emotion that's being felt may be *misidentified* as pride. It may, in fact, be satisfaction, gratitude, humility, and appreciation. And if so, then just re-identify your word.

Denver: Get a better grasp of the vocabulary meaning...

Stephanie: Yeah.

Denver: ...because pride can lead to arrogance and haughtiness and condescension towards others, which is never good.

Stephanie: Yeah, I would agree with that.

Audience 1: Can I ask one, just very quickly?

Stephanie: Oh, my gosh.

Audience 1: I should have thought of it earlier.

Audience 2: We're in no hurry.

Audience 1: Can I? Just one?

Stephanie: Okay. We may not answer it, but go ahead.

Denver: Yeah.

Audience 1: I just want to know. I noticed that Christ, when people—when He appears to them—are there in His presence, He will say, "Come and touch my, you know, the marks in my hands and feet and side, that you may know that I am Christ." Can a false Christ bear those marks? You know, to identify a false Christ that may appear to you, would they have those marks?

Denver: The adversary imitates. The adversary counterfeits. The adversary is not in the business of saving souls, he's in the business of corrupting souls—even if the only corruption he manages to do is slight—in order to hedge up the way and prevent the progress.

Never had a false being try to produce a counterfeit in that fashion, but I have had experience with other forms of counterfeiting that bear remarkable resemblance to things that are, in fact, true. And in that case, it was the content of the message that tipped it off that it was a false message. And at that point, I was able to detect the adversary when he appeared in that manner and to, in the name of the Lord, rebuke and remove him. So, I would say, if an experience like that appeals to pride, appeals to vanity, or delivers anything that is contrary to all of the words of the Lord that we find in Scripture, I would rebuke in the name of the Lord and dismiss, and I would give it no further thought.

And obviously, you don't rebuke the Lord in the name of the Lord and send Him packing. You would dismiss the adversary in the name of the Lord and send *him* packing. But, the response would tell me something. But it's also the content, because I have seen the adversary go to *extraordinary lengths* to mock up a false appearance in order to try and to deliver a false message. And I've been able to detect and dismiss, and I've not fallen captive for any of that.

But then, very often, if you're going to have to deal with the adversary on any substantial matters, you're usually going to be exposed in a way—

Joseph was exposed in a way that gave him the capacity to detect the adversary in a dramatic way, that cued him in and put him on guard, because that would have prevented a whole lot of mischief from later ensuing (see Joseph Smith History 2:4 RE). Moses on the mount had an encounter with the adversary that, again, gave him a capacity that helped him to detect the adversary thereafter and prevent a lot of mischief (see Genesis 1:3-4 RE). And Christ, after His baptism, in the wilderness was confronted

by the adversary in a way that equipped Him on an ongoing basis to deal with that (see Matthew 2:5-7 RE).

The Lord's educational process sometimes requires that you get exposed to the enemy of your soul in order to know how to avoid falling prey to the enemy of your soul. And I know there are people out there that are so befuddled and so concerned about *this very issue*—about the devil misleading—that they *cannot* tell the difference between someone that *is* in the employ of the adversary, and deceived and preaching a false message, and someone that *is not* and has not been deceived, and knows how to detect and rebuke, and has not fallen prey to him.

The only advice that I have given to people when it comes to whether they believe anything I'm saying is: Disbelieve all you want. Search, and try to find the errors all you want. But be very careful about what you *say* when someone has been sent on an errand by the Lord, because that is *one thing* on which the Lord absolutely does intend to judge this generation.

I have been given a message from Him. I have an errand, and I'm working on it. And I don't care if you have no interest in it whatsoever; that's fine. Not everyone who heard the Lord's message when He was *living* had any interest in what He had to say. And I don't care if you disregard what I have to say, but I would warn you to be very careful about *fighting in opposition* to what **the Lord IS DOING NOW. Because He IS doing something.** And I'm on that errand, and I intend to complete my errand. And fighting against *that* is not fighting against *me*; I'm nothing and no one. But it *is* fighting against the Lord, who intends to vindicate promises made to far greater people than *me*. I just happen to be the weak and ill-fitted vessel that He chooses now to work with. And I'm doing my best.

Okay!

Stephanie: Let's go.

Denver: We're out of here! We're done. Is there a closing—

Audience comment: Yes.

Denver: Okay, then you get up here, and let me get out of here.

2020.06.07 Unity in Humanity Interfaith Celebration

Online Conference

June 7, 2020

Jill VanHaren: We can see you on the screen, Denver. Thank you for joining us.

Denver: I had my screen off. Can you hear me?

Jill: Yes, we can hear you.

Denver: Should I begin, then?

Jill: What?

Denver: I'm asking, should I begin?

Jill: Yes, go ahead and begin. Thank you.

Denver: I hate to do so because I've been enjoying what the others have said and wish they had spoken longer.

I had not thought about what to say leading up to the get-together today other than I would listen and then respond. But this week I got an email that I wanna read to you. This is from a woman who emailed, asking this question:

How do we deal with anger towards God? I'm struggling getting along with the idea that I need to praise and love and worship a God that I feel completely closed off to and forsaken and unloved. There's no connection there, and all I have inside of me is this growing, red-hot anger, and I can't shake it. It's frustrating to listen to others saying how great God is and how easily accessible He is because it just isn't true for some people. Some people may go their whole life without God giving them any relief or acknowledgment just because that's their trial this round. I need to know how to deal with that. I know He's real. I know He exists. But I cannot understand how God allows the pain and horrors that some people on Earth go through—the terrible things that happen to children and innocent people, the unspeakable things that people do. I feel as though God is playing a game, and we are all chess pieces to Him.

Well, I liked Rupinder's observation that the first step in the process is a *problem* because I think that is where it always begins. You have to start with a problem.

Well, I intend to address that question, but I was reminded in Sugopi's comment about *sunrises and sunsets are God's dress*. I live in the eastern part of the city of Sandy in the Salt Lake County basin. On the East, there's a wall of mountains called the Wasatch Front. And on the West, across the other side of the valley, there's a wall of mountains, and they're called the Oquirrh. Because I live so close to the Wasatch mountains, the

sun will begin to shine in the valley on the Oquirrh mountains far to the West. And then, the sunlight will creep slowly across the valley as the sun rises to clear the Wasatch Front mountains until finally, the sunlight hits my house where I live in the far East at the foothill or at the foot of the mountain. Then, when the sun sets in the evening, it disappears behind the mountains on the Oquirrhs in the West. And then, the shadow begins to grow, and it grows until it finally covers the Wasatch mountains that I live next to.

In wintertime, the snow-covered Wasatch mountains in the bright sunlight reflect so much light that it hurts your eyes to look at them. You really need to use sunglasses if you're gonna spend a lot of time looking at the sunlight reflecting off the mountains. And sometimes after a snowstorm, the snow has been so thick in what it has done to cover the earth that the trees themselves are no longer green; they're just white. They look like white, jagged teeth sticking out all across the tops of the mountains. But they're white, and they blend in brilliantly with this color.

As the sun sets, as it goes down in the evening and disappears behind the Oquirrh mountains, the shadow (the last light of the day) creep up the Wasatch mountains to the very top, and just the highest peaks have the last bit of light on them before it disappears into shadow, everything being shadow. But because of the angle of the sun as it creeps up the mountain, once it gets about halfway up the mountain, the light is no longer white. It becomes pink, and it becomes blue and purple and lavender—and hues and shades of subtle change that are so different from one another.

Sugopi mentioned that there are artists on Earth, but the greatest artist is God. Watching that every night, it is never the same. It is always different, and it is always beyond the artistry of any man or woman to capture because it is alive, and it is moving; it is light itself. And the canvas that God uses is the canvas He created by the snow and by the mountain and by the Creation. No artist can capture what we get to watch and see every night if we'll just open our eyes and look.

Jesus Christ taught a sermon. In His sermon, He said that:

[His Father] makes [the] sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends the rain on the just and on the unjust. ...If you love only them that love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same? ...if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans the same? You are therefore commanded to be perfect even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect [and to love everyone]. (Matthew 3:26 RE)

God's gift of this beautiful nightly display of brilliant color and subtle hues and artistry is a gift that's given to everyone, but it may not be a gift appreciated by hardly anyone. It **is** his gift to us.

In the book of the Psalms (which are hymns): *The Lord, he is God. It is he that made us and not we ourselves...The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting...his truth endures to all generations (Psalms 100:1).*

We are part of that Creation, and we belong here in this Creation. And we're designed to appreciate what it is that He has done in making this Creation for us.

Someone asked a question: Why are the prayers sung? Prayers for a community are best when they are offered in unison, but **speaking** in unison is very hard to accomplish without a cadence that allows people to stay on the same word at the same time with the other people who are repeating the same words of a prayer. And so, one way that has been devised (in order to keep prayers synchronized between various voices and have them speak the same words at the same moment) is to turn them into hymns so that everyone together can raise their voice and speak the same syllable and make the same sound at the same time. And so, when Delmar Bondi beats the drum to give the cadence and when Sugopi plays the harmonium to set the tune, what each of them are doing is a reflection of a culture that is seeking to have the prayers unified, to have the prayers united to become one in order to express the desire of the heart of the whole and to do it in a uniform way.

The religion of God and the greatness of God is so vast and so all-encompassing that it's impossible for one person or one group or one denomination or one movement to have held onto it all. The religion began in the beginning with God standing in the presence of the first parents who were the father and the mother of the entire race of humanity and teaching them about everything there is to know, to worship, to understand, to appreciate, to love, to share, to feel, to understand. But we have done a bad job of preserving that.

We had, at the beginning, the truth taught; and then, we had the truth lost. The process of losing truth is called *apostasy*, but apostasy does not mean that everything is lost. It means that some has been lost because anything less than all of it is less than the true religion. And so, apostasy causes us to only keep part of the religion. But all religion, in all cultures, in all denominations everywhere in the world, have a common root.

From time to time, God has sent messages back into the world. Those messages are *restorations* in which some of what has been lost is then restored again to help complete the picture. I believe there have been **many** apostasies. Correspondingly, there have been **many** restorations. But a restoration, to complete the **entire** story, has to return us all the way back to the beginning, has to give us the opportunity to have, once again, everything that was here at the start that unifies together and weaves into one great whole **all** of the truths.

In some of the religions that we have heard glimpses of today, there are greater truths about some characteristics than have been preserved in the Christian tradition. We need to have reunited **all** the truths from **all** the limited apostasies (that nevertheless contain truths) into one great restoration—back into a whole—with the guidance and assistance of God.

There was a sermon that was delivered by the apostle Paul two thousand years ago when he went to Greece to teach about the restoration that Jesus Christ had brought about. The audience that he spoke to were a group of philosophers in Greece. That culture, that nation, that society has long since perished. The temples that were built back then have fallen into disarray and many of them into dust, but the **sermon** that Paul taught on Mars Hill has been preserved, and we have a record of the sermon that he taught. He referred to them. He said:

*You ignorantly worship [God whom I] declare unto you. God...made the world and all things therein, ...He is the Lord of heaven and earth, [and] dwells not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he gives to **all** life, and breath, and all things...he is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being. We are also His offspring. (Acts 10:14 RE)*

Those words of Paul on Mars Hill are echoed even more clearly in some of the things that have been said by Delmar and by Rupinder and by Jeremiah and by Sugopi today. Sometimes we lose track of how closely connected we are, every one of us, to God.

There was a king who delivered a sermon as he was ending his reign. In his old age and infirmity, he felt no longer able to provide the leadership, the guidance, and the presiding role of a king in helping bring peace to his people and serve them. And so, he called his people together, and he gave them his last bit of advice before resigning as the king and allowing his son to be the one who would lead the community after that by teaching and defending and helping it. And in King Benjamin's talk, like Paul, he mentioned that *[God] has created you from the beginning and [is] preserving you from day to day by lending you breath that [you] may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another (Mosiah 1:8 RE).*

The story that we have of the Creation in the Bible says that God put into... He breathed the breath of life into Adam. King Benjamin, talking thousands of years later, says that in you (in you, right now, every one of you), God is *lending you breath that [you] may live.* If you want to know how close you are, in reality, to God, just hold your breath. Exclude —throw away— the act of breathing that God is causing to occur in you at this very moment, and hold your breath for as long as you can. Then, when you take your next gasp for air, realize the power to do that is **loaned** to you by God. He is that intimate to you. He is that connected to you.

In a revelation that was given to Joseph Smith about this Creation, God, speaking to Joseph, told him that:

[Christ is] in all and through all things, the light of truth, and that truth shines. This is the light of Christ, as also he is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also he is in the moon and...the light of the moon and the power thereof by which it was made; as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made; and the earth also, and

the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. ...And the light which now shines, which gives you light, is through him who enlightens your eyes, which is the same light that quickens your understandings, which light proceeds forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space: the light which is in all things, which gives life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sits upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (T&C 86:1 RE)

God is everywhere. The light of God is in you. If it were not in you, you would not have the power to breathe, to think, to live, to move, and to even be sustained by God's power from moment to moment to continue in your existence. We, in this present form, are not self-existent. We are dependent upon the energy, the power, and the force of God to keep us maintained as His creation. There are components about us that are coeternal with God, but that doesn't mean that we, as an organized being, existed from all eternity. God created us, but He did this long ago and far away.

Concerning this Creation in that same revelation:

There is no space in...which there is no kingdom, and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom. And unto every kingdom is...a law, and unto every law there are certain bounds also, and conditions. All things are comprehended by God and all things are before him and all things are round about him...he is above all things and in all things and...through all things, and is round about all things, and all things are by him and of him, even God, for ever and ever...The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun gives his light by day, and the moon gives her light by night, and the stars also give their light as they roll upon their wings, in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. ...Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms that you may understand? Behold all these are kingdoms, and any man who has seen any or the least of these has seen God moving in his majesty and power... The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him. Then shall you know that you have seen [him], that I am, and that I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me; otherwise you could not abound. (T&C 86:6-8 RE)

Everything you can see, everything that you can experience, every sense that you are able to employ is a manifestation of God lending you this intelligence in order to comprehend Him.

When people believe themselves to be wise and smart and good and holy, we really do delude ourselves. No matter how intelligent we may think ourselves, the fact is we know practically nothing, and we will only be here a short time period.

God is everywhere and in everything, and we should be in awe of Him. Using everything that we have the ability to assemble, using all of our science, using all of our finest instrumentation, using every mechanism that we can devise, we know that

approximately 68% of the energy in the universe is what is called *dark energy*. It's called dark energy because we know it's there; we haven't a clue what it is. Using that same science and ability and instrumentation, we know that 27% of the universe is comprised of *dark matter*. We know it's there because physics suggests its presence. We don't have a clue what it is. The total of these two means that 95% of the universe we can detect is composed of things we cannot see, we cannot understand, we cannot comprehend. We detect and comprehend, at best, only five percent of all that exists using our best science and best instruments to examine the universe.

On this world—just this world—depending upon the degree of humility that we acknowledge about our present understanding, we may only know of somewhere between 1% and 14% of the life forms that exist on this planet. Of the known life forms that we know about, humanity makes up no more than .001% of that life.

If we are not in awe of God, then we have an awfully small universe and an awfully large ego and an awfully ignorant vantage point. The greatness of the religions that we have heard from today (from the very first with Delmar to the last we heard from) is that the approach of the religion is the acknowledgment of something far greater than ourselves, and the sense of awe and humility that we approach that greatness stays beyond us.

God may make himself known from time to time, but even when He does so, it's difficult for (first of all) man to take it in and then, having taken it in, difficult for man to comprehend what it is that has been given to him and taken in. And then, it is something altogether more challenging and more difficult to turn that into something that can be explained even in part. But the greatest challenge is, then, to comprehend enough in order to be able to teach it. We've had great teachers in many religions, but I think it is foolish to suggest that the greatest teachers that have been out there have ever been able to adequately convey what it is that they took in because the challenge is too vast.

I liked the reference that Delmar made to his grandparents who were involved in ceremonial worship and ceremonial tradition. I understand why Rupinder says at some point along the path of progression, you reach a point at which you no longer need a ritual or a ceremony.

But the fact is that some kinds of vast information can be conveyed in the way that Jeremiah conveyed it—by telling a story, by giving a tradition. The story has embedded within it symbols that are expansive, that grow outward, that have more meaning than simply *the wolf*; more meaning than simply *the moon*; more meaning than simply *the paint on the face*. They have a library of material that they're trying to convey in a shorthanded way.

And so, the ceremony that Delmar Bondi's grandparents conveyed to him when he was a youth were not simply theater. They were an attempt to take a large amount of information and to compress it into a handful of symbols and then to deliver the handful of symbols so that someone who takes it in can then look at and reflect upon that

handful of symbols and to say, "Within this symbol, I see this entire library of material; and within this symbol, I see this library of material; and within that one...." And so, ritual becomes one of the ways in which religion is intended to strike the chord in the heart and convey into the mind and into the senses that you can take information in—something that is beyond merely the senses that we work with; something that reaches out into the universe and touches that infinite.

There is this concept that Christians speak about that's called the *Holy Ghost*; it's also called the *Comforter*, that Holy Ghost, that *concept* much abused in Christianity, much misunderstood, much voiced about (a lot of silly notions), but in part of the restoration of information that has come about in these last two centuries—because we believe that God is continuously trying to restore—one of the things that we've been given in the last two centuries is a description of what that Holy Ghost includes. Let me read those words to you:

It is given to abide in you: the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, that which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. (Moses 6:61; see also Genesis 4:9 RE)

That is the Holy Ghost that—when we allow ourselves to quiet down; when we allow ourselves to take in; when we recognize the breath that we rely upon to remain conscious; when we realize that the colors that we behold with our eyes are loaned to us as a sensibility given to us by God—at that moment, you're connecting to God. At that moment, He is present with you. At that moment, you should be in awe of Him **sharing** with you that capacity because He **is** with you.

So, when the woman is struggling getting along with the idea that she needs to praise and love and worship a God "I feel completely closed off to and forsaken and unloved," the place to begin is to recognize it's an expression of God's love to you that you can see. It's an expression of God's love, kindness, and generosity to you that you can breathe. It's an expression of God's love, kindness, and sustaining power that He makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on both the good and the evil. It's an expression of His love and His presence with you that you have the opportunity to be here, to be part of a family, to be connected with others, to converse and to eat and to feel love and to feel kindness.

The problem is not that you're not connected to God—because every one of us is. The problem is that the foolish religious tradition that you have been taught shuts your mind down so that you do not comprehend His presence **in** you, His presence **with** you, and His presence in this world that you now occupy.

The pictures of the birds that were put up by Sugopi reminded me... I try to hike every day. My wife and I can go out and... In winter, nature has very few of the birds around that we see here during the summer. The songbirds come and go. The butterflies come

and go. But winter has its own dress, has its own coloration, has its own beauty. We've waded through snowdrifts up to our thighs, and we've heard the stirring of animals that are underneath the layer of snow (small mammals that crawl around underneath there). We've seen the predator birds that stay around during wintertime that will listen keenly to locate their prey and will then fly into and be beneath the surface of the snow in order to catch their prey and in order to survive in the winter months. And then, in the summer, when the flowers are blossoming—the return of the butterflies and the hummingbirds that eat on nectar and the bees and the other life there (less dependent upon the loss of lives of their fellow-creatures) and, instead, eat in the vegetable world and survive sometimes on nothing more than nectar.

"A land flowing with milk and honey" was what was promised anciently to Israel. Milk and honey do not require the death of anything. They're produced as a symbol of the abundance of life, the promise of life.

When the ancient Israelites built a temple in the land of Jerusalem, they had waited generations to build it because their holy place was really a tent, a tabernacle. It was portable, and they moved it from place to place. But they finally built a fixed location for the temple in the city of Jerusalem. They built the temple on a hilltop previously occupied by the Jebusites that was not actually acquired under the jurisdiction of Israel until the reign of King David. They'd been living there for generations, but the Jebusites retained it.

King David, in the final attempt to conquer that site, said whoever was first over the wall would become the captain of the Lord's hosts, hoping to displace his nephew Joab, who was the only person contemporaneous with David that scared David and frightened him. And He was hoping that someone would be over the wall first, and maybe he could get a new captain of the Lord's host and be rid of his nephew. But Joab was the first one over the wall and conquered the final stronghold. And so, the site on which the temple would be built was obtained by Israel.

David thought that he would be the one to build it, but the Lord told him, "No, you're too bloody a man. You've shed too many lives; you've done too many things that disqualify you." And so, while David could gather the materials, the Lord commanded him **not** to be the one to build it. It was his son who built it. And so, Solomon built the temple, the (finally) brick-and-mortar building that would house the oracles of God and be the holy place that people came for festivals and worship and sacrifices.

Well, it was built on a prominence, the former stronghold of the Jebusites. It was built on a prominence, and to the east was the Mount of Olives. The sunrise in the East in Jerusalem anciently would rise as the sun came, and the sun would then (as it does here in this valley), it would then start and creep down until the sun cleared the mountain, and then it was visible everywhere.

The eastern wall of the temple that was built by Solomon had overlaid on it gold (a thin layer of gold, but it was gold) on the eastern face. So, as the sun crept up from the East,

the sun on the top of the eastern face of the temple would reflect that sunlight and the gold on the temple as the sun rose. And so, for some period of time, every morning as the sun rose in the East, there would be a time where you could not see the sun because it was blocked from view by the Mount of Olives. But you could see the reflection of the sun in the gold on the temple, and it would appear as though the day was beginning with the sun shining from the house of God, as the sun returned and light returned each day to the earth.

It's just a symbol, but it tied together (in symbolic form) the presence of God, the ceremonies, the rituals, the traditions that remind us, that attempt to preserve for us information—so that even in our apostate states (wherever we are in whatever state of apostasy we may find ourselves), we can have hope that God will renew that and that that light of understanding will increase and will grow brighter and brighter—until, at last, we return again to a perfect day: a day in which there is no darkness; a day in which there are no shadows left around the edges of our religion; no more separation and division, because the shadow does not illuminate the truth that we hold dear in our hearts because that also is returned again, renewed again, restored again. And we find ourselves in a vigorous relationship, connected to one another—because a faith that is big enough to incorporate all truths from all sources becomes big enough also to connect us to one another. It's in that search and that desire for restoration that we all have hope of returning once again and finding that we all stand on common ground. In fact, we all stand on the same ground.

Now, I've seen various agendas for today, but my understanding is that we're supposed to end this at noon, and I hate to impose upon people by dragging something out longer than what they had planned to participate in. There's like two minutes left until noon. Is there any... Are there any questions that I oughta take a look at before we wrap this up?

Jill: Yes, Denver, we have just a couple of questions that you might be able to answer. I guess, first, can you please tell us a little bit about your spiritual background and what Scriptures you're quoting from? (Because I didn't really introduce the speakers.)

Denver: Oh, yeah. I'm an excommunicated Mormon, I suppose. I'm a free-range, non-denominational believer in God's work in all ages at all times, and I believe that God did something in the life of Jesus Christ to bring about truth. I believe that that became corrupted sometime after the death of Jesus Christ and that Christianity preserved and perpetuated an echo but not the fulsome thing.

I believe that Martin Luther was inspired by God to rebel against Catholicism because Catholicism had become oppressive. And Martin Luther's rebellion against Catholicism not only helped free people from the tyranny of Roman Catholicism, it helped Roman Catholicism repent and return and improve itself. As much as Martin Luther did to help spawn a new kind of interpretation of Christianity that allowed people to believe in Christ and feel themselves connected to God outside of the institution of Roman Catholicism, Roman Catholicism itself looked at the problems that Martin Luther criticized and

underwent internal improvement, internal correction, internal growth. It was a... inspired moment that helped all of Christianity.

I believe that that led, in turn, to (ultimately) refugees fleeing Europe and coming to the Americas in order to get religious freedom—because the Protestant Reformation did not result in the freedom of religion. It resulted in Lutheran nations and Catholic nations and Church of England nations. And those nations all had (by force of arms!) government-imposed religion in which some forms of belief were favored and some were disfavored; and some of the disfavored were not only persecuted, they were killed! John Knox, the "apostle of murder," was responsible for murdering people that he had religious disagreements with.

Protestant fathers practiced Christianity in the rebellion against Rome—but **mirroring** many of the **very same** things they **hated** about Rome. And so, when the Americas were discovered, there were many people that left their European nations to migrate to the Americas precisely because they wanted to practice worship of God without someone forcing them to. And so, one of the very first things that—once the Americas rebelled and got their independence—one of the very first things they did after establishing the government was to mandate the freedom to practice religion according to the dictates of their own conscience so that everyone could believe and worship according to the dictates of their own belief, their own connection to God.

And so, it took all of these events to move forward in order for God to then have the ability to do something about Christianity to correct it again. In 1805, He sent into the world a young man through whom He would begin this process of restoring and repairing. That young man had a common name, Joseph Smith, and I believe that through him a restoration of the truth began.

That restoration is today... It's called "Mormonism" by most people, but Mormonism itself is fractured into some 80 different kinds of denominations. Mormonism is not unified. Mormonism is a **fracture**. It's much like what you see with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism and all of the offshoots of Protestantism. There's many, many different forms of Mormonism. God spoke to Joseph Smith.

I have a friend... I've written a number of books. I have a friend; I met him because he read the first book I wrote. He grew up a Mormon. He was a Mormon missionary, and he got to the point in his Mormonism that he felt like it was no longer satisfying to the soul. So, he undertook a journey to try and find enlightenment. He went to India. He studied in India. He found a Guru. He got his enlightenment and his understanding there. And then, after he had spent years in India, he returned. And he came back because his roots were in Utah; so, he came back to Utah. But upon returning to Utah, what he found (or to his surprise) was that contained within many of the revelations given to Joseph Smith, there were concepts about enlightenment that he had to go to India to discover, but he found it back here. He read my book, and he contacted me, and he said, "I don't understand how you were able to find it in Mormonism. It took me leaving it and coming back before I could find what there was that was within it."

I became a member of the particular kind of Mormonism that's called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or LDS). I was a member of that church for 40 years to the day, to the exact day. And on the 40th year anniversary to the day, I was excommunicated from the Church because I do not believe it is possible to have an authentic relationship with God and to also be subordinate to hierarchical control, administrative enforcement, and surrendering to someone else who exercises authority over you. And so, excommunicated from Mormonism because of the things which I teach—but I base what I believe upon the Bible, the Book of Mormon (which was translated by Joseph Smith from an ancient book), and revelations that have been given by God to Joseph Smith. And because **those** things have led me to connect to God, I believe in revelations that God has also given to me. But I don't stand at the head of any organization. I believe I am one among a group of equals, of people who are likewise searching to try to find authentic connection to God because I believe that God is **in** and **with** and **around** all of us. It's hard to convey adequately how closely connected we are all to God using **only** concepts that are found in Christianity and in Mormonism.

It's easier when you appeal to and you incorporate also some of the concepts that we have heard today from an Apache, from Rupinder and his exposition, from Jeremiah (the Blackfoot storyteller), and from Sugopi. There are things that they have said that come straight out of the Scriptures that have been restored to us but are concepts that we do not adequately express even though our Scriptures contain them. We need others who come from a Sikh background or from a Hare Krishna background to articulate and to put into words these vast concepts.

I am someone trying to understand and to teach truth with a recognition that the greatness of God dwarfs the capacity of any man to adequately convey to another. The best that we can do is to invite and to persuade and to say and to deliver constantly the message: *Come, come and see for yourself.*

I believe that God will reveal Himself to everyone. The way in which He may reveal Himself at first may be very limited. It may be very small, but we ought to appreciate even that, and we ought to prize even that. By the time a person is given the opportunity to stand in the presence of God, they're not standing in the presence of God because God is trying to impress them or because God is trying to give them greater faith in Him. It's because, in all of the little ways in which God has previously revealed and made Himself known, the person has accepted with deep appreciation and humility and come to the recognition that we are all really, utterly dependent upon Him.

None of us are great. The best we can offer is our submission and our humble support to God and our fellow men because God cares as much for each one of us as He cares for any one of us. And so, none of us can say we're great, we're good, we're holy. Should God make us holy for even a moment so that we can endure His presence, that's a gift from Him, and it departs because when we are no longer in His presence, this earth drags us down. We get tired, we get cold, we get hungry. We have to

constantly war against the elements of this world. And so, every one of us ought to stand in awe continually of God and who He is.

All I am is someone trying to promote faith and confidence in the existence of, the worthiness of, the greatness of, and our dependence upon God.

Jill: Thank you so much for that answer, Denver. I know you are very considerate of others' time. I was wondering if you have time for one more question, or if you'd like to end now?

Denver: Yeah, yeah, we're only ten minutes—eleven minutes over. But yeah, go ahead.

Jill: In your view, will the restoration of all be accomplished by a single person or a group? Will it require concurrent restorations among many religions, eventually all uniting together as one?

Denver: There's a prophecy about how God intends to gather together into one in the last days and how they're gonna be. According to the Book of Mormon, it's a testimony of God's dealings with one group of ancient people. But the Book of Mormon makes it clear that God's dealings have not been limited to one or two groups, but there have been multiple groups to whom He has visited and provided information. The testimony of all of those are intended to grow together. The Book of Mormon confirms that that is ultimately an objective.

Prophecies require that there be a house built, that there be a people gathered, that there be a location where God can take up His abode. The earth ultimately is going to be redeemed and returned to an original state that was described in Scripture as being a New Creation in which there was a garden planted eastward in Eden in which God could come, and He could visit directly, face to face, with man. The purpose of the temple is to construct another prototype that is symbolically representative of that same condition in which it is possible for angels, God, men, the living and the dead to be reunited as a single spot from which a restoration and a return of everything will spread until it finally fills the whole earth. But it begins in a single spot at a single place.

My understanding of how that's going to come about is that a command will at some point be given about a location. A command will be given at some point about the facility. Direction will be provided in order to put that into motion so it exists on the earth. And as with so many of the prophecies that God has given, we tend to view them *vast* and *macro*, and God tends to fulfill them *small* and *micro*.

The coming of Jesus Christ into this world was, on a **global** basis, almost inconsequential to the notice of mankind. It appears that the largest audience that we can confirm that Jesus Christ ever spoke to was about 7,000 people. It appears that most of them turned away from Him because of His doctrine, because of His teaching, because of what He was insisting the truth to include. It appears that by the time He

gets to the end of His ministry, He is slain on the cross; and then, He is resurrected from the dead; and He ministers for a period of about 40 days in and around Jerusalem; then, He ascends into heaven; that at the moment of His ascension into heaven that His followers at that point were approximately 500 people. So, the Lord Jesus Christ comes into the world as nothing more than sort of a local disturber of the peace. And by the time that He has finished His ministry and He's resurrected and ascends into heaven, He has about 500 followers.

If you look at the scriptural prophecies, the symbols embedded in the Law of Moses, the foreshadowing of a pascal lamb that would be slain in order to rescue and save mankind; if you look at what Isaiah foretold, what the Psalms celebrated; if you look at the vast body of literature, and then you compare that to the fulfillment of all that in the life of Christ, it would be very easy (if you're being fair about it) to take a look at that and to say, "God fulfills His great designs in very small ways."

And so, in some ways, the easiest way for God to get His work done is for the world to give little heed or little notice of it until it has been completed. No man yet ever built a temple alone. It's just beyond the capacity of a single individual to do. And so, there has to be... There has to be a temple-building people, if for no other reason than to support the cost of what it would take to build a temple. Even if you, like Solomon, used professional builders from King Tyre to send down to construct the temple because the expertise did not exist among the Israelites to accomplish the work, you still had to have the Israelites to support the budget that King Solomon had to employ in order to pay the king in order to bring the people and the material to accomplish the work. Even if it's done with small professional labor, it's still gonna fulfill the prophecies. It's still gonna meet all the criteria that has been given in Scripture. And it's still going to accomplish everything that has been promised to all people.

How we then gather together all of what are called in Scripture, the *rich treasures* (see T&C 58:3) from the earth... Those rich treasures from the earth are not rubies and diamonds and gold and silver. They are records of truth. They're the truths found in the traditions in the religions.

One of the things that's required in the design of the temple is that there be a treasury. But the word "treasury"... That the room is viewed by some people as having money and gold and silver and value—it's not that. The treasury of the temple are where the records are kept. It's where the greatest truths are to be housed. They're a place for preserving the great truths that God has planted around the earth that are to be gathered together so that there is one place that houses the most valuable thing that we have. It was not the marble temples on Mars Hill that endured. That's not where the treasure was found when the apostle Paul spoke to the Greek philosophers. It was in the truth that was taught by Paul in the sermon he delivered on Mars Hill. All those people have long since been reduced to dust. And yet, the sermon has been preserved. That's the treasure. That's what needs to be gathered.

Okay! Now we're 20 minutes over, so we should wrap up. Thank you all.

Jill: Thank you so much, Denver, for speaking today.

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Zoom Meeting with Denver and Stephanie Snuffer
June 14, 2020

Denver: I'm wondering, it's always an issue of whether the sound is any good...and whether you can all hear. Is the sound good?

Unknown: Thumbs up. Yeah.

Denver: Good?

Unknown: Great. As always.

Denver: I was wondering—particularly when we're covering the kind of distances that we're covering here—whether we're gonna have hiccups or stutters.

One of the things that I thought... You form an impression of someone based upon what your level of exposure to them is. And what you see from me and from Stephanie (I call her Steph, some of [indecipherable]...

Stephanie: [indecipherable]

Denver: Yeah, "Stephanie" does sound funny.

Our formerly-prepared talks, in which you stand behind a microphone, or you sit behind a microphone, and you give a bunch of thoughts in an organized fashion... And that creates an impression that... If you spend any time with us, you're gonna probably have a completely different impression. And I thought one of the things that you **can** do is listen to talks. One of the things that you would have a hard time doing is figuring out just how incomplete a picture that that gives of both of us.

This morning, for example, we're down here in my law office to do this. We got up, we took care of things at home, and then drove down here and got all of this set up. We have a parrot, and I asked my wife (she's finished all the coursework, but she's now finishing the residency work for a counseling degree), I told her that our parrot was again hiding underneath the matting in the bottom of the cage, where she apparently spent the night. I asked her if there was anything she could do about our parrot's psychosis when she finishes up her residency because I think our parrot is mentally imbalanced; she needs therapy.

Our life is a lot more interesting than just talks. We go out, and we hike every day of the week—the workweek. On Saturday, we ride bikes, which is a miserable experience. We have a challenging hill that we go 1300 feet of elevation over about a two-mile distance up and then down again. And on Sunday, we've started doing yoga (which she can actually do, and I do poorly—a lot of groaning, a lot of moaning, a lot of reaffirming that I don't have the flexibility that she has or that the people on the screen that are

demonstrating it have). But we do that to try and stay physically fit. But during all of that (except yoga; you can't talk during yoga), we spend a lot of time talking about things that matter to us or that are funny to us or that are interesting, and our lives are not lived, like, standing behind a microphone.

Stephanie: [indecipherable]

Denver: Yeah.

Steph has been a substitute teacher at a private prep school in Sandy, Utah named The Waterford School. How many years?

Stephanie: 10 years.

Denver: And she's more or less the number one substitute; fell into that by complete accident. Tell 'em about that.

Stephanie: It's a... I started volunteering just as a parent volunteer, doing a whole bunch of things behind the scenes—organizing events and being on committees and stuff like that—and got to know a lot of people and was there fairly frequently, and that's where all of our kids went. So, you know, in... We don't take a bus; you have to drive them there and pick them up, and drive them there and pick them up. So, it requires a lot of time. He did the morning run; I did the afternoon run—but you're there all the time. So, when I got tired of volunteering, I kept thinking I would substitute, but then they required me to turn in a resume and do a teaching demo, neither of which I was willing to do because 1: I didn't have a resume. Resume what? I don't do anything! So, it was the stumbling block that kept me from doing it. And then, one day... I went to high school college with one of the women who worked there as an administrator (just coincidentally), and she called me one day and said, "We fired the entire playground staff. Will you come and just work playground?"

And I said, "Sure, that's fine."

So, I'm out on the playground on the second day, and she comes out, and she says, "Can you substitute a second-grade class for us tomorrow?"

And I said, "Can I suck?"

And she said, "Sure."

I said, "Okay, I'm in."

So, that was my first thing. I didn't have to do a teaching demo, and eventually, they made me turn in a resume. But they helped me, you know, ~~they said~~ the lady in the office said, "Have you taught Young Women's?"

And I said, "Yes."

And she said, "Write it down."

So, we got this resume put together, and that was it. And so, I didn't have to do all of those things that kept me from doing it, because I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. And substituting is the greatest job in the entire world because you can say no when you want to; you don't have to substitute the same classes. And if you're willing to do everything, they will have you do everything. And the more you're there, the more they ask you, and the more jobs you get. And so, there were some times I was substituting anywhere, I was substituting half a month every month. And then I got some longer-term jobs through that. And then I had the opportunity to teach for an entire year for a fourth-grade class, which came at exactly the right time because... By this time, I think our youngest was in... She was a Junior, I guess; I don't know. And I'm trying to figure out what I wanna do with the next third of my life because that's where I'm at. And you know, we tend to live a long time. And so, I taught fourth grade for an entire...for that whole year. Loved it. It was incredibly challenging, and I knew I didn't want to do that. And so, I thought about it for a long time, started saying it out loud so that I would be held accountable for it, and eventually went back to school to get my Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. And it was being in the schools for 10 years and having those relationships, and seeing sort of the ebb and flow of kids and how things have changed for them and the struggles that they're dealing with and the difficulties that they have. And I said this. So, I'm now finishing up my last internships to be a clinical mental health counselor, and then the world is my oyster since we're... Everyone has gone bonkers. So...

Denver: Yeah.

Stephanie: It's one of the fastest-growing professions out there...unfortunately.

Denver: Yeah, everyone's crazy.

Stephanie: So, I went from teaching fourth graders and sixth graders and fifth graders to working in an adult substance abuse residential clinic. And let me tell you, they're not really the same. They're not really the same.

Denver: Yeah, she's... A lot of the people you're working with now are recent...

Stephanie: Most of them are criminals.

Denver: ...parolees who've left prison and are in a substance abuse in-residence treatment facility, and she goes down and works with recent parolees.

Stephanie: Stealing cars is a big thing. I didn't know that. But apparently, it's a thing.

Denver: If you've got a... If you've got a drug habit...

Dionne: And that's a way to fund the drug habit, isn't that?

Stephanie: Yeah, oh yeah.

Dionne: Great. What a great thing to do; it's a neat thing.

Stephanie: So, that's kinda me.

Denver: Okay. There was one issue that was raised in an email that Jonathan sent that I wanted to address and that was this idea about being located in Europe and apprehension or anxiety over gathering to Zion. I'm not gonna go through and read all of the Scriptures (and I'm gonna use the LDS numbering), but if you look at the LDS numbering of Doctrine and Covenants section 45, 49, and Doctrine and Covenants section 133, there is only a small initial gathering that occurs preliminary to the Second Coming. And then there is a much larger subsequent gathering that occurs **after** the Second Coming. I don't think anyone is going to be left out. I think there will be plenty of opportunity for gathering. There will be two places in which the Lord—when He returns to govern—is going to assert His governance. One of them is in Zion, which will be on one side of the world, and the other is in Jerusalem, which will be on the other side of the world.

At the time that the tribes divided and the Northern kingdom was taken captive into Assyria, at the end of the period of captivity in Assyria, they were released and allowed to return back to the land they came from: the land Palestine, the Holy Land. And the presumption was that that was where they were headed. But when they left, instead of migrating back to where they came from, they crossed the Euphrates, and then they turned; they went north. The ten tribes, if you look at where the North countries would be, occupied the area that many of you are living in right now (the British Isles, Europe, European Russia), that... The ten tribes scattered there. And then later, a migration took place from the European countries into the Americas. The Book of Mormon, of course, accounts for some small group that had remained in Palestine just before the captivity that took them into Babylon. They escaped, but they didn't hail from the remaining two tribes. The Southern kingdom consisted of Judah and Benjamin. But there were a lot of Levites that were located there because of the temple in Jerusalem. But the Levites weren't really well reflected in the population that migrated to the Americas. You have... You have the tribe of Manasseh represented in Lehi and his family, the tribe of Ephraim reflected in Ishmael and his daughters, and then later, you have Mulek who was from Judah, who migrated and joined the group in the West. But the two capitals are essentially on opposite sides of the world.

It's like the old saying, "The sun never set on the British Empire" when Britannia ruled the world because you could go to a colony—India was a colony; Australia was a colony—you could go to any place on Earth and find the representation of the British Empire. And so, when the sun was shining in London and it was dark in Australia, you could say the sun was shining on the British Empire. But you know, at nighttime in London, you've

still got the sun up in Australia, and you've got the sun up in India; the sun was still shining on the British Empire.

Well, that's the same kind of concept that the two capitals of Zion (on the one hand) and Jerusalem (on the other) has for the millennial reign of the Lord, having two capitals on opposite sides of the world. The sun will never set upon the kingdom of the Lord. And therefore, there will never be a point at which the rulership of the Lord is dormant because God has gone to sleep, as Elijah taunted the priests of Baal, "Yell louder because maybe your God's asleep." The sun won't set, the Lord won't sleep, and it will be continuously daylight for the kingdom of the Lord.

Well, much of the gathering is going to take place... You... The burden of prophecy almost exclusively deals with two generations of time. One generation is the moment in which Christ came into the world. And an enormous amount of prophecy is focused upon that event. The second generation is a generation in which the Lord returns. If you look at how all of those fabulous prophecies concerning the Lord's first coming were fulfilled in the coming of Christ, it seems, historically, at the moment that it occurred, as nothing more than a little footnote that's occurring out on the periphery of the Roman Empire. It didn't matter much to Rome that Christ came. It didn't matter much to Rome that He fulfilled the prophecies. Largely, they were oblivious to it. The significance of the coming of Christ to Europe would not occur for 345 years when Constantine decided he needed a unifying state religion, and he chose Christianity to become his unifying state religion (not that he believed it, but he wanted a Roman Empire of faith). And **then** Christianity became relevant and ultimately came to its form at that time to become the dominant religion.

Well, the fulfillment of the prophecies in that second generation is going to very much have a similar look and feel. The world will hardly take any note of it, but it will accomplish exactly what the burden of prophecy says will need to be accomplished. That does not mean that all of God's people will be gathered together into one at one moment in order to vindicate the prophecies. The prophecies talk about some minimalist event that's going to happen that will allow the Lord to return as the lawful possessor and Governor of the Earth.

That requires several technical things to be accomplished on Earth (because mortals are the inheritors of the Earth). That has to be set up, and then it has to be turned over for the Lord to make His return, and that will be accomplished in a relatively small, discreet way. But **after** that, when He returns to rule, everyone is going to be gathered into the governance of the Zion or Jerusalem; no one is gonna be left out. And during the period between the minimalist accomplishment and the time that the nations of the Earth are shaken until there's a folding of all nations, what the Lord is intending to do is to protect all of those—wherever they are—that are His sheep, wherever they're located, those individuals are as the Lord describes it: as if they are kept in the very palm of God. He's gonna look over 'em. There's gonna be a lot of things that happen that seem very random, very disorganized, very chaotic, very fortuitous. It just... It will

seem like there's nothing going on except bedlam. However, despite that, God's hand will watch over and protect all of those that He holds in His hand.

There are stories that... My father was in England, preparatory for Operation Overlord. And he landed on Omaha Beach on ~~December~~ [June] 6, 1944: D-day. And there was chaos; there was slaughter; there was bedlam. There was... It was... It was a slaughterhouse. And they were... Their objective was to take the beach and get up the hill and then overcome the pillboxes on top that were reinforced that were killing all of them. And it didn't matter that the armaments that they had were useless. It didn't matter what they did, they couldn't accomplish anything. My father's job was... He was a combat engineer. His job was to blow up the tank traps that were on the beach, in order to let the tanks arrive and drive up and blow up the pillboxes to protect them. Well, that morning on June 6th was very windy/very rough, and the way that they had designed the flotation device for the tanks was inadequate for the waves. All of the tanks sank; there wasn't a tank that made it onto the beach during the initial assault. And so, here he is armed with explosives to blow things up, and the only things that were protecting them from incoming machine-gun fire were the tank traps. I mean, they were hiding behind these things to keep the bullets from killing them. And ultimately, it became apparent they needed to do something to get off the beach. The explosives were used to blow up some obstacles so that they could get up the hill. All around my father there was death; there was maiming; there was slaughter.

Many, many years later, my father was in a hospital in Boise, Idaho. He announced he was going to die. Everyone thought that that was ridiculous. But he announced he was gonna die three days before his death. We all insisted that he go to the hospital, and he went over, in Mountain Home, to the hospital. They took him by ambulance to Boise. He said, "I will never make it back to Mountain Home; I'm going to die." And we all poo-pooed that idea. He said, "No, no, the doctors do not know your body like you know your body. I will not make it back to Mountain Home." I went over to Boise. I spent the night on Saturday with him. And then on Sunday morning, I drove back to Utah to get the family to bring them up to see him on Monday. During the night, on Saturday night, my father—he couldn't sleep because he was in pain—was talking about all of the people that he knew, all of the friends that he had who died on one day in one few-hour session on the beach in Normandy and how random it seemed to him that on the morning of June the 7th, the entire company that he had come into combat with—the entire company—were casualties, but he could still fight on. They moved him into a new company, organized from the tattered remnants of the other companies, and they moved on, fought their way to Saint-Lô, which was another problem. But his observation was he did not understand why. Why was **his** life spared when so many others—so many others—had their lives end on that day?

There appears to be randomness: a hand grenade lands near a group of soldiers, and the grenade explodes, and everyone is taken out—several are killed, many are horribly wounded—and one person standing among them—one person—is untouched, not even bleeding. I mean, his ears rang because it was a hell of a noise, but he's untouched.

Why did men die, were men injured, and yet one spared? Well, there's an apparent randomness that conceals the fact that God is absolutely capable of holding in His hand and protecting whomever it is that belongs to Him that he has a purpose for.

There is nothing awful about death. Getting out of this world is something that appears to be unpleasant, particularly in some of the ways that people achieve that. But the other side of that is not an unpleasant place to be (assuming you've lived your life right, and you're not racked with guilt). It's not an unpleasant thing. But God intends to re-establish the civilization on the other side of the Second Coming that will finally be a civilization in which men are at peace with one another, and men are at peace with nature. And that accomplishment needs to be achieved with a population of people that He preserves, that He has watched over, and that He intends to use to rebuild His kingdom on Earth. So, don't think—wherever you are—that you're not in plain sight of the Lord and that the Lord isn't keenly aware of you, with an intention to include **you** in what His future plans are—because God's more aware of you individually than maybe you are even of Him/of Them.

Anyway, that was one thing I wanted to cover that was a question that had been posed.

But we had talked about pursuing that issue that in the revelation given about the covenant, there's language about us becoming precious to one another. And we've talked about what it means to be precious to one another. What do you think it means to be precious to one another?

Stephanie: Okay, I'm going to set this up. I was somewhere, and I think... I actually think it may have been Silvie who asked the question about being precious to one another? And what does it mean? And it's language from the Answer and Covenant that she was referring to. (And if it wasn't Silvie, I'm sorry; it was somebody else.) And so, I'm pondering this, and the way stuff comes out for me is I think about it and get all these ideas, and then I come home, and I write these ideas on sticky notes—okay?—so that I have some outline, and then I leave them in my planner, and then, ideally, I'll get them in my journal at some point. But it's kind of just the way I... Yeah, it's... That's what it was. So, I do have a journal, but that doesn't always get into the journal. So...

And then on our hikes, our walks, or whatever, we talk about this... Yeah, we talk about this stuff. And I put forth my ideas and stuff. So, I have... We have this outline in front of us, and it's basically just the Socratic method of asking questions. And so... And we do want them to answer right? It's not... Or do you just want **me** to answer?

Denver: Well, I want them to think about the questions.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Denver: It can be chaotic...

Stephanie: Yeah, that's true.

Denver: ...and frustrating to have a lot... And you get feedback... So, they can think about the questions, but...

Stephanie: So he's gonna ask... He's gonna ask the questions, and then I'm gonna respond the way I sort of process this through my own mind, and then we've sort of come to, you know, where he says these are great ideas or whatever, so...

The idea of becoming precious to each other... You know, you think of families, you think of the way you feel about your kids. He said something about God knows, you know, God knows His children, and He knows them. And I had a conversation with one of my daughters the other day, and... She called **me**, but I had said something. She was struggling with some things, and I had talked to one of her sisters. And I had an over... kind of an overarching view of what she was going through. And so, she calls me, and she's talking, and I impose something on her—an idea on her—and she said, "You talked to so and so, didn't you?" Meaning, you know, I... "Someone told you how I was feeling."

And I said, "Well, yes, I did. But the other thing you need to understand is sometimes I know you better than you know you."

And she said, "Yeah, yeah, you're right, you're right."

And that's how our Heavenly Parents... They know us more/They know us better than we know us. So, this idea of becoming precious to each other... What relationships do we have to have or what kind of symbiosis do we have to have in order to be precious to one another?

Denver: Yeah, do you have to be friends? Do you have to know one another? Do you have to be members of a family? Does it require some familiarity in order for there to be value or preciousness to another person?

Stephanie: So, there's a lot of conversation about becoming one, having (like, you know) all things in common, like-mindedness, and that kind of thing. And I get the impression from some conversations I hear and some things that I read that we are really, really expecting a lot of ourselves, in that we think we have to **love** one another. You know, we have to have some sort of relationship that enables us to say...

Denver: Affection.

Stephanie: Yeah, to have affection. And this doesn't resonate with me particularly well because I find, well, so... Is it/are there requirements? Is it family, is it friendships, is it being...? Do we have to reside in a symbolic or literal Zion before we can become precious to one another? So... And in my life today, who would qualify? Who would I—if I had to list the people who are precious to me—who would I put on that list? Am I fighting with a sister, so she wouldn't be on the list? Am I estranged from my parents, so

they wouldn't be on the list? How do we get to this point where we know who's precious?

Denver: Yeah, can someone be precious to you and still just piss you off, just make you...? Look, some of the people that **know** you the best know how best to trigger you when they want to push your buttons, and very often (given the emotional "give and take" of long-term relationships), sometimes your biggest fights are with your closest friends. Does that mean, at the moment in which you find yourself in conflict, does that mean that the person ceases to have preciousness to you?

Stephanie: Yeah... So, if we're relying on relationship status—okay?— ~~and you~~ and the ideal or the requirement is that you have to have a relationship with people to be precious, does that mean I'm making them **earn** my affection? "If I like you and if you behave in certain ways, you will be precious to me." So, is that... Does that resonate? Does that make sense? Are we required to earn... You know, do I have to behave a certain way all the time or the majority of the time in order to be considered precious to the people I associate with? And then what happens if that's not possible? I mean, what if I just plain don't like somebody? What if I **can't** like somebody?

Denver: Yeah. What if there's an absolute personality conflict between you and them? Does that make it impossible for **them** to be precious to **you** and for **you** to be precious to **them** because you just don't fit together? Everything is alien; everything is foreign.

Stephanie: Yeah. What if we worked on a project together and literally butted heads every step of the way? What if I never listened to them? What if I thought every idea they had was just stupid? What if they thought every idea I had was pointless? I mean, where are we trying to place ourselves so that we can finally say: one heart, one mind, living in—you know—perfect harmony. (And I could break out in song, but I can't think of what it is right at the moment... "I'd like to teach the world to sing to live in perfect harmony.")

Denver: There was a... In order to keep my license to practice law, I have to be trained in continuing legal education. And much of that is wasted time, but there was one speaker who came during one get-together who talked about his work as a consultant with a large group of law firms in New York and Washington, D.C. And he was trying to convey the idea that you need to have diverse viewpoints. And he used an example: They did a preliminary... They used a preliminary test at one large law firm to determine who would get in, and the consultant took a look at the way in which they decided who the next hire would be. On the test, they would only consider taking someone if they got 90% or better of the exam correct. And he looked at all of the test results. And he said, "Your new hire should be from among this small group." And it was only two or three people, this small group, **all** of whom had gotten less than 40% on it, and one of whom had only gotten about 15% on the test. And their reaction was, "Why on earth would we hire anyone that does that poorly on the exam?"

He said, "Because these are the only people... Everyone that got the 90% missed the same material. This small group of people are the only ones who picked up on and got **that** correct. Therefore, your law firm will never... If you're only hiring for this, you will be oblivious to—you will never pick up on—what you are missing." And so, his recommendation was to hire... They were reluctant to do so, but they did it as an experiment. And we found out that the firm really valued this "lone voice" that was contrariwise to almost everything that was going on.

Well, the lone voice that speaks up in contradiction to group-think is sometimes the one voice that you ought to spend a little time listening to, because if it hasn't yet entered into your heart, but it resides in theirs... That doesn't mean that they get to rule the roost. It simply means that: take it into account; let **that** become value; let that **other** viewpoint become precious to you, and realize that they're just... They're giving you something just as valuable as what you've got already.

Stephanie: And you don't have to like them. I think that's where we're sort of imposing on ourselves.

Denver: Yeah. What if it's based on something much broader and more generalized than "affection" or "desire to be" or "longing to be with their company and enjoying them"? What if preciousness includes something much broader than that? And if it does, what exactly is it that makes one person more valuable or precious to you than you may think they are at first blush?

Stephanie: Okay, well for me, I don't have... I think that broader, more general, over...over-arching thing for me is are they precious to God? And the answer to that is a 100% equivocal yes. So, if I can just labor under the assumption that all I have to do is trust God, that He values every human life equally...

I told this story in the only talk that I ever gave. And it was this brief experience at Circus Circus in Las Vegas where I'm watching, frankly, the people who are now my clients.

Denver: Yeah—Circus Circus is one of the...umm...one of the low rent...

Stephanie: ...casinos in Las Vegas. Yeah, and I'm watching these people walk by thinking I would literally hide my children from these people.

Denver: And you're there **with** your children.

Stephanie: I'm there with my children! And it just was as clear as a voice speaking to me right now. "I love them as I... These are **My** children. I love them as much as I love you." So, this might have been the very beginning of this whole experience for me. And thinking...

Denver: You sitting in judgment...

Stephanie: (Literally.)

Denver: ...of the ne'er-do-wells...

Stephanie: Yes, I was...

Denver: ...and again we could see Lord...

Stephanie: That is exactly what I was doing.

Denver: ...saying, "They belong to Me."

Stephanie: Yes, "They belong to Me; these are **My** children. These are..."

Denver: Oops.

Stephanie: Yeah. "The people you are hiding **your** children from (your children—wink, wink, nod, nod—who are also My children) are My children. And so that was... And that was like 15 years ago. Wait, [child's name] is 19; that had to have been maybe 13 years ago. So, this is probably the beginning of my journey in this "who's precious" and "how do we..." And so, I determined (then and over the course of the years that I've been thinking about this) that the only measure I have to use in order to determine whether I'm going to value another person and whether they are going to be **precious** to me and whether I can live in community with them is: Are they God's children? And that literally means everybody.

And so, if they're precious to God and if Christ loves them and **died** for them and **suffered** for them, how can that not be enough for me? Or alternatively, **can** that be enough for me? Is that all I need? And if that's the case, what do I have to say to myself to make that a reality? Because, you know, "as a man think, as a man speaks"—that's who he is.

I mean, I can go around and pick and judge and nitpick and criticize with the best of them. And I do sometimes. And then I have to come back and say, "What do I have to say to myself to reel back in my true feelings about who I value/whose life I value?" And I don't have to like them; I don't have to love them. And I guess the question would be: Do I even have to know them? Is that **required** for me to value them? And then, where in our lives have we come across any... Does knowing someone help or hinder your ability to accept and hold them precious?

Denver: It helps with the pleasant people, and it doesn't... It harms with almost everyone.

Stephanie: I believe that to be true, in my experience.

Denver: People are quirky; everyone's quirky. Everyone's got a screw loose here or there. And we're a product of our education, our environment, our family, our background—and there's some weird stuff that's going on in everyone's head. There were... I mean, normal is normal because you suppress all the abnormalities that are resident inside of every one of us. We're all a bit "off." We're all a bit strange. And yet, we somehow managed to deal with one another comfortably in formal settings because we suppress our desire to, you know, backhand the idiot and... Well, I was gonna say, "...piss on the foot of someone that offends you," but we've got mixed company here, so I probably ought not speak like I would normally. Which is another thing...

Stephanie: Speak like you would "normally"?

Denver: Yeah, which is another thing: You know, you get a whole different impression of what people are like when you're giving a talk (as opposed to what they're like in life). I have a really irreverent sense of humor. I find a lot of things absolutely hilarious. I mean, I laugh at things that are probably inappropriate. And most people have—at least when it comes to their sense of humor—a body sense of irreverence that is just part of being human.

Stephanie: Yeah. I... We're looking... Our actual "pinned" family is Dionne's family. So, you kids, I'm literally staring at you, and I'm sorry, because I'm assessing whether you're enjoying this or not. No, I'm not really. But I want to say, here's the...

So, I remember very vividly in high school (and I don't know your ages, but I'm gonna give you this example), you know, just the cutest... Everybody's after this guy. (I mean, I remember his name; I hope he doesn't live in the UK anywhere. His name's Shane Whetman.) And **everybody** wanted to go out with Shane—just handsome, blond hair, the whole works, you know, just... And I knew him a little bit. I don't recall being in that group of people who were just pining after him, but he just happened to ask me to (I don't know...) some dance, it might... It wasn't a biggie; it was just one of the dances. And so, we went, and he's a very nice person, but he has such profound... I mean, his insecurities were overwhelming, okay? He **ceased** to be that good-looking, k? It just went away. I'm now looking at this person, and I cannot even **see** how people find him attractive. I didn't dislike him; he didn't turn into something offensive or un- (you know) or unpleasant. I just... So, the relationship at arm's length (where I could just enjoy him from afar and pass him in the hall and say, "Hello") was wonderful; it was lovely. We went on four or five or six dates; it was all I could do to go on the fourth and then the fifth and then the sixth—because I got to know him. He ceased to be what I thought he was in my head, okay? Now, if all I ever thought he was in my head was a child of God, just someone God loved, I would have had no expectations. I would not have wanted him to be something he wasn't. I would not have been disappointed when I found out that he was something profoundly different. And it was all I could do not to walk around and say to everybody who was patting me on the back and giving me high fives, "You really don't know what you're talking about. He's really not that great, you know, he's just a dude who..."

Denver: It's like the... It's like the Hollywood actress and make-up, speaking words in a artificial setting, with artificial lighting, portraying an artificial character that is compelling, even beautiful. And then, you hear them on the news spouting off about something, and the illusion is shattered. And now you're dealing with the actual person, and it's just another ass, and they're just another self-centered, loathsome, offensive person with a political agenda. And it... All the varnish goes away. It just, it...

And so, the question on preciousness (to get back on theme) is: What happens when your myth about a person... Because they "believe"; they've been baptized; they've taken the covenant, and they're trying—but they're just a jerk; they can't help themselves. They never grew up in circumstances that civilize them in the way that make them compatible with the way that you grew up. Does that shatter their value? Are they no longer... **Can** they no longer be precious to you?

Stephanie: Yeah, and you know, I mean, a "courting" relationship into a "marriage" into an "early honeymoon stage" relationship into a "three kids" relationship into a "empty nest" relationship into "old age" relationship, I mean, there's nowhere in your life where you don't come across people at times and places where (to use his phrase), "the varnish comes off." K? So, if we are using "varnish" (we use that as a metaphor), if we're using varnish—and the pretty and shiny and the tolerable and the kind words and the smooth-talking—to decide "precious" and "people who we want to bring into our inner circle," what are we losing?

So, my question (he's supposed to ask the question, but somebody is knocking at the door—isn't that weird?): Who is precious to our Heavenly Parents, to Christ? Well, I... We all know that. The answer is literally *everybody*. There isn't a single human being ~~who will~~ who has ever lived or will ever live on the face of this Earth (and many other Earths or planets or solar systems), who is not precious to God. And I don't think we earn it—because if we have to earn it, we're doing a pretty poor job of it, and none of us will earn (you know) whatever that could possibly be.

So, if we had to earn it, what would that look like, and could we do it? Because I think the answer is no. And they don't require us to **earn** it. We do have to follow a few fairly... In some instances, they might be fairly difficult; in other instances, they're pretty easy; and in some instances, we turn them into things much more difficult than they need to be. But we had to... We do have to, you know, keep the commandments, love one another, you know, treat each other as though we are all God's children.

So, my next question (that is impossible to answer) is: In what manner or what experiences have our Heavenly Parents had that enable them to claim us as precious? This idea of omniscience and omnipresence and Their ability to know us all intimately is just huge. I mean, honestly, can you even wrap your head around that? How is that even possible? What would that even look like? I can't even, I mean, I can't even... I don't know if there's Scriptures about that, but I can't even get my head around the idea of Them in Their omniscience being able to know us intimately enough that we are all precious to them.

[Directed to Denver] Are you gonna read it in Scripture?

Denver: Yeah. It's really the best description—is the one given by King Benjamin, talking about how God is sustaining us from moment to moment by lending us breath and supporting us from moment to moment so that we can live and move and breathe and have our being. We are literally employing the power of God in every breath that we take, so God's familiarity with you is based upon the fact that He is the organizing power or force within you. You get to make your choices, but He understands the choice you're making and why you're making it. He is in and through all of us. But the irony is that when Christ performed the atonement, Christ was mortal.

There's an incident that happens in the book of Moses (which is now in Genesis in the new Scriptures), where Moses is inquiring of God, and he wants to know about everything. He wants to know about the entirety of all Creation. And God tells him "I can't do that. If I were to tell you all of that, it would require that I change how you are composed, in order for you to take it in, and it is impossible for me to give that to you and for you to afterwards remain in the flesh on the Earth"—meaning that while we're still composed of this stuff—this mortal clay—we have decided limits on us.

Jesus Christ was incarnated into this mortal stuff. He **could not** (while He was mortal) take in everything that God (in a resurrected and exalted state) **can** take in. He had to get through mortality as a bonafide mortal. Therefore, when Christ suffered the pains of the atonement, He suffered the pains in a generalized sense. Every dilemma that any man or woman will ever face/every challenge/every temptation/every disappointment/every bitterness/everything that constitutes a dilemma for the mortal He passed through. But He did that as an exemplar of what all of us goes through. He didn't do it because he comprehended you and comprehended me and comprehended 100 billion different people's mortal experiences; He comprehended the dilemmas that are **shared**.

I mean, you think about the people down at the counseling you do [addressing Stephanie] that have this addiction problem that they're seeking rehabilitation from; it doesn't matter what their drug of choice is, they have a syndrome in which the weakness and the appetite has gotten on top of them. And so, if you can understand in an aggregate, the nature of the weakness, you can understand and identify with each one of the victims of that particular appetite, and you can form generalizations. Christ took in all of the weaknesses, all the frailties, all of the failures in an exemplar/in an illustration/in a syndrome after syndrome, problem after problem; He experienced it all. He knows how to teach and heal and guide and lead every individual. But our Heavenly Parents—God the Father, whose power was loaned to Christ in order to make this Creation and who animated Christ, sustaining Him from moment to moment during mortality and who has surrendered the throne of the Father to Christ once He was exalted and resurrected and attained to resurrection—God the Father and God the Mother (the Heavenly Parents), they **do** know everything about all of us. And despite that, they find every one of us precious, valuable, potentially infinite, potentially like Them.

Stephanie: Yeah, and he jumped ahead a little bit, but that was gonna take me to the idea that the...of the atonement and Christ just saying to the Father and the Mother, "I will do it. And I will do it for everybody—not because I'm going to know everybody but because You do, and I believe You." And so, He takes that on, exactly like He said.

I was having a real... Oh, I don't know if it was a "problem," but I had some things, just, that I was micro-managing and sort of spiraling about in terms of just things I couldn't get my hands around in terms of behaviors and, you know, why do people do this and why do people do that? And it was sort of... It came back to the atonement and what Christ...and what the atonement really was and is, because I, you know, I... Very few people are egregious sinners, okay? But we're all weighed down by pride or insecurity, or we may have... We may be having difficulty with a child, or we may have lost a child, and so, we have these moments in our lives where we just can't seem to get a handle on what's going on, and it's not a sin. And while I know that we're not taught the atonement is just for sin and repentance and stuff—it's just for sin; I know that's not overtly taught, but it's always where my mind settles, and I have to break out of that and say, "Oh, the atonement isn't for my **sin** (which isn't non-existent), but my atonement is for this spiral that I'm in right now." I can actually say, "I can't do this anymore, Lord. I need you to take it. I need the atonement to work in my life for this issue."

And so, I've been doing a lot of praying and a lot of pondering, and I actually was listening to a bunch of random Evangelical and Baptist and Christian podcasts about the atonement and the way they viewed it, and then when it all came roundabout, I went back to the LDS—the remnant—the LDS Scriptures or whatever we call them now. And then I actually went to *Come, Let Us Adore Him* and ~~did the Geths...~~ and read in the Gethsemane chapter. And I think, again, part of this is all me just formulating this idea that Christ died ~~for the~~ for our infirmities and for our weaknesses, **not for us** as individuals, although ~~it is represen...~~ it's manifested **in** us, and we are obligated to value that by really tapping into it for our struggles, whatever they may be. They don't have to be big. They don't have to be huge. They just... We just need to tap into it.

And one of the other things that we've talked about is: To me, in order for the atonement to have any efficacy at all, Christ had to have had a choice. And Christ has to be able to look across the landscape and say, "There are people who will live lives who will be in constant need ~~of my saer...~~ of this sacrifice; their lives will be so full of trauma and heartache and disappointment and missteps..." And I don't like to use the word "sin," although I believe there is sin—I just don't like the word. "...And they will need constant access to this." And He had to know that there would be crappy people. That what He's doing is going to be efficacious even for the worst of humanity. And I know we use it a lot—I mean, it's a... It's kind of a cliché at this point—but, you know, Christ's atonement is as effective for Adolf Hitler as it is for Mother Teresa, as long as they're both willing to accept and use it for its intended purpose. And, again, not to be cliché about that, but that's the reality of life. And if that's how our Heavenly Parents and Christ view mankind—including the Adolf Hitlers of the world—then, I think it's incumbent upon us to say, "Would I give up my life for the Adolf Hitlers of the world? Or would I only/or can I only

view the Mother Teresas as precious?" Well, if I know Adolf Hitler, well, that's gonna be hard. You know, if I know Mother Teresa, that's gonna be easy.

So, somewhere in my thinking and somewhere in my acceptance of the love of Christ, which is the highest love we can have, I have to be able to say to myself, "If it is required of me, I will give my life for the best of humanity and the worst of humanity equally." And that's how I reconcile precious. I don't view it as needing to know you or love you or like you. There are too many people in the world for me to get to know, love, and like. I can barely maintain healthy relationships with the people I associate with on a regular basis. It's super hard sometimes. And I think to impose on a group of people who are trying to become one, who are trying to measure up to a Zion standard, who are trying to work together on projects, who will be coming together in either location (physical location or geographic location) or locations in our hearts where we're trying to become of one heart and one mind, I think to say we have to like each other/know each other/love each other is setting ourselves up for requiring people to earn it.

One last thought for me is that, you know, we have a lot of hurts, a lot of offenses imposed on us/given by us to friends and family, maybe ex-Ward members, I... You know, I don't know. The list is long. I mean, I hear horror stories of families who, you know, turn each other in because they're taking the sacrament at home or (I mean, I...) whatever—just horror stories—or estranged, you know, estranged members because of differing views on religious beliefs or how to raise children and... You know, there's no better place to start than in your own home. There's a phrase in substance abuse. They use it a lot. It's like, "I can only sweep my side of the street." And, you know, I write these phrases down because they're so good that they just repeat them over and over again. You know, your side of the street, if it's clean, good on you! You know, way to go! You've done some great work. But I'm gonna go out on a limb and say, I doubt it. I doubt your side of the street is clean. And so, it's really nice to be forward-thinking and, you know, how do I get along with a bunch of people who want to gather in Zion and who, you know, I may have differences with because they wrote a blog post or contributed to an email, and I found it offensive, or you know, they're whatever. But you still have your side of the street, which probably includes family members, close friends, you know, extended family members, aunts, uncles; I don't know. Make **them** precious to you; start **there**. Because those are the people that you can really do the hard work for, and...

Denver: Practice.

Stephanie: ...and practice because, you know, you might be gathering at some point with people who are very diverse from you. And you might be associating in close quarters with people who, you know, ~~de~~ you don't share the same view on... I mean, **big** things you share the same view on, but you got to in a different way, or you... I mean, we get to the same ideas; we get to the same concepts but through very different means—very, very, very different means. We don't take the same path to get places. And so, I think the idea of precious—if you're talking about personal relationships—start on your side of the street. And then, as you go out further, just realize that the only value

anybody in the entire world has to have is that they are loved by the same God who loves you. And that's all you need.

Denver: Okay, so we've covered that.

I wanted to comment because, very often, one of the issues... We have a friend who lives in Japan, and he watches the news, and he wants to know why the United States is completely insane right now. Yeah. I wanted to comment on what's really going on in the United States right now. Because the news media gives you a really distorted view of where people's heads are at.

This may seem like completely improbable; it is nevertheless true. The same... The very same reason that Barack Obama was elected the President of the United States is exactly the same reason why Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. Barack Obama appeared to be utterly different, outside, inexperienced, not part of the Washington establishment, and therefore, he would be something really different, and he would shake things up. Donald Trump fits exactly the same mold. He's someone that doesn't appear to be part of the Cabal in Washington, D.C., and therefore, he got elected to be president for the very same motivation.

Right now inside the United States, there is largely a lot of frustration and distrust and disappointment with what they see Washington, D.C. as being. The next president of the United States is likely to be Donald Trump again because he's still (in comparison to Joe Biden) the outsider, and whoever is going to win after that—and it doesn't matter if they are a Democrat or if they are a Republican—whoever's gonna win after that is going to be elected primarily because the public, in general, can't stand what they see in their government. The government is disconnected, filled with self-interest, filled with stupidity: They can't even pass a relief bill in the middle of a crisis without lighting it up with a bunch of things that no one wants. But in order to get the relief that needs to come because of the mess that has been created by the government shut down, the bill gets passed, the bill gets signed, and there's a whole lot of pork and Christmas tree gifts for pet projects included, and the public in the United States doesn't like that. Even the folks (that have **some**—not a lot; it's very small—but they have some support) that are carrying on in the Seattle area actually represent part of that same sentiment that "we don't like our political leaders."

In the United States right now, political leaders (by and large) are disliked/distrusted because the way in which governance has gone on has been horribly disappointing. Now, the news media has an agenda; they largely want to have the vested interests (that have been doling out the trillions of dollars that come to Washington) to continue to be in power, because that's their network. They feel comfortable/they feel at home with that. And so, the news media hates Donald Trump, but the public (by and large) doesn't. You know, he's an embarrassing, kind of brash... Yeah, he's obnoxious. But I guess he's precious, huh?

Stephanie: Yes, of course.

Denver: So, must be. In any event, I wanted to finish with that, and I also wanted... When we started— because Jonathan had given us a heads up about what the time zone is over there that we're talking to (we're in the evening with you; we're in the morning here)—I wanted to keep this to an hour and a half. And so, we're down to the last few minutes of this. But I have to say, I've written down the names of the people that we got introduced to.

Things may look very different from the distance that you observe it from. But the fact is that even the people that are the closest and the most involved have misapprehensions and misunderstandings and traditions that they bring with them.

When the Protestant Reformation took off in Europe, that first generation of Protestant leaders modeled the behavior of Catholicism; they just changed who it was that got to do the killing. But it never occurred to them that the example of coerced religious conformity was completely upside down. It took generations after the Protestant Reformation before either Protestantism or Catholicism settled down into something that was a little more like the Sermon on the Mount. And the refugees that left Europe to come to settle in the colonies in America were largely motivated by religious the desire to be religiously free and to not be meddled with in what their beliefs were.

But in the American colonies, each one of the colonies, originally, had a state religion. They taxed the Colonialists, and with the taxes that they gathered, they paid the ministers from various churches to be the state-sponsored religion. It was a second revolutionary act for the Bill of Rights to be passed and for Congress to no longer have the power to legislate respecting the establishment of a religion. States still could. It would not be until the Civil War and the passage of the 14th Amendment (in the post-Civil War) that the First Amendment would then become applied to the states, and no state in the United States could have a state religion anymore. So, it was really... Freedom of religion (in an authentic sense, that all religions were on an equal footing) was a post-Civil War occurrence, which is why you could organize the state militia of Missouri and the state militia of Illinois, and you could send them out to evict from the entire state a population of religious believers and send them into exile—because the 14th Amendment hadn't been passed yet.

Well, authentic freedom of religion opens up a responsibility and an opportunity for all of us to look at and to deal with the responsibility and the freedom that we now have. We all come from different religious traditions into a setting that we find ourselves now. And this setting does not have an organized hierarchy. It doesn't have a body of authorized... Everyone is equal. No one gets to be supported by the tithing of anyone else. No one gets paid to participate in this. Tithing, if it's collected, gets collected and used to help the people in need; it doesn't go to support an organization. It goes to help those among you who find themselves in a position that they need some financial assistance.

Stephanie: I need to interject. Can I interject something?

Denver: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Stephanie: On that... Briefly, the idea of deference: We... People become leaders when the people around them give them deference or permission to do that, so... 'Cuz we hear enough around here that people think there are certain people "in the know" or "more this" or "less that" or... And so, I just would like to put the idea out there: We can "think" people into their positions just by the way we act or the way we talk or the way we think. And so, you know, I'm of the view that much of our hierarchical LDS leadership and the admiration and the infallibility that they labor under or with or through has been imposed upon them in large measure by the membership. And so, as you transition out of that into a new experience with new people and new, you know... And some are gonna be way more vocal than others and some are gonna be in the United States congregated regularly/doing regular things and other people in other parts of the world are gonna feel left out and think that there's this group of people somewhere in Utah or Idaho or Colorado (or, you know, wherever they are) being in charge or being more important or being "more than." And I strongly encourage you to self-talk that out of the dialogue. Because if we talk it **into** the dialogue and talk it **into** the experience, then it just creeps in. And it's not real.

And so, I guess I'm making some assumptions that you might think things, which is what he was talking about: impressions and misunderstandings. And so, don't buy into the notion that there is a—I don't know what even to call it—an "in-group" or a...an important group. I mean, there might be cohorts all over of vocal people who do a lot of stuff who are very active, and that doesn't make them anything other than just people who are feeling like they've got stuff to do. It's not proscribed or...

Anyway, I just felt impressed to make sure that you know that a lot of what happens, in terms of hierarchical creep, comes from the way we talk about it and the way we view it and our own...

Denver: Yeah, we have the unique opportunity of actually viewing one another as equals.

Stephanie: Yes.

Denver: We have the unique opportunity of saying: No one's greater, and no one's lesser. And we really need to seize hold of that and to say: That—**that**—is desirable; that's wonderful. I've talked about how—when the Restoration began—there was literally no hierarchy. As it moved along, it began to aggregate hierarchical offices and a pyramid with a Presidency and Twelve and Seventy and then stakes that had kind of a similar organization. And it didn't work. It—literally—it did not work.

By the time you got to 1838 in Missouri, Joseph Smith had a presidency of the Church, and he had a presidency in Zion, and the presidency in Zion was headed up by David Whitmer. (David Whitmer was going to be the replacement president if Joseph were

slain.) In 1838, everything fell apart. David Whitmer, the successor, was excommunicated (as was his counselors in his presidency, including Oliver Cowdery). The Church Historian was excommunicated. Several of the Apostles not only left, but they signed affidavits that helped get Joseph Smith arrested. And so, he's sitting in Liberty Jail, and he's writing the letter from Liberty Jail, and it occurs to him that this hierarchy, this... It doesn't work. And he writes in that letter, "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by patience, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, pure knowledge."

We have an opportunity to say, "Okay, let's run with that; let's take all of this bigger and lesser hierarchical... Let's take all of that; let's say that we're all exactly on the same footing." Now, every one of us have an opportunity—with gentleness and meekness, kindness, with pure knowledge, and with persuasion—to persuade one another to something that is good. Let's use that as the criteria; let's not use status. Steph was right; there isn't any status. But let's make sure that we don't inadvertently allow there to become some.

If it is not gentleness, meekness, persuasion, kindness, pure knowledge... If it doesn't enlighten and enliven, then give it no heed. Require that of every man. Don't excuse anyone, not myself, not Steph, not any of those people that blog or write or want an audience.

Stephanie: Or **have** an audience. Yeah.

Denver: Yeah, it should not make any difference at all.

We're a little over an hour and a half, so we're gonna let you get on with your evening, and we're gonna get on with our day. We go back to Jonathan, I guess.

Thank you all. By the way, it was good to meet you, and I hope we can do more of this. Actually, I would like to come there sometime.

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I don't have any computers to run amok with. My wife pointed out that I know how to do that but commended me for having the self-discipline not to do so.

Joseph Smith was a better historian than historians—was a better and more capable describer of the truth of events that took place than people that devote their lives to the skill of becoming a historian.

In the Book of Mormon record, Nephi wanted to understand more clearly the vision that his father Lehi had received. So, Nephi prayed to have a similar experience so that he could comprehend what his father had seen. Nephi records in his record an account of what Lehi told him, and then he records in his record his own experience saying the same thing that was shown to his father. He stops his account because he was told he was forbidden from proceeding with a complete account of the things that he had seen. And so, he interrupts his account, and he doesn't complete it.

Nephi was a literate man—he could read not only the Hebrew language and command that, but he also was familiar with another language in which the Plates of Brass were recorded (which you get all the way down to the time of King Benjamin and Mosiah before you find out that the Plates of Brass were in fact written in an Egyptian language). Then the Nephites used a modification of the Egyptian language that they called Reformed Egyptian, which is now a third language that Nephi would have been familiar with. And so, I have to assume, as a literate man, that at the time the incidents happened in which Nephi had the heavens open to him that he would've created some kind of a record contemporaneous with that event.

Then they migrate across the peninsula of Arabia to the shore, a journey of some four years. Then they settle down, build a boat, and they migrate to the Americas (likely a route that stayed close to the shore) and went around the Horn of Africa, where there was this horrible storm that lasted until the brothers relented and finally un-tied Nephi from the mast. And then they sailed up and around—and ultimately passed British Isles and Greenland, Iceland—into the Americas, where they would have settled.

Things remained (as an intact family) until the death of Lehi, at which point the older brothers resented the younger brother's status among them, and it became intolerable (in fact, life-threatening) for the group to remain together, and so, they separated. And after the separation, Nephi prepared what are called the Large Plates of Nephi, on which he recorded the history.

Many, many years later Nephi got a commandment: make some small plates, and on the small plates, you don't record the history. You only record the things that are sacred to you. And so, the Small Plates of Nephi were prepared by Nephi to record the religious

history some three or four **decades following** the time when the vision had occurred before their migration across the Arabian peninsula. During that ensuing three or four decades, Nephi records what he had accomplished in the interim that allowed him to write the sacred history.

*And upon these I write the things of my soul and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children. Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord, and my heart **pondereth continually** upon the things which **I have seen and heard**. (2 Nephi 3:6 RE, emphasis added)*

Four decades of reflection went into the account that Nephi put onto the Small Plates of Nephi. This account was so good that when Mormon abridged the Book of Mormon and Joseph translated the beginning of the Book of Mormon consisting of the abridgment that had been made by Mormon, those were deliberately lost. It took a whole series of events (and the Lord foresaw those events would take place), but that was lost, and in its place, the Small Plates of Nephi were substituted.

Now, the Small Plates of Nephi were put at the **end** of the plates. The abridgment of Mormon was how the translation process began. All of the abridgment of Mormon was completed (and the beginning had been lost) before the translation of the Small Plates began, which would then become the beginning of the Book of Mormon. These testimonial words of Nephi were so important that they not only were something that Mormon was not permitted to abridge and include, but they were also withheld in the translation process until Joseph Smith had reached the greatest part of his competency in serving as a person with the gift and power of God to translate the record. And so, the beginning of the Book of Mormon, now, is 40 years of reflection by Nephi upon the things which he had seen and heard—and the account is the greatest, most powerful, most accurate translation rendered by Joseph Smith after obtaining competency in the rest of the record.

So, if we had Nephi's record that he put down contemporaneous with the events, before the trans-Arabian migration, would it have read like what we have in the Small Plates of Nephi in First and Second Nephi? If we had, instead, the Large Plates of Nephi's account (that perhaps was written 20 years after the incident and 20 years before the Small Plates), would **that** account of what it was that Nephi experienced read the same as what we get on the Plates of Nephi?

So, what we do have is the final product of decades of reflection to put into words the things that he saw and he heard. And in the process of putting together his testimony, he tells you, "This is what happened to me, and this is what I'm permitted to say about what it is that happened to me. However, the Lord told me a whole lot more which I was forbidden from saying, but he mentioned that it had been shown to others. And so, here's my testimony that I **can** tell you. Now let me incorporate the words of another prophet. And I will apply them, and I will liken them, and I will tell you the rest of what

the Lord showed me by resorting to the words of Isaiah. And if you can't get what I'm telling you, then in the final chapters of the Second Book of Nephi, I'm gonna give you the interpretive key so that you can get that I'm not talking about **Isaiah**, and I'm not employing the testimony of Isaiah as Isaiah's words. I'm adopting and I'm incorporating the words of Isaiah as **my** testimony of what I saw and what I heard that I was forbidden from writing so that you can understand what it was that was shown unto me."

Well, I'm talking about the **First** Vision. Joseph Smith experienced something in the Spring of 1820 that Joseph Smith likely did not write down that Spring. And when he did make a first attempt to record it, what he recorded was incomplete and inadequate. Joseph Smith relied on scribes; he relied on others. He had an actual historian that was called to record the events of the Church. And in 1838 in Far West, the entire presidency in Zion...

(That's what it was called. There was a Church President; that was Joseph—and they were in Kirtland; and there was a presidency in Zion—that was in Missouri; David Whitmer was the head of that; Oliver Cowdery was one of the counselors in that First Presidency. In fact, that had been who would be the successor to Joseph Smith—identified as his successor in the event of Joseph's death.)

Except that in 1838, David Whitmer left the Church, and Oliver Cowdery left the Church, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve left the Church. In fact, the entire presidency in Zion was compromised. And the Church Historian left the Church and took with him all of the Church's records.

And Joseph wrote a letter to John Whitmer asking for the records back, but the letter doesn't appear to make a legitimate effort at trying to recover it. He more or less says (sort of like General Moroni writing back to the king when he wasn't getting support for the army), Joseph writes to him: "You are a lousy historian; there's nothing you've got that's of any value. It's just a pile of crap, but I want it back. Will you give it to me?" And with such persuasive prose, of course, John Whitmer didn't do anything.

So, Joseph Smith is left with the dilemma of what to do about the history of the Church in 1838—when the Church is in complete turmoil, when he's lost his successors, when members of the Quorum of the Twelve are signing affidavits to try and put him in prison, when everything is a mess—and he sets about in this period of conflict to write the history of the Church, starting over again.

At this point, Joseph Smith has had 18 years to reflect upon the things which he had seen and heard. At this point, Joseph faces the daunting task of trying to restate (again) the reasons for and the legitimacy of the Restoration that commenced in the Spring of 1820. At this point, Joseph Smith has finished the translation of the Book of Mormon. He's had numerous revelations and visions. Most of the work (all but a tiny fraction of what we find in the Doctrine and Covenants) had already been received and recorded by revelation. Joseph Smith was now an accomplished Prophet who had slightly less than two decades to reflect back upon what it was that occurred in the Spring of 1820.

He has the ability to put it into context that his expanded mind could put into writing in a way that he previously could not have attained unto. And fortunately, the circumstances were such that he was forced to do just that.

So, when you read the Joseph Smith History, what you're reading is the mind of a 33-year-old Prophet that has been tempered by persecution, tempered by betrayal, tempered by years of service in a public setting in which the opponents have railed against him, the critics have shouted him down, and his own closest members have forsaken him and turned their heel against him. And in **that** circumstance, with the sober reflection of nearly two decades, he sits down to write:

*Owing to the many reports...[that] have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a church and its progress in the world, [I've] been induced to write **this** history, so as to disabuse the public mind and put all inquirers after truth into possession of the facts as they have transpired, in relation both to myself and the Church, as far as I have such facts in possession.*
(Joseph Smith History 1:1 RE)

Well, one of the facts that Joseph Smith did not have in possession was the **date** of the First Vision, as we heard in that video. So, he says, "It was a beautiful morning. It was Springtime. It was 1820, but I can't give you the date." If he could have, he would have. He knew the date on which the visit by ~~the angel Moroni~~ the angel Nephi (later renamed Moroni—he has an alias, "previously known as Nephi"; you wonder if there's a mugshot that he's trying to avoid having identified on the Internet by the assumption of a new name)—he knows that date, and he can fix that date. Probably in the wisdom of the Lord, Joseph didn't know the date of the First Vision so that John Lefgren and John Pratt could perform the research and do the work in order to find the date on which the First Vision took place. Things like "losing the 116 pages" are done in the wisdom of the Lord, and things like "not knowing the date on which the First Vision took place" are likewise done in the wisdom of the Lord.

But Joseph Smith records the First Vision account, and one of the chief arguments by the people who want to detract and criticize Joseph is that it's different from other accounts. Well, if I had Nephi's original notes, and if I had the Large Plates of Nephi... In fact, if I had the Large Plates and Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates, I'll bet I could advance exactly the same argument against the First and Second Books of Nephi. Because what you get in the final version that we have in print is 40 years of reflection/40 years of mastering the process/of understanding the things which he had seen and heard—and therefore, it was the most worthy account. And that's what we have in the Book of Mormon. And Joseph's most worthy account is what we have when he was put to the extremity of having to re-create the history of the Church after John Whitmer had stolen it and run away.

Now, there's a command given in the Sermon on the Mount—Christ speaking to everyone that wants to follow Him and obey His new and higher law. He rebukes all of

us and warns all of us and commands all of us: Don't call your brother a fool. (So, there's a commandment —I can't call you foolish folks a fool.) Christ was resurrected and spent the better part of the day of His resurrection walking on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and another (likely Luke) on the road, in which He asked them why they were so downcast. And they said, "What, are you new around here? You haven't heard? There was this fellow—we thought Him to be the Messiah. He was crucified, and now it's been three days since then." And Jesus says, "You fools and slow of heart. Don't you realize that everything in the Law in Moses, everything required that these things be done?" So Christ, immediately after being resurrected, violates the commandment about "don't call people fools." And as a lawyer, one of the things you try to figure out is: How do you reconcile differences in the law? And the reconciliation is this: **We** can't call each other fools, but the judge of all mankind has the absolute right to call anyone a fool who's a damn fool. So, having said that—

One of the things about Joseph Smith that the Lord said (while he was in Liberty Jail, by revelation) was to Joseph: "Fools shall have you in derision. But the wise and the noble are gonna constantly seek blessings from under your hand and counsel." So, one of the things that fools have done with the First Vision is to say Joseph wrote different versions of the First Vision; therefore, it wasn't true. Well, here's one of the things that he says (after what Adrian put up a moment ago, I'll start at the end of that):

They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. (Joseph Smith History 2:5)

Okay, all of that language... All of that language that is put into the mouth of Christ in the First Vision comes from Isaiah/comes from Paul/comes from Scripture. Okay? So he's just... Joseph is trying to convey what happened at the First Vision, and he's putting into the mouth of the Lord in this first encounter all of these scriptural quotes strung together as one statement (and James, too).

*He again forbade me to join with any of them, and **many other things** did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time.* (Ibid, emphasis added)

What you've got from Joseph Smith is a condensed effort, using the words of other prophets to put into the mouth of the Lord—conceptually—exactly what the Lord was attempting to achieve in the First Vision with Joseph, after nearly two decades of reflection on how it might best be put.

There are at least two different ways in which we get the words of Scripture. One way is when the Lord actually **dictates** the words. If the Lord actually dictates the words, then what you're going to get is a statement that the prophet himself may not understand. It may require him years of work in order to figure out what those words mean. A second way in which a revelation can come is a flood of light in which the person is left like Father Lehi: *he saw and heard much* (1 Nephi 1:3 RE). And that's all Lehi's gonna tell you about it. Or Moses on the mount: he saw all of the inhabitants of the Earth from the

beginning unto the end, and not one thing is withheld from his view (see Genesis 1:6 RE).

Okay. Can you organize that into a theme? Can you get... Can you give me some... Can you give me some detail about that? Or you can do as Joseph Smith does in the reflection that he does on the First Vision, and you can say: Many other things did I see which I cannot at this time put out there.

Nephi had 40 years of reflection before he put together his First and Second Book of Nephi. During that time of grappling, who knows how many efforts he made, how many times he tried to articulate it, and how differently he may have put it on different occasions. But what we get in the First Vision by Joseph is an attempt to convey, to the best of his ability, the truth of what came through to him, that in 1838, when he was writing, would be the most meaningful for people who are following the events of the Restoration and trying to understand that the work was afoot and that God was laboring with mankind once again. And so, it's relevant to the circumstances in which Joseph Smith found himself in 1838.

One of the things fools have done is point out he wrote different versions, and a second thing that fools have done is to argue he got the chronology wrong. Well, no, he didn't. He was absolutely right about the Spring of 1820, and through research, we've been able to confirm and find it. Fools also say, "Wait a minute—the burned-over district revivalism was not contemporaneous with the Spring of 1820." Okay... (Now, I'm inclined to resort to my Idaho vocabulary and call it something other than bovine feces.) But here's the problem with that argument. Joseph Smith is writing the account as a 33-year-old man of the recollection that he had of the events taking place as a 14-year-old—in his 14th year—in 1820.

This is a fairly isolated area in Palmyra, New York. Great upheavals that are caused by revivalism in the burned-over district would not settle down simply because tent preachers may or may not have been setting up shop in Palmyra, New York in the Spring of 1820. But the ripples of what they had done would certainly still be reverberating, and in the mind of a 14-year-old observer of the events, Joseph is giving you an absolutely accurate retelling, insofar as he was in possession of the facts of exactly what it was that he experienced as a 14-year-old boy. And so, if you're foolish enough to advance that argument against a prophet of God in order to say, "I reject the testimony of this man," then you deserve the Lord's characterization of yourself as a fool holding in derision a prophet of God. And you deserve to merit the results of that foolishness.

Well, the First Vision that occurred in the Spring of 1820 set in motion things that continue—to this day—to warrant the most serious of inquiry and the most serious of reflection. Time and time again... And I brought a few Scriptures with me, but I'm not going to let this go over; I'm gonna end this on time. Time and time again, the Scriptures take us up to the point that we have an adequate foundation from which to conclude that something profound, something sacred, and something wonderful took place. And

then a veil is drawn over it. It's as if the testimony that we're given in Scripture is deliberately designed to provoke your curiosity, to provoke your inquiry, to provoke your own search into and contemplation of the things of God—deeply, soberly, prayerfully.

I wanna read just one of them that I hope provokes your interest in inquiring further of the Lord.

Jesus groaned within himself, and saith, Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel. And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth, and behold, he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written; and the multitude did bear record, who heard him. And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath [not] seen, neither hath the ear heard before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father. And no tongue cannot speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak. And no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father. (3 Nephi 8:4 RE)

That sounds pretty interesting. That should arouse your curiosity. That should make you want to hear such a prayer and to witness such a thing—because mortals who wrote this record "saw and heard." It's not that it is forbidden from anyone to see or to hear. It's that some things that are seen and heard are forbidden from being put on public display to be profaned by people who will do far more injury to themselves by acting the part of the fool in relation to them than they already do to themselves by mocking and holding in derision things that are most sacred that **are** on public view.

So, the vision of the Three Degrees of Glory ends with these words:

*But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he shewed unto us, which surpasseth all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the holy ghost, which God bestows on those who love him and purifieth themselves before him, to whom he grants the privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves, that through the power and manifestation of the spirit, **while in the flesh**, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (T&C 69:29, emphasis added)*

—not something to happen in the great and glorious afterlife but to be done while in the flesh. And it's purposeful. It has a relationship between the exposure of the individual to the information about these things in the flesh, so as to preserve and to prepare them for what will take place in the world of Glory, that they might be able to occupy a position there and do something meaningful to help advance the work of the Lord.

We've spent too long, as believers in the Restoration, quibbling over who's got the button. That "button, button, who's got the button" game that was put up on the board awhile ago. "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn," although what? That's now censored. So, "Dude, where's my car?" Oops, someone gets that...

Okay, so—it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter who's got the button, because I can tell you none of them do. If they had it, they really wouldn't talk about it. They wouldn't put it on display. They wouldn't boast themselves. They wouldn't go about chest-thumping. They wouldn't buy a toupe to put on their elderly chest in order to expose chest hair and the gold necklace to say with (turn the reverberation on...), "I am the man." Because if they really were the man, their interest would not be in being celebrated; their interest would be in helping to elevate others.

Joseph Smith grew to hate what he had created in the organized Church. You see, it was the positions of authority within the Church that created the crisis that resulted in the war in Missouri and the apostasy of the leadership in Far West that created the mess that got Joseph Smith arrested for treason. It was the position of authority within the hierarchy that gave legitimacy to the affidavits that were saying that Joseph Smith was, in fact, a treasonous traitor. And so, sitting in Liberty Jail and contemplating everything that had gone on, Joseph Smith took the hierarchical model that had turned on him—the model that had created the presumption that if you were in a position of authority, then you obviously had credibility and throw-weight and power and influence—and he threw it all away with *no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood*; only by meekness, gentleness, persuasion, long-suffering, and pure knowledge, that will greatly enlarge the soul (see T&C 139:6). He changed the paradigm in the dungeon in Liberty Jail, and there he said, "Your position doesn't matter."

And a true messenger sent from God, interested in the salvation of others, is never going to stand up and say, "I need to be supported by your tithes and offering. I need to be the boss, and I need to jerk you around and tell you which way's up, and you shouldn't question. You shouldn't have any thoughts of your own. Those thoughts are mischievous, and if you get too far with that, we're gonna excommunicate your ass," but...

That whole approach was thrown out in Liberty Jail, and then when he talks to the Relief Society sisters in 1842, he says, "Your minds in times past have been darkened because you're depending too much upon the prophet. You're neglecting the duties that are devolving upon yourselves." He's rescinding authority. He's saying, "Let's take everyone—myself, Joseph, included—and let's say everyone is on exactly the same level. There's no greater; there's no lesser." The question is who preaches truth? What is it that comes out of the teachings of a man that appeals to your heart, that appeals to your soul?

Jesus didn't come on the road of Emmaus to put on any kind of display, and He didn't glow in the dark. In fact, their eyes were holden that they could not recognize who it was

that walked alongside them. It wasn't until he departed from them that they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he spoke with us yet in the way?" That! That is the sign. That is the evidence. That is how you know the words contained within them, the power of God unto redemption. And when I read the First Vision, I read a record that to me resonates with the truth, even without the research having been done to confirm that it occurred in May 26th of 1820.

[Audience Member]: March.

March, yeah. Yeah, it was before April. It was in March. Even without that research having been done, I knew that only fools would criticize and hold Joseph in derision. I have never been disappointed in the search into the life of Joseph and the teachings of Joseph.

Nephi saw and heard unspeakable things and found a way to make that information available public by using the words of Isaiah and then, at the end, giving a targum in order to explain what it was he just did for you in the words that he'd been quoting.

Joseph Smith saw and heard things that he couldn't at that time speak of, and throughout his ministry, he would get up and expound upon a passage in Genesis or words that show up in Ezekiel. And he would lift the veil a bit, and he talked about how he always delighted in uncovering some new thing using the Scriptures. Joseph Smith practically confined his sermonizing to the Old and New Testaments because of the audience. Had the audience been a little different, he may have expanded what it was that he used as his text material (from the Old and New Testaments) into the Book of Mormon (because he rarely cited it), and he may have expanded further into some of his own revelations had he been around long enough and had the people been prepared adequately in order to receive it.

You have to wonder how often Joseph looked at Christ teaching the Nephites—getting to the point that he saw they were saturated and said, "I can't tell you what I've been sent here to tell you because you're just not ready. Here's what we'll do. Let's send you home tonight and prepare your minds, and maybe tomorrow we can get there," and then he has the idea, "Hey, bring any sick here." And they bring the sick, and he heals them; and "Hey, bring the children." And they bring the children, and he ministers to the children so that He (in an audience whose hearts are pure enough) can convey information; and the others—the older audience members—can be voyeurs, looking in on the sermon that He wanted to conclude.

Well, I think—just like Nephi used Isaiah—Joseph Smith used the Scriptures, and he was able (by teaching the Scriptures) to lift the veil on things that he saw and heard that were not otherwise permitted to be put out there. And so, when you get to something like the King Follett Discourse, you may be getting a peek into what (in section 76—the vision of the Three Degrees of Glory) the words of that were forbidden from being recorded. He found another way in which to testify about these things.

It's one of the tricks that Nephi used, that Joseph used, and the question always is: At what point are you hearing about things from beyond the veil that are forbidden from being otherwise put out in the public?

Well, let me end by saying Joseph Smith was not only a better historian of his own life, but one of the most remarkable things that Joseph Smith gave us was also a more accurate history of the father of the righteous in the book of Abraham. The book of Abraham is one of the single most important revelations that have ever been handed out. It's been badly handled by people who defend the faith. It's been left subject to criticism that is so unwarranted that, once again, you have fools holding in derision a work that should not be criticized—should be upheld, should be studied, and should be prayerfully approached. Maybe, at some point, I'll mount a defense of that.

I'm out of time. Thank you for coming. Thank you for organizing this. Thank all those who have participated in the talks that have been given in the conference. I really appreciate how despite... I mean, Tausha never learns the same lesson. She has to repeat it—year in, year out. This stuff is kind of brutal on her, and you know, sometimes we get a phone call or an email that kind of reflects the Lamentations of Tausha about trying this again. I mean, Boise State University short-sheeted her, speakers declined to travel, things just became awkward. And you know, she's only set back for a few hours, and then she's right back at it and persisted through. So, for everyone who's helped, including all the technical people involved, thank you for organizing it again. Thank you.

2020.06.28 Gospel Tangents Interview

Rick Bennett Interview of Denver Snuffer, Jr. for the Gospel Tangents Podcast
June 28, 2020

Rick Bennett: Welcome to Gospel Tangents. I'm really excited to have a wonderful guest here in the Restoration movement. Could you go ahead and tell us who you are?

Denver Snuffer: Denver Snuffer, reluctant interviewee.

Rick: [laughter]

Denver: Been persuaded by the promises that you made of remuneration.

Rick: [laughter] Remuneration...

Denver: Yeah, yeah. No, I don't like doing interviews, but after the request was made, I watched a few of the interviews that you've done, and I communicated with Lindsay Hansen Park. And the style of interview that you have really doesn't seem to have an agenda. You're just interested in letting people talk. I watched her interview; I watched Michael Quinn's. So, yeah, this is one of those rare occasions where I'm willing to talk.

Rick: [laughter] Well, I feel really lucky. I'm excited to have you on, so this is fantastic. So, how would you introduce yourself? I mean, I think some people would call you a prophet. Is that a title you accept? Or how do you...? How does that...?

Denver: There's a whole lot of baggage that has accumulated around the idea of some title, some honorific title. And the trappings that go along with those kinds of things are unwanted, unwelcomed, and I just don't like it. I commented one time that in all of scripture, the use of the term *Beloved* is confined almost exclusively to the Savior. It's a sacred appellation—Beloved—and it gets used by the Lord on rare occasion when He is talking to an individual that is in the presence of the Lord, and He's being acknowledged or promised something by God. So, the appellation Beloved is, to me, inappropriate to use because of its sacred nature outside of talking about the Lord's Beloved, which is Christ.

Beloved prophet: Now you're also going one step further because my understanding of the role of a prophet— It's like Joseph said: A prophet is only a prophet when a prophet's doing something that fits within that framework. Anyone can have a revelation —anyone. It's not confined to Christians; it's not confined to denominational leaders. Revelations are available, generally, to the entirety of mankind in every culture, every religion everywhere in the world. A prophet is someone whose revelation was not intended for necessarily *that* person but was intended to be a public message.

Almost all revelation is individual, personal, and the property correctly belonging to the recipient of that revelation. A prophet's message really doesn't belong to him. In fact, on some occasions, the message a prophet receives is something that he doesn't even understand himself. He's gonna have to parse it through and try to untangle the content

to understand it himself. So, the message to a prophet is not personal; it's not directed to merely him. It's a message to the world.

So, in that context, the term gets misused a lot and—in particular, in this culture, in this geography—implies status, control, deference, authority. And I make no claim to authority. I make no claim to preside over anyone. I make no claim to be anything other than a fellow sojourner here trying our best to follow God.

But you caught me at a fortuitous moment because I now have the culmination of years of work by hundreds of volunteers. And maybe the best way to put a context to me is for me to talk about *this* [holding up his RE Scriptures].

Rick: Okay.

Denver: These are prototypes. It'll go into production. But we now have a print copy of a new set of scriptures. There are three volumes. The Old Covenants volume is the Joseph Smith Translation of the Old Testament. It begins with Genesis that most LDS people would recognize as the Book of Moses in the The Pearl of Great Price.

Rick: Okay.

Denver: So, the Joseph Smith Translation-Genesis text begins with the Book of Moses, and then, it follows the Joseph Smith Translation version of the Old Testament to the end. That's all in the first volume called The Old Covenants.

Rick: So, that's basically the Old Testament plus the Book of Moses, basically? Is that it? And Joseph Smith's translation...

Denver: It's the Old Testament-Joseph Smith Translation version.

Rick: Mm-hmm.

Denver: And it's the most accurate version of what Joseph did that has ever found its way into print. The Reorganized Church, now the Community of Christ, published what they called the Joseph Smith Translation.

Rick: *Inspired Version* I think is what they call it.

Denver: The Inspired Version of the Bible.

Rick: Mm-hmm.

Denver: The problem with that is that it was not entirely complete in that they omitted dozens of things that Joseph had done, but the committee that was responsible for publishing it also inserted things that they thought ought be in there. Therefore, the Inspired Version in the RLDS is not what you'll find in this [tapping the RE volume]. The Inspired Version—we've had people compare with the available material, and all of the

changes that were omitted are included. All of the additions that were made by others are deleted. And in addition, during talks Joseph Smith gave in the Nauvoo era, there were times when he was talking about a passage of scripture from the Bible, and he would comment that "a more correct translation..." or "a more correct reading..." And then, he would alter the text that he just read out of the Bible. He didn't always do that in the manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation, but all of those Nauvoo-era comments that he made were picked up and were also added. So, it's the most complete set.

Rick: Wow.

Denver: Joseph Smith also always intended to publish both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon in a single volume. So, the second— The first volume is called The Old Covenants because those are the covenants (plural) that went with Adam and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses down to the time of Christ.

The second volume is called The New Covenants. It's the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. Again, it has the same Joseph Smith Translation version put into it with all of the corrections—most complete version. But, in addition, we have a different Book of Mormon text. Joseph Smith dictated the translation of the Book of Mormon, and it was written by various scribes beginning with Emma Smith's handwriting and ending with Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. That material was then used by Oliver Cowdery to make the printer's manuscript.

The printer's manuscript was intended to be a faithful copy of the original translation, but we know from a comparison between what has survived of the original and the printer's manuscript, that we have 100% of, that Oliver Cowdery made about one and a half copying mistakes per page of the printer's manuscript. That manuscript was then taken to the E. B. Grandin shop, and it was John Gilbert who got hired by E .B. Grandin to typeset the Book of Mormon. John Gilbert took the printer's manuscript, which has no punctuation on it, and then, he punctuated and typeset the Book of Mormon. John Gilbert did what he did in punctuating based upon his understanding of how the words that were on that page should be understood.

There's been this controversy that has existed in Mormonism (scholarly articles being written) about how Joseph Smith's understanding of God changed from, originally, a trinitarian view into, later, a different view where there's different personages who belong to the Godhead. And as evidence for Joseph Smith's earlier trinitarian understanding of the Godhead, they point to the original Book of Mormon text. Well, the punctuation that was put in by John Gilbert, if you repunctuate it, can change from a trinitarian view to the later doctrinal view that Joseph Smith would teach and preach and advocate. I've referred to John Gilbert's use of punctuation (I've coined the term the *trinitarian comma*) because if you take out some commas, or you move them about, you can actually reach exactly the same doctrinal conclusion that Joseph would later teach simply by repunctuating what John Gilbert did.

So, in the second volume, what we've done is— I think I gave two talks in which I changed the punctuation and showed how you could conform to Joseph's later teachings. I think those got in here. But by and large, as much as possible, punctuation has been removed in order to allow the reader a more independent way of coming to grips with the content of the book and to deciding for yourself how best it ought to be understood.

Rick: Hmm.

Denver: It's also— Joseph made a revision, and he was revising again in the 1844 time period, but he revised the Book of Mormon a couple of times while he was still alive. It appears from comparisons that what Joseph was doing in the revisions he was making was trying to take the printed version that we had and make it conform more closely to the original translation, not the printer's manuscript. Errors crept in there. More errors crept in when John Gilbert worked with it. (The printed copy was after John Gilbert's fingerprints were on it.) He took that back to the original translation, and he tried to correct it to conform back to that.

We— Unfortunately, that original translation got put in the cornerstone of the building. It didn't get pulled out until it had rotted. We only have about 22% of the original left. We have 100% of the printer's copy but only 22% of the original. And so, we don't have the ability to go back and completely conform. But as near as it is possible at this point to recapture that, that's the Book of Mormon version that appears in the second volume.

Rick: Hmm.

Denver: Then, the third volume is something called the Teachings and Commandments. It's a chronological layout of the revelations given to Joseph Smith with the exception of the Joseph Smith History. Joseph Smith rewrote the history after ~~John Gilbert~~ [John Whitmer] left the Church and took the history with him. Joseph rewrote the history of the Church in 1838. Then, he published it in the *Times and Seasons* when he was the editor of the *Times and Seasons* (it being based upon the 1838 material) because the internal content of the *Times and Seasons* material is all referencing the 1838 time frame. We don't have that. We do have a copy that was made in 1839, and it was that copy in 1839 that was the basis for the *Times and Seasons* version.

While Joseph Smith was the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, his history began to roll out. It's significantly longer than what is in the Pearl of Great Price-Joseph Smith History that Latter-day Saints would be familiar with. But the entirety of this history, while it was written and published with him as the editor, appears as the first section of the Teachings and Commandments. Then, it follows a chronological layout through all of the revelations of Joseph Smith. And once again, we have access to the revelation as Joseph Smith dictated it.

The revelations of Joseph went through two iterations that altered the text. A copy was taken by Oliver Cowdery to Independence, Missouri, to be published as the Book of

Commandments. Oliver Cowdery, in setting up the Book of Commandments, felt at liberty because there was a revelation about Oliver having the right to write for the Church but not by way of commandment; yet, he could write. He had the liberty, he thought, to alter some of the texts and to add to them. So, he did that in the Book of Commandments. And the press was overrun, and it was destroyed. Copies of that got salvaged in loose form. They later got gathered up and bound together as the Book of Commandments. But that publishing effort in Independence was abandoned because of the mobs and the destruction of the press. So, in 1835, they published the Doctrine and Covenants in Kirtland.

Well, the Doctrine and Covenants contained, as its very first section, the Lectures on Faith. A committee was appointed to deal with the revelations, the Book of Commandments material. Joseph Smith was part of that committee but apparently didn't contribute. His diaries say that he spent *his* time editing and correcting Lectures on Faith.

There are those who say that Lectures on Faith appear to be the product of Sidney Rigdon and not Joseph Smith because they did word comparisons. Joseph Smith, before the publication of Doctrine and Covenants, spent *his* time editing and correcting Lectures on Faith. When he finished with that, and that is apparently the only thing he worked on getting ready for the Doctrine and Covenants to be printed, he said he would vouch for the correctness of the doctrine that is contained in what he had done, that he would stand by every word of it. *That* portion in the front of the D&C is the *doctrine*. The *covenants* are the *revelations*.

Well, the committee that was working on the revelations included Sidney Rigdon, and he took even more liberties than had Oliver Cowdery with revelations that had come to Joseph. And so, what you have in the LDS version of the Doctrine and Covenants are two steps removed from the original revelation to Joseph. And what is in the Teachings and Commandments is a chronological layout that includes Lectures on Faith that, insofar as we are able to accurately do so, recaptures exactly what the original revelation was and states it, as near as we can get at present, comprehensively, chronologically, and accurately in the form that it came as a revelation to Joseph Smith.

Rick: So, you're telling me that you've recanonized Lectures on Faith because that was actually taken out?

Denver: Yes.

Rick: Yeah, so you recanonized it, huh?

Denver: Yeah, it's in here. Lectures on Faith is Section—the Teachings and Commandments Section 110. Yes, recanonized it. It was actually never— See, here's two interesting factoids: first is, Lectures on Faith were canonized by a vote of the Church. They were not removed. They remained, by vote of the Church in General Conference, canonized scripture. They were deleted without a vote by a committee in

1921 that simply took the step of dropping it and saying, "We're not sure it's good material. We're not gonna to keep it in the scriptures." So, it was decanonized.

The second interesting fact is that no conference, until these scriptures, ever accepted and canonized the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon was simply accepted, but it was never accepted and canonized by a vote of conference until it was done so for these scriptures.

Rick: You mean in one of your conferences?

Denver: Yeah, it happened in Boise in 2017 as I recall.

So, let me tell you the whole reason behind all of this effort—because hundreds of volunteers, donating thousands of hours of effort, worked tirelessly for a long period of time to put this material together in a correct form.

There was a revelation that was given in September of 1832. The Church got organized in April of 1830. By the time you get to September of 1832, this is the sad news that the Church is getting:

Your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say but to do according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom. Otherwise, there remains a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion.... (T&C 82:20)

So, condemnation was brought, and the focus that most people have on those words is to *do*. But what became apparent is that the problem is not merely *doing*. It is also in the *saying*, meaning that the revelations were entrusted to them, but they weren't accurately preserving or accurately saying, "What it was that I..." And the *I* in that statement is God — God saying, "I gave this to you, and you're not saying what I said, and you're not doing what I've required of you; and therefore, you're condemned." And this happens within what? eighteen months of the founding of the Church? The condemnation's there?

Well, if they'd taken that seriously in September of 1832, you still had available to you the original translation manuscript that we don't have. They would still have the original revelations to Joseph that we still don't have (or we have not been able to preserve entirely intact), and the recovery effort could have been done by the time you got to the conference in 1835 where they adopt the Doctrine and Covenants with Lectures on Faith and the others. But they didn't do it.

And so, today, when you say, "You're under condemnation because you failed both to say and to do what the Lord had done and said and required that you do," if you're going to set about, at this late date, to try and make that right and to put it all back together again, what you find is that it is—it's an impossible undertaking. You can get close. You can get a whole lot closer than what you do in a traditional Latter-day Saint set of scriptures or a Community of Christ set of scriptures. You can get a whole lot closer, but you really would have needed to undertake this work while Joseph Smith was *alive* in order to actually accomplish what brought the Church under condemnation in September 1832 to emerge *out* from under that condemnation.

But this effort was undertaken as the best efforts that can be made with the available source material. And it was a labor of love intending to show, at least to the Lord, that although we may not be able to get all the way there, there is a group of people still left on the earth who take seriously the condemnation and would labor as hard and long as they can to try and bring it back into a restored, accurate state. And that was the scripture project which got presented to the Lord for His approval.

The Teachings and Commandments Section 156 is a *prayer* that was offered to try and get the scriptures accepted and acknowledged. That Section 156 then received an *answer*, and that's Section 157.

All of these scriptures are now being produced in a leather-bound set with a 100% cotton paper, leather-bound, gilded edging, finest leather, finest binding, finest printing, and finest materials that we can make. Unfortunately, we had to pay in advance to get them made, so...

Rick: Did you ask Martin Harris to mortgage the farm?

Denver: There were actually a couple people who stepped forward to help with that, individuals who contributed in order to get the minimum order made to satisfy the requirements. I think there— It's more than 2500 but less than 3000 copies of the leather-bound material that's gonna be put out. But they were pre-purchased. So, I think that Benchmark is gonna— I think they ordered 15 sets of the three volumes. I think they'll have 15 sets available for sale. But it will require another pre-order at some point in the future before there's ever a second printing. But they're really quite nice and quite accurate.

Rick: Well, it sounds interesting. When are these gonna be available? Can the public purchase these, then?

Denver: No, they would have had to have ordered at the time that the order went in.

Rick: Oh. So, you have to go to Benchmark to get them, huh?

Denver: Well, there will be 15 lucky souls that are able to get them through Benchmark. But all the copies that were printed were paid for in advance. I think I personally placed

the largest single order because I bought them for myself, my wife, all of my children, and if my children are married, for their spouse, also. So I bought a number of copies.

Rick: Wow. How much do they run?

Denver: This is what's interesting. The printer that we got for this wanted to get into the Bible-publishing business because the Bible is the largest-selling book in the world still, today. And he'd never printed a Bible. So, he competed with multiple printers around the world that we got bids for. The best Bible printers are not in the United States.

Rick: Hmm.

Denver: The very best is in the Netherlands: Royal Jongbloed. Well, we passed around a copy of the Royal Jongbloed among the committee, and everyone oohed and aahed, but to get them to put these together, it would've been about \$500 for this set. Okay? But we loved it.

It just so happens that a fellow was on the committee who builds books as a living. He restores books; he makes them, handmade. But he'll take a rare book— He's restored the majority of the existing prints of the original E. B. Grandin Book of Mormon that had been restored. He *did* it. He was on the committee. He went through, and he prepared the specs for the printer who wanted to get into the Bible-publishing business. And this set that I'm holding is based upon the Royal Jongbloed workmanship and specifications, and it was done at a fraction of the cost. I think each of these books is about \$34 apiece. The whole set is less than \$100.

Rick: Hmm.

Denver: And, I mean, they'll obviously all be sold out because you have to pay in advance. But I'm hoping that someday there'll be a second printing, maybe a third. Who knows?

Rick: I'll have to put my order in to Curt Bench.

Denver: Yeah, call Curt.

Rick: [laughter]

Denver: There's another effort that we've undertaken.

Rick: Oh.

Denver: The original purpose of the Book of Mormon was to try to recover two groups of people. One was a remnant in the Americas. Another was a remnant that is referred to as the Jews. There is— There was one Hebrew Book of Mormon that was made (I think it was in the 1940's), but it was taken out of print, taken off the shelf. And the LDS

Church has signed a treaty with the nation of Israel that they won't do anything to proselytise. So, one of the very target audiences that the Book of Mormon was intended for, the LDS Church has abandoned, by their commitment, in order to get the BYU Jerusalem Center on the north of the Mount of Olives. They agreed that they won't do anything to proselytise.

Well, we're under no such constraint. So, there are two things that are underway. The first is a separate, bound copy of the Book of Mormon which has been rendered into a Jewish-friendly version using Jewish spellings. The names in the Book of Mormon have been altered to Jewish spellings. The language has been— This is in English. I mean, the closest thing I can get in order for you to understand what we're talking about is: This is a Yiddish version of the Book of Mormon. It's been published and titled *The Stick of Joseph in the Hands of Ephraim*, and it has a Hebrew subtitle. That has been printed as part of this printing effort, also, and it will be given away. Several hundred copies of that book will be given away to Jewish people for them to consider the Book of Mormon in a more Jewish context.

And then, secondly, the Book of Mormon itself is currently being translated into Hebrew and will be published as a Hebrew text. The LDS Church, after they took the Hebrew Book of Mormon out of print, donated that translation to the Genealogical Society of Utah. The Genealogical Society of Utah microfilmed it, and we got a copy of it on microfilm. But as it turns out, it's not a particularly good Hebrew translation; so, it's being redone. A volunteer...

Rick: So, this is in Hebrew, then?

Denver: [holding the book] This is not. This is in English.

Rick: That's in English.

Denver: But it's in English with Hebrew spellings and Hebrew usages in it. But it's an English version.

Rick: So, instead of using *Jesus*, it's going to use *Yeshua*?

Denver: Yeah, it's—yes, exactly. And *Moshiyah* instead of *Mosiah*. I mean, it'll be Jewish- friendly.

The Hebrew-language version, which will be in Hebrew, is a work that's underway. Volunteers and then, some professionals are being compensated, and then, a PhD who — His specialty for his doctoral thesis was rendering into Hebrew, English material, taking English material and converting it into Old Testament Hebrew language. That was his PhD thesis. He's on the faculty of a major university. He's doing the final edit on the work that is being done to bring it into a Hebrew language. And when that's done and is published, it should withstand scrutiny from the most scrupulous rabbi of anywhere in the world—New York, Jerusalem, Amsterdam—doesn't matter. It will withstand scrutiny as a...

Rick: Are you sure? I've heard the saying, "Take two Jewish rabbis, and you get three opinions." [laughter]

Denver: Well, they may differ on what they do with the text, but they won't differ on the language that got used in order to bring it about. But we're doing an equally serious effort with Native Americans and the remnant there.

We don't necessarily want a lot of attention for the effort that's being made. In fact, there's a lot of disappointment, even bitterness, among Native American people because of what happened historically with the Indian placement program with that Indian School that's now abandoned. Much of it's been dismantled up in Brigham City.

Rick: The Intermountain High School.

Denver: Yeah, the Intermountain High School. There are children who were run through that program, who are now adults, who felt that they had been put upon, abused, belittled, discriminated against, mistreated at the hands of an institution. So, to say, "Hey, we're Mormons, kind of," or "We aren't Mormons, but we're bringing you the Book of Mormon," it's off-putting. You're gonna have an uphill battle to even get a fair hearing because the LDS effort has been disastrously off-putting. So, we're trying to deal with, cope with the trauma that has been inflicted by others in hoping to get a fair hearing for what the Restoration *could* mean to Native American peoples and getting them to respect what Joseph meant and what Joseph was attempting to do and what the Book of Mormon was really intended to accomplish. But we're not doing it with a lot of fanfare because the more fanfare that gets called to something, the more people will draw comparisons and analogies that just aren't true.

I mean, my personal view is that the LDS Church institutionally has pursued an institutional self-interest. A *byproduct* of their self-interest, fortunately, has been the preservation of the Book of Mormon, for which I'm grateful, the preservation of the Doctrine and Covenants, for which I'm grateful. I don't think that they were as interested in accuracy of the material or even in obedience to the material or trying to understand the material. But it served a self-interest, and that self-interest has been a blessing to me—because they may have profited; they may have built themselves a trillion dollar empire off of the back of these things. That doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is that they have gifted to me, generations later, the Book of Mormon text, and now, through *The Joseph Smith Papers*, enough material I can do something to recover it; and through the work of Royal Skousen, enough so that I can compare every edition in one volume side by side.

Rick: Royal Skousen was a big part of this. It sounds like he was.

Denver: His work product was. His work product was a phenomenal help. But he personally didn't participate in anything.

Rick: Right.

Denver: But *The Joseph Smith Papers*, which is also the product of the LDS Church, has been a marvelous aid. I buy *The Joseph Smith Papers* as they come off the press. I've got every volume. But I mark them up. Mine have interlineations, handwriting, cross-references.

The editors will introduce material. In their introduction, they will absolutely contradict the document you're about to read. It's glaringly stupid how they've approached some of this material. They will footnote stuff to say, "There is more to this story, and this is the 'more to the story'" because they sincerely, devoutly believe that it stayed on the rails after Joseph died and that what they inherited (and the traditions require that they take this position)—what they inherited is, in fact, a preservation of the Restoration through Joseph Smith. But *The Joseph Smith Papers* demonstrate that it's anything *but* that. The editorial contributions, the footnotes, the headnotes, the descriptions that they give, and the arguments that they make— It just wouldn't withstand scrutiny if you were subjecting it to, for example, the rules of evidence to get a document admitted in a courtroom. But that's a whole nother story. Anyway, we're trying to fix that in *this*.

Rick: I understand that historians and lawyers have different rules.

Denver: Sure.

Rick: And I have to mention, you are a lawyer, right?

Denver: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Rick: I probably should've introduced that earlier.

Denver: Right.

Rick Bennett: All right. So, I've got a bunch of questions that I want to ask. So, since you mentioned the Book of Mormon translation that you've done, you said that if you take out the punctuation, then it becomes less trinitarian.

Denver Snuffer: Yes.

Rick: Also, you mentioned—cuz I've read Lectures on Faith, and one of my understandings is Lectures on Faith is very trinitarian, and I feel like that's kind of why the LDS Church put that away. And so, I'm curious cuz you've reCanonized that. To me, the Lectures on Faith sounds very trinitarian. And the Book of Mormon, as we have it, does sound very trinitarian. So, it's interesting to me to hear you say, "Well, if you take out the punctuation..." I guess it would support more of a Nauvoo-style theology. Is that...

Denver: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. / think so.

Rick: So, how would you respond to that, I guess?

Denver: Well [flipping pages], let me see if I can find the language. The lecture that talks about who God is— See, one of my problems is that I just got this on the 25th, and this is the 28th.

Rick: Oh, so you haven't gotten...

Denver: I haven't gotten to Lectures on Faith to look at it just yet [looking up a scripture].

There's a definition given of who God is in Lectures on Faith. And it says that there is God the Father who is a personage of spirit, power, glory. And then, there's God the Son, and He's a personage. And then, there's the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is the *mind* of the Father and the Son. And that is very Nauvoo-era, doctrinally correct. And that definition of God is one that he returns to. The Holy Ghost in the Lectures on Faith makes the personage of God two individuals. And then, in addition to the two individuals, the Holy Ghost is the mind of the two of them. Well, this is also in your Pearl of Great Price definition because it's in the Book of Moses; but it's in Genesis chapter 4 in these.

Therefore, it is given to abide in you: the Record of Heaven, the Comforter, the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, the truth of all things, that which quickens all things — which makes alive all things, that which knows all things, and [that which] has all power according to Wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.
[Genesis 4:9 RE]

That's in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, Genesis 4 in The Old Covenants. That's the definition of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter that God, or that Christ says He will send (in the Book of John) to the disciples after He ascends. That Comforter is the Record of Heaven, the Comforter, the keys of the kingdom, the truth of all things, and so on—which is exactly what is the lecture-on-faith description of the Holy Ghost, which is the mind of the Father and the mind of the Son, the Record of Heaven, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things.

And so, you have two personages in Lectures on Faith. You have the Holy Ghost that is really a manifestation of *their* minds. You have in the Book of Moses the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 4, the Holy Ghost being the Record of Heaven, the truth of all things, the Comforter. You have the Holy Ghost *not* as a *personage*. You have the Holy Ghost as a kind of *vibrant force of truth* that is bestowed upon mankind generally. Then, we have from the Willard Richards pocket book that statement by Joseph that "The Father has a body of flesh and bones, the Son also, but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones but is a spirit; were it not so, it could not dwell within us."

And there's an interesting article written about how that came about. That didn't stabilize. It went through multiple iterations and multiple expanding and contracting versions of what it was that is attributed to Joseph Smith before Brigham Young finally

settled the dispute and reduced it to what is now in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. That may or may not be a reliable definition of the Holy Ghost. Certainly, what we have in Lectures on Faith that Joseph vouched for the accuracy of, and what we have in the Genesis chapter 4, or Pearl of Great Price-Moses (there! I think it's Moses chapter 6) is a kind of different definition.

So, I don't think Joseph started out trinitarian, although when he reports what he learned from the First Vision (in his story that he wrote in 1838) is that he went home and, essentially, said, "I learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." And that was his response to his mother when she thought he looked rather haggard from what the encounter was. "Never mind. I'm well enough off. I've learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." And I think that was probably what Joseph got out of the First Vision on the day after the First Vision.

Anyway...

Rick: Okay. So, you're saying that Lectures on Faith is *not* trinitarian, essentially. Is that...

Denver: No, I don't think so.

Rick: You don't think it is.

Denver: Yeah. Yeah.

Rick: Okay. And so, you're saying that the Book of Mormon, if you take out that punctuation as Joseph originally wrote it, is not trinitarian, either.

Denver: Right. I'm saying you can repunctuate. The Book of Mormon in the LDS version is still John Gilbert's punctuation. Today. The LDS Church is living with John Gilbert's punctuation. We're not. And it's easy to repunctuate and to reach a different result.

I've given a talk on this, and there's stuff out there that will demonstrate what I'm talking about if you're interested or if someone listening's interested.

Rick: Yeah. Well, so, a couple other things I want to talk about since we're talking about your scriptures— And I guess I should mention I've read your book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. One of the things...

Denver: And you're willing to admit that? Do you still have a temple recommend?

Rick: [laughing] I do, actually.

But, yeah. So, we should probably talk about that one because that was a bit of a controversial book. And I do want to talk about the history of that. But the reason why I

bring it up in the context of your scriptures is when I read it, one of the interesting things to me was your take on Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. And from what I understand, you had said—and I've heard various things, so, maybe you can clear up this— but when you wrote in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, you had mentioned it was really four revelations. And I like that interpretation. I don't know that I necessarily agree that that's historically accurate, but— So, I'm curious if you still stand behind what you've written, cuz I understand you've kind of evolved on your beliefs about polygamy. So, will you talk about that?

Denver: Like any interested and attentive Latter-day Saint, my understanding of the history of what happened in the early Church began using the B. H. Roberts material, the Joseph Smith History as gathered by B. H. Roberts.

I got baptized September 10th of 1973. There was a lady in our ward that ran a Seventies Mission Bookstore. I don't know if anyone in your audience is old enough to remember Seventies Mission bookstores...

Rick: So, Anne Wilde—I interviewed her, and she mentioned it.

Denver: Yeah, yeah. Anyway, it was on her porch. I bought and I read, you know, the *Autobiography of Parley Pratt*. I read all the biographies of Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor. I read the (what's it?) seven-volume set by B. H. Roberts. I read the multiple-volume set that was attributed to Joseph Smith that is the forerunner of *The Joseph Smith Papers* project. I read everything I could get my hands on in order to try and understand. I mean, if this is really the work of God—if God restored something, He's speaking again; and He hasn't done that since we close out the New Testament record. Now, He's speaking, and stuff is rolling forth that tells us the mind of God. Then, we ought to pay particular attention.

So, in the era that I came in, that 1973 time frame, you're really looking at leadership that consists of Joseph Fielding Smith's son-in-law, Bruce R. McConkie, who's the doctrinal go-to guy. You've got, you know, Marion Romney; he can stand his own. You've got Mark Peterson who thinks he's *all that* on doctrine. And, you know, you had — Well, N. Eldon Tanner was a money guy. But you've got men up there— Boyd K. Packer who ran CES at the time. You got men who have *really* strong opinions and, essentially, a consensus about what was and what was not history. And then, you wind up with Arrington, and Arrington winds up hiring D. Michael Quinn. And then, Arrington appears to go a little off the reservation, and D. Michael Quinn appears to go *way* off the reservation. And my initial reaction to what D. Michael Quinn did was to think, "What an awful turn of events that a man would apostasy [apostatize] and then turn around and trash the history of the Restoration in this wretched fashion." But it was Michael Quinn's work that got me looking for and trying to find original source material.

Michael Quinn donated a bunch of the material that he had to Yale University, and then, Signature Books had someone go back to Yale University; or maybe they went back on their own, and Signature was just the ones that would print it. And so, these diaries and

these journals begin to roll out that is the source material from which Michael Quinn drew his conclusions cuz he had access to and made copies from the Church archives that weren't particularly open. Arrington made them open somewhat, but they weren't particularly open. So, Church history was written from a closed point of view, a controlled point of view. And Michael Quinn actually represents sort of opening the door and seeing behind the orthodox interpretation.

So, the materials that Michael Quinn made available became available. And this orthodox, traditional view of history which I understood well— I mean, I had studied it. I was a Fielding Smith-McConkie-Packer disciple; and to me, Michael Quinn's view was heretical. But as you begin to examine the source material from which Michael Quinn drew his conclusions, you begin to see that in some respects, he's not at all unfair. And in some ways, he's not just fair, but he's kindly. He's being sympathetic in his viewpoint. He got in a lot of trouble because what he wrote had a far different look and feel than the look and feel that you get from this other narrative.

So, *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was an attempt to take a whole nother bundle of source material that existed and was available, and I'd gone to the trouble of buying these small print— You know, 300 copies were all that were ever put in print. But Curt Bench over at Benchmark is one of the outlets that sells this stuff. So, I was able to access these diaries, these journals, and to look at it myself. And my attitude towards Michael Quinn changed considerably, and my view of what the Church was doing with their history changed considerably.

But of all the subjects that are out there, probably the most controversial, internationally known, dramatic topic of all is the plural marriage subject. I mean, I don't want to get really granular about it, but to me, it required over 40 years of research to reach a conclusion.

It wasn't a single view. I mean, if you're gonna read everything that is said by the advocates and the defenders of the plural marriage establishment through Joseph Smith, you have a library of material that you're gonna have to plow through. And if you're gonna to say, "Okay, what are the arguments, then, on the other side of the coin about the issue of plural marriage?"—because you've got Emma denying that Joseph ever practiced that. But you also have incidents in which Emma Smith was present in something that happened that William McClellan tries to sensationalize in his account, talking about his discussion with Emma about the very incident that you're talking about. And then, you've got Joseph's view of that, and you've got Oliver Cowdery's accusation, and the minutes of the High Council in Far West when Oliver Cowdery was disciplined for what he was saying about that same incident.

Rick: You're talking about Fanny Alger.

Denver: The Fanny Alger stuff. And you've got all of these points to triangulate from, you know. What are you to make of it? I can tell you that story and make Joseph Smith an adulterer and a plural marriage practitioner; or I can tell you that story, and I can

make Joseph Smith absolutely chaste and that what happened there was not by any stretch a sexual liaison.

Fanny Alger would have nine children from a husband. Joseph Smith fathered eight children through Emma Smith. They were both at the peak of their fertility when the two of them had something going on, and yet there was no progeny; there was no child. In fact, there's no child born that was fathered by Joseph Smith other than the children that came through Emma Smith. So, if you're gonna turn Joseph Smith into something that is akin to the narrative told by the LDS Church, one of the questions that ought to enter into your balancing of what happened is the absence of any progeny when you've got a fertile man, and you've got fertile women who bore children to other men but never bore a child for Joseph Smith. What effect ought that have on your thinking and interpretation of the historical events? You got Emma Smith's denial that anything had gone on.

So, it's a long, arduous process to get through enough of the source material in order to form a fair opinion. And even after you form a fair opinion— And the one I had initially (in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*) reached was that if people are reliable— And one of the stories of the angel with the drawn sword comes from Eliza Snow; and Eliza Snow is someone for whom I had some respect. So, I'm gonna give credence to that because of her. And the story that she tells suggested that something happened in order to provoke Joseph to initially begin implementation of something that Joseph Smith was reluctant to implement.

Well, you go to the High Council minutes in Far West, and Joseph is acquitted, and Oliver Cowdery is convicted of slandering him. And everyone heard it. You go to the incident in Nauvoo when Joseph dictated a revelation in July of 1843. It was written down by William Clayton. Hyrum Smith took the revelation; it was read to the High Council of Nauvoo. The High Council minutes in Nauvoo talk about what was read to them, and they say it's an explanation of an ancient order of things, and it has nothing to do with some practice today.

How do you reconcile all of the different triangulation points?—because this, now, is a contemporary statement both in the High Council in Far West and the High Council in Nauvoo. These are contemporaneous things that suggest there's a problem with the narrative that Joseph is out there bedding women including, in the most outrageous form, bedding young teenagers. Well, to his credit, when he wrote *Rough Stone Rolling*, Bushman grapples with this issue. He comes down on the side of the historical storytelling, but he says that—and I'm paraphrasing, but this is pretty close—he says that Joseph Smith was not a nefario and that he didn't father children with other women, that his desire for sealing appears to be related to plentitude in the afterlife, plentitude in the afterlife.

Well, somewhere along the line, the idea of sealing and the idea of marriage become one and the same. And they overlap into "Well, if someone's sealed, then someone's married." And it's not at all clear. If you go back— It's really hard for people to accept this idea.

Well, I had dinner with Michael Quinn, and I posed this...

Rick: Oh, that's interesting.

Denver: Yeah, I posed this to him over dinner. I said, "Okay, let's take June 27th, 1844, and let's say, 'Right there—that's the *end* of the historical record.'"

Rick: That's the death of Joseph Smith.

Denver: Yes, that's the day Joseph is killed, and Hyrum.

"That's the end. You consider *nothing* that got written down or got introduced after June 27, 1844; and you are limited, *absolutely*, to the material that got its existence (put pen to paper) before that date. 'Kay? What do you have? What do you have to support Joseph Smith practicing plural marriage with sexual relations with other women than Emma?"

It was an interesting dinner. It was an interesting evening. We had an...

Rick: What did Quinn say?

Denver: ...interesting conversation.

Well, I don't know if I oughta quote him. I don't know if your listeners are going to be offended. But we got on that topic because he said that his reaction to my position on the plural marriage subject was bullshit. And I said, "Well, okay then, let's start with the proposition that we're gonna take June 27th, and we're only gonna go before." And we went back and forth for a few minutes, and he said, "I see where you're coming from," —because if you consider the source material that only was extant on that date...

Rick: So, you throw out all the Temple Lot case and everything cuz it's after June 27th.

Denver: Yeah, all of that stuff. All the affidavits got gathered. Look, the idea that you get to practice *plural wivery* is not made public until 1852 in a general conference talk in which Orson Pratt was assigned to introduce the topic by Brigham Young; and then, Brigham gets up. And then, you've got the assistant historian that had worked in Nauvoo (and who was working in Salt Lake under the leadership of Kimball) running the historian's office. And he says, in one of his diary entries, that the records that they brought with them from Nauvoo— The records were being altered to conform to the new regime.

Rick: You're talking about Heber Kimball?

Denver: No, he worked under Heber Kimball.

Rick: Oh.

Denver: His name will occur to me in a minute. But he wrote in his diary (who he's working under) that the records were now being altered in order to fit the new system of things, the new regimen. And so, you have to question if they're willing to go so far as to interlineate and alter original source material including William Clayton's own diary being altered.

One entry that you can see in *The Joseph Smith Papers* has this incredibly innocent statement that is about fidelity and monogamy, and it's turned into a statement about how only one man at a time has the authority to introduce the plural wife system, and that he, Joseph, was that guy—from interlineations. I've written about all this.

Anyway, the fact is that if you confine yourself to what existed at the time that Joseph was alive, you have a *very, very* difficult time saying that there is evidence Joseph did anything other than practice something called *sealing* that was designed to create plentitude in the afterlife. Joseph Smith, as Bushman described it, wanted large families to go into the eternities. In John Taylor's book, *The Government of God*, he asserts that the government of God in eternity is the family. So, if Joseph Smith is trying to restore on earth the family of God, the way in which you restore the family of God is to bind people together into some sealed family connection—doesn't matter that they're married to one another. If you seal them together, you seal people into a family relationship that can exist on into eternity.

So, Joseph doesn't use the word *adoption* in the context of *sealing* until October of 1843. In *The Joseph Smith Papers*, that's the earliest date I can find that—in his diaries—that the word adoption gets used.

Rick: Like as in the Law of Adoption.

Denver: Yeah, a very misunderstood concept, but Joseph practiced something that was adoption. But apparently, the introduction of that occurs in about the October 1843 time frame.

Until then, if you're talking sealing without defining what *sealing* meant, you weren't using the word *adoption*. You were using the word *marriage*, in people's projection of what the word meant, backward. If the sealing that took place was some form of familial tie that was designed to bind together as a family to Joseph, who had a connection that had been made to heaven, then what was being sealed was a family and not a sexual partner.

But beginning in that October 1843 time frame, there comes out something that results in adoption. Joseph will be dead within six months. Between the October mention and the time of his death six months later, there really isn't enough time in order to develop even an adequate historical record of what Joseph was doing with the idea of adoption in that time period. It gets mentioned. And then, what happens is that following his

death, by the time you get to the 1845-November-to-February-1846 time period, there is *adoption practice* going on.

The language that we get in the word and the will of the Lord about captains of 50 and captains of 100— It's actually kind of *code* for public consumption. That was *adoption practice* going on in the Nauvoo era—so, set that aside for just a moment—*adoption* being the organization of the companies that were assigned and organized through temple ceremonies and adoption process, preliminary to the migration, the abandonment of the Nauvoo temple, the companies migrating out into the Salt Lake Valley. And they *practiced* something called *adoption*.

Then, as they migrate across, there are these conversations that enter into journals. One of the funniest to me is John D. Lee's journal where he's talking about someone asking John D. Lee to be sealed to him (adopted to him) because it's going to increase his kingdom, and John D. Lee saying, "Why would I be adopted to you? Why don't you be adopted to me so I get to be the boss in the afterlife in the government of God?"

Rick: It's all a great pyramid scheme, right?

Denver: Yeah, it's all just fabulously stupid because they're *aspiring*— If this stuff be truthful, holy, and sacred, they're *aspiring* to manipulate the afterlife by having introduced to them a concept that Joseph only had a six-month time period between introduction and death, and it doesn't get fleshed out. Then, you have to go to many, many years later when you have journal entries by Cannon and by Taylor and by Pratt, Hyde, and their conversations and the notes of meetings that they held where they say things like, "I never understood what Joseph Smith was doing with adoption." Cannon goes so far as to say, "I didn't believe it when he introduced it, and I don't believe it now." And so, the concept of adoption just drips into wreckage. And adoption as a concept related to sealing turns into mush, and it gets abandoned. It wound up being a fight.

But the idea of adoption had a profound effect on the history of the Church. Because Brigham Young led the first company. They come in; *this is the place*; they settle down; he has himself anointed a king and a priest in the log cabin that was built; and then, the king returns across the plains back to Winter Quarters. On his way back, he runs into the company that had John Taylor and Parley Pratt in it. John Taylor and Parley Pratt had some kind of sealing-adoption organization put together for the companies they led in the migration. And when Brigham Young met them, they had reorganized the companies that they were in contrary to the way that Brigham Young had adopted folks together in the ceremonies in Nauvoo. So now, they were in *defiance* of the *priesthood* by what they'd done. Well, they were members of the Quorum of the Twelve. I mean, the vote that was taken on what? August 8th of 1844? was that the Quorum of the Twelve would take care of the Church, not Brigham Young. It was the Quorum! So, John Taylor and Parley Pratt didn't regard Brigham Young as having any right to rule and reign or dictate over them. They were doing what they thought best. After they saw how the company functioned, they realigned the adoptions as they were going west.

Well, Brigham Young fumed from there all the way back to Winter Quarters. And while we didn't have them before, the collected *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, which I think were put in print for the first time in 2011 — you can look. I mean...

Rick: Yeah, that's a really expensive set.

Denver: Yeah, yeah. I bought one of those. They were meant for libraries, but I bought one. They are expensive, but they're comprehensive. You can read what happened.

When Sidney Rigdon was campaigning to be elected after the death of Joseph Smith, his speechifying in Nauvoo to try and solicit votes for him was bizarre. I mean, he seems deranged. Brigham Young spent several days trying to persuade Wilford Woodruff that he, Brigham Young, needed to be elected president. They *needed* a president. And Woodruff wouldn't relent. His position was it required a revelation to reorganize the First Presidency. And Brigham Young's position was it didn't require revelation. It just required a vote, that Joseph Smith got made president by a vote of the group; he did not get made president by a revelation.

Rick: Common consent.

Denver: Yeah, it was *just* an election; it was *just*— And that he could be elected the same way, and it would have exactly the same effect. No revelation required. And eventually, he wore down Wilford Woodruff. Woodruff got on board with that, and they assembled. They called a general conference, and they held a vote. In the process of holding the vote, Brigham Young did some speechifying. And I tell you, it reminds me of Sidney Rigdon in the August campaign in Nauvoo for the election. He's practically incoherent.

Now, to give him the benefit of the doubt, he'd kept Wilford Woodruff awake haranguing him, and he couldn't sleep if he was doing that. So, he's sleep-deprived at the time he's giving the talk. But one of the things that he says in the aftermath of being elected is that he could hardly wait to get back to Salt Lake to have Parley Pratt and John Taylor confess that they are not Brigham Young, meaning that now *he's* in authority, and he *alone* has the right to dictate what goes on. And that it is an act of apostasy against the priesthood to rebel against what the chief says cuz they apparently were not willing to relent when they came across the plains. So, having been elected as president in Winter Quarters, he goes back to Salt Lake. And the rest of the Quorum of the Twelve, who were back in Salt Lake, have to choose between a fight, again, after relocating from Nauvoo over leadership or submitting to what Brigham was saying. And rather than split things up again, they relented. Brigham was elected, and he says he has the right to dictate.

Well, he still had not yet clarified that he intended to assert that he, and he alone, could seal —because Parley Pratt, even after that, sealed other women to him, including Lenore whose husband would ultimately murder Parley. And Brigham Young would later

say that those women that Parley Pratt sealed to himself after Brigham was elected president, was adultery. And he went so far as to say that the murder of Parley Pratt was justified because it was adultery, and he essentially had it coming to him. Because once he was elected president, Brigham Young said, "I, and I alone, am the only guy who gets to do a sealing."

Rick: So, he consolidated the sealing power because it was kind of distributed before that.

Denver: It was far and wide.

All of that history needs to be taken and put into the hopper if you're trying to figure out what Joseph Smith was trying to do with sealing between the Fanny Alger moment and the moment at which Joseph is slain—because if he had absolutely no intention of creating sexual access to women by sealing, but he had, instead, the intention to put together in a form that would be recognized into eternity as a familial connection (as Bushman puts it, *familial plentitude*) then, we really have to put on a whole different lens if we're gonna try and interpret what went on.

So, I was grappling still in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* with the whole subject. I was trying to show appropriate deference to whatever the historical narrative was. I mean, I wrote that book as a member of the Church. I mean, I pulled every punch that I could pull in order *not* to be someone that's just a hostile critic. I believe if the LDS Church had adopted *Passing the Heavenly Gift* like they adopted *Rough Stone Rolling*, and they said, "Look, this is a very different way to look at the history of the Restoration. But you can look at it this way. And if you do, you can still be, you know, happy and associate with us." I believe if they had done that, they would be facing today far less of a religious crisis than they are currently facing with the members of the Church.

I never left Mormonism. I never even left the LDS Church; the LDS Church gave *me* the boot. But, I mean, I was 100% home teacher, I was a tithe payer, I was a temple recommend holder.

Rick: You were on the High Council as I understand?

Denver: I was a...

Rick: You taught Missionary Prep, I think it was?

Denver: I did. I taught Gospel Doctrine. While all this nonsense was going on—the flap about the book—I was helping, at the request of the stake president, a returned missionary who had lost his testimony and was a student at BYU. And so, he said the only one he knew in the stake that could help the young man was me. And so, I had him come over to my house. In fact, I would go to interviews with the stake president preliminary to the issue of whether I'm going to be excommunicated or not, and on my way home from that, I would stop by and get this returned missionary in a faith crisis.

He'd come to my house, and we'd spend time talking about what his issues were. The first issue, and the most troubling to him, was polygamy. So, we started with polygamy. And we spent weeks talking about that topic. Then, the next topic— I forget what it was, but we didn't— He had a list of concerns. By the time we got through the first two, he said, "Really, I don't think I've got any other concerns because what you said satisfies me that I'm looking in the wrong place for answers. There's more substantive material out there that answers."

Rick: Could it be— cuz in your book, you basically said— This is really attractive to me. I'm going to tell you about it.

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Rick: You separated the sealing from the polygamy.

Denver: Yeah.

Rick: And from what I understand with your new version of— I know you don't call it the Doctrine and Covenants.

Denver: Teachings and Commandments.

Rick: Teachings and Commandments.

Denver: Yeah.

Rick: You kind of excise the polygamy parts out of 132. Is that right?

Denver: I tried to fix 132. I actually went through it and tried to make it a consistent document. I said to myself, "Okay, knowing everything that I know about what went on in the Restoration, if I start with this document, can I fix it?" And I made a concerted effort. The dramatically contradictory stuff— I threw out the contradictions. And I tried to edit it.

Rick: You probably threw out the condemnation to Emma. Right?

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Rick: I'm actually really glad to hear that...

Denver: Yeah.

Rick: ...because that bothers me.

Denver: I tried to fix it. And when I got all done with that, I thought, "Well, maybe *that* is — If they were interlineating— I mean, D&C 132 was hidden until..."

Rick: 1852.

Denver: Yeah, when it was first announced in a general conference talk by Orson Pratt. Until then, it was hidden. What do they do with it in the interim?—because the only copy that we've got is in the handwriting of Joseph Kingsbury.

Rick: Well, Emma burned the one, right?

Denver: Yeah, well, Emma was allowed to burn the one. Everyone agreed to it.

Rick: So, well, going back to here, because...

Denver: But think about what the source is—Joseph Kingsbury. *Joseph Kingsbury*. It's not a clerk of Joseph Smith's in the historian's office; it's not a scribe of Joseph Smith. It's a *guy*...

Rick: So, you're saying it's a myth that Emma threw it in the fire.

Denver: No, I'm saying that the copy we have, the only extant copy we have, is in the handwriting of Joseph Kingsbury.

Rick: Mm-hmm.

Denver: Whatever it was that existed before that that he says he copied from what William Clayton wrote (and we've got Kingsbury's word for it), Kingsbury did not work as a scribe or someone that helped write history for Joseph Smith. When Kingsbury was called to testify in the Temple Lot case, he refused to swear to tell the truth about 132.

Rick: Hmm.

Denver: He would not swear that his testimony could be charged with perjury if it wasn't true. He just refused to take that oath.

Rick: So, he did not testify?

Denver: He testified.

Rick: But he refused to take that oath.

Denver: He refused to take the oath, but he testified, anyway. He said, "I'll affirm, but I will not swear to it." And they want to know what the difference was. He says, "*Affirm* is just me telling you what I understand. But if I swear to it, I can be charged with perjury." And he didn't want to do that.

Rick: And they let him testify, anyway?

Denver: Let him testify, anyway.

Rick: Well, I've never heard of that before. That's interesting.

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Rick: Okay, so with *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, you are under the...

Denver: I was still under the effort to explore and try to understand.

Rick: And so, you believed that Joseph Smith did...

Denver: ...tried to make the Church's story work.

Rick: With polygamy.

Denver: Yes, tried...

Rick: That Joseph practiced polygamy.

Denver: Yeah, trying my best to make *that* story work.

Rick: But, you don't stand by that anymore.

Denver: Well, I finally reached a conclusion. Part of the reason I was able to reach a conclusion is *The Joseph Smith Papers* coming out and source material that didn't exist then existing now, and research that was done by a number of others that has also rolled out. I mean, I thought at the time *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was printed, I thought the evidence was really equivocal. It's *clear*...

Rick: Well, Michael Quinn still thinks it's pretty clear, right?

Denver: What's that?

Rick: Michael Quinn still thinks it's...

Denver: Well, Michael Quinn gives credence to the 1860 affidavits. I mean, he has a hard time envisioning the idea that a whole bunch of people would sign affidavits in Joseph F. Smith's affidavit book to support the lawsuit if they were swearing falsely. And those affidavits were used as evidence in the Temple Lot case. So, they were gathered with a specific purpose in mind.

Well, think about it now. In the 1860's, they're, for the first time, creating a record about what had happened two decades or more earlier. And Joseph is dead. But they've made public, and they have taught you. They've reassured you. They've testified from the

pulpit to you since the 1852 time frame that *this* is a revelation that came through Joseph Smith. And you *know* your Church is true. And you *know* that that temple in Kirtland belongs to your group. And you *know*, because he's said it—you *know* Emma's apostate. Brigham Young called her a "wicked, wicked, wicked woman." "If Joseph Smith wants to be with Emma Smith, he's gonna have to go to hell to be with her because that's where that wicked, wicked, wicked woman is." They *know* all that because they've been told that in isolation here for a couple of decades. And Joseph's not around, and you've got a burning testimony of the Restoration. Are you going to sign an affidavit when you *know* it's true? When you *know*? I mean, the Church *leaders* are asking that you sign— a member of the Quorum of the Twelve! A future president of the Church, a member of the First Presidency is asking you to sign an affidavit. Are you going to sign the affidavit?

Rick: An affidavit that makes you look like an unvirtuous woman? Who in their right mind would do that?

Denver: It's not unvirtuous in the state of Deseret in 1860.

Rick: But the entire government is trying to take down the entire Church over this.

Denver: Doesn't matter. They won't succeed in doing that until 1890. In fact, it's those promiscuous *Romans* [speaking sarcastically] that introduced and enforced *monogamy* so they could get a supply of prostitutes. The virtuous, lovely, Christian community, including, according to Brigham Young, Jesus Christ Himself— *They* were all polygamists so that you didn't have to *have* prostitutes. But the wicked Romans— The Romans wanted monogamy because they needed an ample supply of prostitutes to keep themselves happy in their public baths and such. So, the *virtuous* women were the polygamous *wives* that bore children and lived in a familial relationship, not those monogamous fools that pretend to piety and produce prostitutes.

It's like Mark Twain commented in *Roughing It*. He said when he first thought of plural wives, he thought it was an exercise in licentiousness. But when he got a look at the poor, ungainly creatures that were being married, he said he felt inclined to take his hat off in reverence cuz he's standing in the presence of pure Christian charity. The man that would marry *one* of them was a Christian soul. But the man that would marry *ten* of them [laughing] has committed an act of Christian charity and virtue that's unthinkable in the modern world. But that's Mark Twain, and he's always tongue in cheek.

Rick: He's pretty funny.

Denver: But I gotta tell you. Have you seen the picture of Sarah Pratt in Volume 10 of *The Joseph Smith Papers*?

Rick: I have not.

Denver: It's worth the trouble. It's worth the trouble of looking at the picture of Sarah Pratt in Volume 10 of *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

I have a friend I went to law [laughing]— I'll leave his name out. I have a friend I went to law school with who's a descendant of the Pratts. His last name isn't Pratt; he's a descendant of the Pratts. Sarah Pratt looks like my law school buddy with long hair.

Rick: [chuckling]

Denver: Twain was right. It was an act of Christian charity.

Rick: [chuckling]

Denver: Boy, now we're way off.

Rick: All right, yeah.

Denver: We're way off base, and [chuckling]...

Rick: Yeah, let's— All right, so...

Denver: I do know some Pratts. They're probably all gonna be offended at this.

Rick: [chuckling]

Denver: Okay, you go look at the photo, and you decide for yourself.

Rick Bennett: Okay. So, I do want to kind of go back to— We'll talk a little bit more about the Remnant Movement. Not to be confused, I should add I previously had an interview with a guy named Jim Vun Cannon. He was a—

Denver Snuffer: Yeah.

Rick: He was in the First Presidency of the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ.

Denver: Right.

Rick: He's no longer part of that church.

Denver: Oh!

Rick: Interesting thing—they've actually split, and it was just kind of like Brigham and Sidney. And he ended up more like Sidney and started his own church: Everlasting Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Days.

Denver: Ooh, wow!

Rick: Yeah, so—

Denver: How about "The True and Living, Real Authentic, Mostest Correctest Version of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?" And I'm sure there's an acronym you can put together out of that, that would spell something obscene probably. *[laughter]*

Rick: But anyways, so your movement is kind of named—

Denver: Look, I— Yeah.

Rick: Do you have an official name for your church?

Denver: No, no. There isn't a church. There isn't a church except in the sense that the church was defined in the revelation given to Joseph Smith. The church that existed were people that repented, came unto the Lord, and were baptized. That's it; that's the definition of a 'church' (see T&C JSH 10:19 RE), and that definition preceded the organization in April of 1830.

There were at least three different congregations or fellowships of people that existed before the incorporation took place in April of 1830, and all of them are considered members of Christ's church because the definition was just repent, come unto me, be baptized in my name for a remission of your sins. And that— If you're going to say there's a church, that's it.

We don't require— I don't require— I don't know of anyone that says you have to leave the LDS Church to accept the work that God has got underway today. I have said a Catholic priest could come and be baptized for the remission of his sins, accept the Restoration, and go on his way and retain his status as a Catholic and a priest if he chose to do so. Methodists can join. Latter-day Saints can join. There's nothing to be done except have someone that has authority to baptize, baptize you.

And then the name of the person, because we're required to keep track of the names, has to be submitted to another volunteer who's keeping what's called a Recorder's Clearinghouse; those names get given to him. At the end of a year, all of the names are alphabetized and they're put in for that calendar year, and they're entered by hand into a book. There's no electronic version; no one can hack it; no one can go online and get into it. There's only one, hand-written copy.

If you want to give it to him by mailing it in to him, the mailed-in copy will be recorded. The mailed document will be destroyed. At the end of the year, all the records are destroyed after having been entered into the book. And the only thing that that is done for is because the Lord *requires* that that book be maintained, in order to present it at the Second Coming as one of the things that we're accountable for keeping. We're accountable for keeping very few things, but that *is* one of them.

And so, repent, be baptized for the remission of sins, get your name recorded with the Recorder's Clearinghouse; that's it. Then you're part of it. And you can be a Mormon Latter-day Saint; you can be a Jew. You can be whatever you want to be, but you have to accept the terms that the Lord has outlined in order to come aboard.

And if you want to fellowship with others, there are informal gatherings of people that fellowship together. We're expected to pay tithes from *surplus*, not what's required to support you and your family but of your excess. Of your surplus, one-tenth is paid into the fellowship, and then the fellowship determines who among them has a need. And if someone among them has a need, then the tithe is used to help those who have health problems, medical bills, education problems, food, housing, transportation issues. They get spent inside the group to help and benefit those within the fellowship. It doesn't get gathered— There's no big slush fund. It gets used to help the poor.

If there's an excess that ever accumulates in a fellowship, then ultimately we expect to build a temple and the funds can be donated for *that* purpose. But tithes are not used to support a hierarchy—your religion should require that you sacrifice. If you are going to practice it, you should practice it as a person of faith, sacrificing to do the will of the Lord. No one gets remunerated for anything they do.

I gave a series of lectures. I had to personally pay to rent the facilities that I used in order to give a series of lectures. People organize conferences now voluntarily: *They* rent the venue, and *they* publicize the thing, and *they* do all the work with volunteer efforts. And if there are any costs to be advanced, they advance them. If they ask me to help defray costs, I help. But no one's— I spent a lot of money of my own doing the things that I've done; no one's paid me anything for what it is I do.

Rick: So somebody can join your movement and continue to go to the LDS Church?

Denver: Absolutely. Yeah, a number of them have. In fact, some interestingly-situated people have.

Rick: That's interesting.

Denver: I wanted to clarify that, as it turns out, the website scriptures.info (i-n-f-o) was available. All of the scriptures are available, for free, online at scriptures.info. You can either read them all there *or* you can connect to the website and it will read them to you—in a variety of voices. You can have the scriptures read to you, all of these [*tapping the new scriptures*]; you don't need to buy a leather-bound set. But they're also available, exactly the same document, through Amazon in a soft-bound, not leather-bound copy, available online. So, they're very accessible *for free* online. They're available from Amazon in a paperback form, but the leather-bound copies—there was a limited print of those and they're virtually all spoken for, but Benchmark will have a handful.

(*Note: The most up-to-date, print-on-demand version of the Restoration Edition of the scriptures is available for purchase at scriptures.shop.)

Rick: Wow.

Denver: And so—

Rick: Well, that's good to know. So, yeah, I'm just curious if there's anything else about — So, you're going to try to build a temple? Do you have a location for that?

Denver: Not yet. Not yet, but...

Rick: Here in Salt Lake Valley, I assume?

Denver: I assume not.

Rick: No?

Denver: Yeah, I assume not. I think there would be— The likelihood is there would be active interference, active opposition.

In my view, the adversary cares about *very* little, but the one thing he intensely cares about is the establishment of something that reconnects Heaven and Earth, in a way that fulfills prophecy and opens up the return of the Lord. Because the Lord's promises all have to be vindicated, and right now, there isn't *any possibility* in all of the existing efforts. But, we're hoping to make the effort to accomplish just that. At which point the adversary will feel threatened, and so, I expect there will be some trouble and opposition in getting it done.

And in this place, in particular— I mean, why am I an excommunicated Mormon? I'm an excommunicated Mormon because they don't want people *reading* what I write. They don't want people *listening* to what I have to say. I'm *not* hostile; I'm *just trying* to get to the bottom of the correct story. I'm *not* picking a fight with anyone. If I'm threatening, it's not because I'm trying to overthrow *anything*; it's because I'm trying to understand *correctly* the sequence of events and the content of the Restoration and the effort of the Lord to achieve an end goal that, right now, appears to have been compromised and hijacked into real estate development and hierarchical servitude.

It doesn't make any sense to me. I was happy to pay tithing—give them my money! I was happy to go to their meetings. They didn't want me there because they didn't want people to read what I have to write. And they certainly, I'm sure, don't want this material [*tapping the new scriptures*] becoming generally available because it— In the original iteration in Joseph Smith's day, it was markedly different than what we've got downtown in Salt Lake—or in Independence, Missouri, or in Monongahela, Pennsylvania, or in wherever that group that left Boulder City, Colorado, is now headquartered. They're *all* off the beaten track.

Rick: Would you consider yourself kind of a unification movement, where you're trying to unify Mormon groups?

Denver: We just had a conference in Boise. We invited everyone to come from all the various— A Latter-day Saint spoke; Church of Christ's representative spoke; Church of Christ Temple Lot...

Rick: Community of Christ—is that what you meant?

Denver: Community of Christ. ...Church of Christ Temple Lot; the group of Latter-day Saints out of Monongahela sent a representative.

Rick: That's nice.

Denver: Yeah. We've had Restoration Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint group — They split off from Community of Christ. They split off because of their desire to emphasize the Book of Mormon, while the Community of Christ is de-emphasizing the Book of Mormon.

I mean, anyone's welcome to come to the conferences. And unifying is unlikely because people don't really want to try and understand and *live* the Restoration as it was promulgated in the revelations to Joseph in the Book of Mormon. They really just want a kind of social-club atmosphere where they can come and be reassured that they belong to the *one and only*, authentic, *real* church that will get you into Heaven with a pass.

And the superficiality of the Latter-day Saint curriculum right now is so *vacuous* that I wouldn't waste my time sitting through two hours of their meetings. I mean, they spare you that third hour now, but it's still *vacuous*, insubstantial. You can't sustain life with the content that they provide at this point. It's been a series of subtractions. It's the opposite of restoration, which is additive; it's deductive—continually deductive.

And so, no, I don't view anything that I've done as being or holding the potential to be popular, to be unifying. I figure every single group gets offended when you talk about what the straight and narrow path may really look like and what it may really require of you. So, no, I don't expect to unify. I expect to be denounced by just about everyone. The more they learn, the less they like what they're learning. *[laughter]*

Rick: So do you— Is it a big movement in Boise, then? 'Cause it seems like you go there a lot. I know there was a 'Boise Rescue' a while ago.

Denver: There's a lot of activity that's taken place in Boise, but the majority of people are far and wide. I mean, I had a fireside, week-before last Sunday, with a group in Europe that— We did it online. But there were people from Scotland, and England, and Holland, and Slovakia, and various places around Europe. There are people all over. I'm corresponding actively with folks in Japan. We were supposed to have a conference in Japan, when Japan shut down because of the Chinese flu problem that they had going on, and we couldn't. We couldn't get into the country for that conference, but it's now rescheduled to take place in October.

There are people in South America; there are people in Canada; there are people in Alaska, Hawaii. There's a group in Africa. Some of these groups stay under the radar, in part because they don't want to be disciplined or excommunicated or rescued. But they only need to submit their names to the Recorder's Clearinghouse; they don't need to stand up and say, "Hey, please notice me. You'll want to kick me out of your Church too." Because if they find that fellowshipping in an existing congregation of Methodists or Latter-day Saints or Catholics is gratifying or satisfying to them, there's no reason for them—other than being baptized and submitting their name to the Recorder's Clearinghouse—there's no reason for them to become a renegade among another people they want to associate with. If asked, they're probably going to teach something that will be markedly different than what other congregations believe, but I doubt they'll be running around saying, "You're all screwed up and you're practicing priestcraft and you're going to hell." I doubt— Although maybe there's one or two people like that. [laughter] But I wouldn't think...

Rick: Are you aware— Are there any efforts to root out— I'm not— You probably don't like the term "Snufferites," but I know that's what you're called.

Denver: Yeah.

Rick: But people in active LDS congregations, who've been rooted out, that say, "Hey we like what Denver's doing"—

Denver: Yeah, yeah. Sure.

Rick: There is kind of an underground movement.

Denver: Oh, yeah.

Rick: Kind of like the polygamists—we go after the polygamists; we go after the Snufferites.

Denver: Yeah, yeah. Pretty much. Two former bishops were—I met with them last night—who were chased off precisely because they were reading and talking about material that I had written. So, yeah. Yeah, it's silly, really.

But if you're not going to teach anything, if you're not going to try and understand what went on in the Restoration, and someone says, "I would like to try and comprehend exactly what went on in the Restoration; I'm willing to explore that"—*but*, you're willing to still stay a member of this institution—why would you care? I mean, you've got to be awfully thin-skinned. You have to be extraordinarily insecure to say, "If you think *that* way, you're *so scary* that I want you kicked out of our organization." Why does that scare you? Why does that alarm you? Why are you so thin-skinned?

I mean, I take all kinds of *foolish*, practically obscene, mischaracterizations made of me on the Internet, and I don't react to any of 'em. Why do I care? I'm not what you think I

am if you've envisioned this heretical monster gobbling up, you know, the souls of men. If that's what you think, yeah, go ahead and think that, but it doesn't change the reality. Your foolishness never defines me. So, if they think I'm foolish, why would *my* foolishness define *them*? Why aren't they live-and-let-live?

Rick: So, what would you say is the attraction to people who are attracted to your movement?

Denver: Most people have awakened to the realization that what they're hearing institutionally—either in polygamist groups or Community of Christ or Latter-day Saint—they've awakened to the realization that what they're getting fed from institutional sources is decidedly limited, misrepresentative, lacking depth. It's not soul-satisfying. And these people are— You would call them the best that there are. They're the Seminary teachers; they're the Bishops; they're the Gospel Doctrine teachers; they're the serious folks that have been on High Councils.

You'd be surprised at the substantial, thoughtful, reflective character of the people that wind up saying, "Oh, I'd like to go there." Because you have essentially two choices: You either stay with something that you realize is not fulfilling and is insubstantial, and in many cases it's compromised and it's not doing its job, *or* you say, "I've lost my faith in the institution, and therefore maybe the whole of it; the Restoration itself is just a sham." Many people are saved from going to "the whole of it is a sham" by discovering that there is great depth, profound insight, transcendentally important material to be culled from the Restoration; and if welcomed into your life, fundamentally change the way you view your existence here, the way you relate to other people here, and how meaningful your life becomes. Marriages have improved. People that were in conflict, who come in a search for the truth, reach a level of harmony between one another that is soul-satisfying.

These aren't people that I've converted. I've been out here trying to piece together as much of the truth as I can piece together, and I've been joined by people who have helped in that process. The work of the volunteers that put this together— I'm 1 - 2% of the effort that got made to do this, but I'm the beneficiary of it. The hard work, some of the hardest work, was done by a fellow who's sitting here on the Joseph Smith Translation material. These are people, on their own, who have discovered that there are others like them —myself being one of them. And that has coalesced into, now, groups of people fellowshipping around the world together, donating tithing and helping one another with their financial needs, and meeting in conferences from time to time. And now, we have leather-bound scriptures to rejoice in.

Rick: Well, from what I understand— I'm trying to remember your other book, *The Second Comforter*.

Denver: Yeah, *The Second Comforter*.

Rick: Because in that book, that's the one where you talk about how—and please tell me if I'm saying it wrong—but how to have angels visit you. Is that right?

Denver: Essentially, yes. *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil* is a book that was written while I was an extraordinarily orthodox, Gospel Doctrine teaching, active Latter-day Saint. And its curriculum, its agenda, its teaching is trying to get a faithful, active Latter-day Saint to rise up to a higher level of practice of the religion, so that you can stir the Heavens and have some connection be made between you and the Heavens themselves.

It was absolutely correct, orthodox doctrine of the Church when that book was written. The manuscript was submitted to Deseret Book. They spent seven months troubling over whether to print it or not; ultimately decided not to print it but encouraged me to get it into print. It got into print, and it's an orthodox statement of the highest aspirations of the Church at that time.

That teaching has since been renounced. You mentioned the Boise Rescue. One of the things they renounced up in Boise was the teaching of the Second Comforter, and they recently revised the footnoting in the Gospel of John (John 14:16; also John 9:8 RE and T&C Testimony of St. John 10:11 RE) to eliminate the previous footnote that confirms the doctrine you find in *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*, so that that footnote, that connection, has now been abandoned.

I've been encouraged to do a 3rd edition of the book and to rewrite it from my current perspective, but I believe it is more important as an artifact to show what the orthodox teaching of the LDS Church was in 2006 when that book was printed, in contrast to where they are today in 2020, abandoning what was once welcomed, accepted orthodoxy. It's now heretical and denounced.

Rick: Well, to me it would seem to be bigger— *The Second Comforter* would be a bigger problem than *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Denver: Yeah.

Rick: Because the Church doesn't— It would be concerned that angels— And I guess the question...

Denver: But if you read the book and you look at the footnotes, it's hard to say, "Well, someone should be in trouble for writing *that*." It's impossible; it's orthodoxy.

Rick: Well, I'm just trying to understand why *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was the bigger problem, 'cause to me, your first book would be the bigger problem and I don't understand why.

Denver: I believe that *Passing the Heavenly Gift* takes so much varnish off the institution's history that it makes it look like they've failed to perpetuate what was once here, and that they've fallen into disarray. But the end of that book—and I advise

readers if they read it to go all the way to the end—the end of that book gives you reason to have continuing faith in the Restoration and to remain affiliated and believing. But I think their view was Brigham Young looks bad; territorially, Utah looks bad.

Rick: Heber J. Grant looks bad.

Denver: Heber J. Grant looks awful. But I'm quoting Heber J. Grant's journals—that's Heber talking about himself. It's actually Heber recording in *his journal* what his mother said to him about himself, and then Heber writing about, you know, what his own limits were.

Rick: Because that was one of the issues—it was denigrating Church leaders, right? That's why you were excommunicated?

Denver: Yeah. Supposedly I denigrated Church leaders, but how is it denigrating Church leaders to quote the Church leader about himself? If he's being candid in his journal and he's telling you, "I've never had an inspired dreaming in my life," if he says that his mother thinks he's more concerned with money than he is with anything spiritual — I mean, if he's writing these things in absolute candor about himself in his diary, how is it denigrating him to quote him? It's understanding him. It's grasping the concept that there's a man who is absolutely, religiously insecure about his status before God, unsure about where he's going in the next life, standing as the President of the Church. He was probably scared out of his mind every time he got up in a General Conference to address people because he was hollow inside. He *knew* he was an empty suit. But he knew what he cared about, and he cared about managing '*the kingdom*' and making the kingdom function financially and like a business, and he did his best to do that. Whatever his skill set was, that's what he put on the altar, and that's what he had *to* altar. But religiously, there wasn't much there.

And there are a lot of leaders, I think, sitting down in red chairs in Salt Lake *today* that would look at the comments about Heber J. Grant in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and would identify with that; would say, "That's *me*. That's the awful position in which I find *myself*. I got nothing to offer." I mean, go listen to General Conference and tell me if you think that's vacuous or edifying. If it's enlightening— Joseph Smith, when he gathered a group together to give a talk in a conference, *startled* them with an abundant outpouring of new light and knowledge; talked about how it was his role to always turn up some new thing in order to help edify and move the process along. (From a discourse given May 12, 1844; see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pg. 364.)

Well, what we're moving along, in a process if there be one, is real estate development, and community development, and condominium development, and land development, and investments in multi-billion-dollar funds. And in that, since the kingdom is in magnificent shape, the kingdom is prospering at the hands of businessmen.

Joseph Smith had a pending petition for bankruptcy at the time he died because he didn't know how to manage money. Joseph Smith was largely responsible for raising the

hopes for the Kirtland Safety Society that was an abysmal business failure. Joseph Smith was not a good businessman; he was an awful businessman. In his store, when the poor and needy came in, he gave away the inventory instead of collecting for it. The store was going bankrupt. Everything he touched he failed at in business, as a businessman.

And Brigham Young figured out how to monetize Mormonism and how to turn it into something that would pay off. And the leaders ever since then, they learned some bad lessons; they learned some hard lessons. Heber J. Grant had to go to the bankers in New York to try and get money to make payroll to keep the employees of the Church paid, including the compensated General Authorities. And those were *hard* lessons in *hard* times.

So, then you have Boyd Packer calling the clerk, the financial clerk of the stake before he arrives, and he says to the financial clerk he wants to know the names of the top ten tithe payers in the stake for him to interview when he comes out to call a new Stake President. And the financial clerk gets upset about that, and picks up the phone and calls and tells me what an obscenity *this* is. But *they don't understand* the history. The history is that you put...you *ingratiate* people with money *to the kingdom*, because the kingdom has on occasion run into *huge* deficits. They were afraid of financial collapse on *multiple* occasions and were only rescued by bankers back East.

Well, now that they've turned things around in the post World War II era, and they've got billionaires and multi-millionaires who are out there, you ingratiate them and you get their loyalty to the kingdom by having them called into positions of authority. They become your Stake Presidents; they become your Bishops; they become your Patriarchs; they become your Seventies. They become your leaders because you never know when you're going to have another hiccup.

The joke about the Jesse Knight building down at BYU, when I was there, was that Jesse Knight was a drinking, smoking, swearing Mormon, but he made a fortune in the mining business, and when he finally returned to activity in the Church, his tithing that year cleared all of the debts that the Church had. And so, they have the Jesse Knight building down at Brigham Young University in honor of the tithe that the man paid.

There are pragmatic reasons why choices are made; they are based upon historical precedent. They have very good reasons behind them if you're trying to manage a trillion-dollar empire as the Church leaders are. But you think about what they have— They've undertaken a project in Florida on 133,000 acres of ground, approximately. The development costs will be about a trillion dollars by the time the project is finished. Five-hundred-thousand people will live and work and buy groceries and go to school, and do everything in life, there in that community.

They started that project just a few years ago. There will be members of the Quorum of the Twelve who are not yet added to the quorum, who will come aboard while that project is underway. They will live their entire tenure in the Quorum of the Twelve and

die, and that project will not be finished. They will inherit it as a project. They will babysit through the completion, and they have no say in whether or not that's what is going to occupy an extraordinary amount of time. That's the way the Church has wound up today.

They've called good businessmen. N. Eldon Tanner helped straighten out a whole host of problems, and they've gone to school on that. Some of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve were called specifically because of skill sets that they have in the business community—skill sets they have in banking; skill sets they have in law. To his credit, the current Church President didn't come aboard with a background as an accomplished businessman, lawyer, or banker; he came as a surgeon, and that's an oddity among the group that's up there. But I understand and I empathize with the plight. They really don't have elbow room. They've got an empire, and the empire *demand*s attention. They *have* to give attention to it, and they're doing a marvelous job in paying attention to it.

That was not what Joseph Smith set out to accomplish. It's not what the Restoration was intended— And if Joseph Smith were here, my guess is he *would* bankrupt the Church— probably go out and find great causes, poor people, needs, fund whole hospitals, don't charge anyone anything, help the benighted, run into the inner cities and see if you can bring peace and an end to the murdering and the violence that goes on there, improve schools, give away schools—do everything you can to fund an effort to try and rehabilitate an entire nation first and then the world second. I think Joseph would wreck the Church; the kingdom would be in disarray. You would have, you know, the hat being passed to see if we can pay the utility bill for the ward building. It wouldn't be the empire that we see if Joseph were here because his priorities were contrariwise.

Rick: Well, I do want to hear your final thoughts on their— Just one more question before we talk about Joseph Smith. As far as— 'Cause I know there was a lot of early gifts. I think my opinion's—in looking at your movement—you know, this idea that angels visiting you is very attractive to some people. Also, I was just curious about speaking in tongues. That was an early gift. Is that something that you've had in your movement?

Denver: The way that Joseph had encouraged the 'tongue thing' was to be able to communicate with other people. Yes, the answer's yes, but the way in which it's manifest itself is not something that we've done a lot to publicize, advertise, or speak about. Signs generally attract the wrong sort of folk. So, while there are abundant things that have and do take place, they're not spoken openly too much because the wrong kind of people get attracted to that sort of stuff. And we're interested more in substantive, reflective, serious-minded people who are genuinely interested in trying to find and do the will of God.

We lost a light.

Rick: I know. [*chuckles*] That's alright; we'll finish up.

But so, anyway, just wanted to hear your final thoughts on Joseph Smith.

Denver: Yeah, I think Joseph *is* a very misunderstood character. Obviously, he felt confident in his role and in addressing the truth and in testifying about the things that he had experienced, but he was *not* the character that people make him out to be. Of the two of them, I think Emma was the stronger personality, and I think Joseph was deferential *to* Emma. I think Joseph had a number of vulnerabilities, including the fact that he didn't regard himself as well-enough educated or erudite to compete with a Sidney Rigdon. And so, he gave Sidney Rigdon a lot of deference and a lot of opportunity to demonstrate leadership because Joseph respected that he was better educated than him. He also respected that Emma was better educated than him.

He was shy around women. I mean, the idea that Joseph was some sexual aggressor around women—he was *not that*. He and Emma were close. You read the correspondence insofar as it's preserved between the two of them: He was devoted to her, and she was defensive of him and devoted to him. And of their two personalities, she was the stronger of the two. The idea that Joseph would, you know, hold her in defiance and get away with it doesn't match up with what you see—to the extent that we've got material to look at to examine their lives.

Emma was a force to be reckoned with. And Brigham Young wanted her as a prize, to be able to say, you know, he's got *her* onboard too. And she would not allow herself to be used in that fashion—to her credit. She went to the grave defending Joseph.

And Joseph, I think, was bold as a lion in defense of the things that came from God, and oftentimes frustrated at people around him, but he kept interpreting their intent to be exactly like his own intent. So, when he uncovers the character flaws of John Bennett, and John Bennett cries and says, "Don't, you know, let it out; I'll be a ruined man," and he betrays sincerity and he makes an attempt at suicide, Joseph Smith is convinced he's repented; he's got a good heart. He assumed a *lot* of people had a good heart who turned out not to have, 'cause he thought they were like he was. That was a flaw; he misread people.

He was insufficiently cynical about the foibles of other humans, and ultimately it wound up costing him his life. But he died with a conscience void of offense towards others because he committed very few offenses towards others—particularly offenses towards women that he's currently charged with. People ought to be ashamed of the way they speak of him. God foretold that fools would hold him in derision, but the noble, and the pure in heart, and the wise, and the prudent would constantly seek blessings under his hand.

And part of his hand under which we seek blessings are in the books that we've put in print. Because I would rather be regarded by the Lord as someone who is wise and noble and pure in heart, than a fool to be held by God in derision as most people regarding Joseph Smith do. They haven't spent the time; they haven't taken the effort; they haven't done the work to figure it out. But Joseph was who Joseph said he was, and if anything he understated *all* that he was—to his credit.

Anyway, thank you! It's been obnoxious, really, to be sitting here. Let's not do this again!
[laughter]

Rick: [laughter] Alright. So, well thank you, Denver Snuffer. I really appreciate you sitting down with us here on Gospel Tangents.

2020.07.12 Presentation of the Leather-bound Scriptures

July 12, 2020

Sandy, Utah

I see people have figured out where the shade is and have seated themselves accordingly.

I figure everyone who's here knows enough about how these [the Scriptures] were put together, what the content is, how it has been voted upon—

(And someone hasn't muted their Zoom. If you'd check your Zoom and mute it.)

The purpose of getting together was two-fold. One was if anyone who doesn't know anything about the project came, we were gonna make a presentation to bring them up to speed about what these things are/what their content are, but apparently, everyone here is already acquainted with that. So, we needn't deal with that.

There are two things that have been supplied by the factory. One is a set of the Scriptures. I'm holding the complete set in my hands. Then, the Book of Mormon has been also turned into a Hebrew-friendly, English-language version that's called The Stick of Joseph. If you ordered a set of Scriptures, you will get these three volumes. You had to order separately The Stick of Joseph, and that's the other volume that isn't... It's duplicative of half of the New Covenants.

What I have as samples are two different kinds of leather—the buffalo in cognac, and the goatskin in British tan leather. I'm gonna hand them... You know, let's pass 'em around to whoever wants to look at 'em. I'm gonna hold onto this one.

When you look at them, at the top, they make the interior of the book as a separate block. It's all sewn together, it's put into a press, and then it's sanded on the edge. The corners are rounded, and then this is gilded—covered with gold leaf. Then that is put into the cover. Well, to hold the material, the block—the book block—together... Normally, at the top of a book, you get cloth that's stitched around. The top, if you look at the book block binding, it's held together by leather. There's a leather insert that's more durable than the fabric is. It's a suede product that's put on there.

And then the interior—the black paper—is a kind of durable polyurethane that will probably outlast most landfills. They'll be pulling this stuff up through the next cycle of creation because it's extremely durable. That product is what the exterior leather is bound with.

In your best Bible publications, very often the leather cover is then glued to a backing. This one is not only glued to the backing but if you look at it, it's stitched around so it's both sewn and glued. Sometimes if you have a set of Scriptures, the corner will pull up. These are sewn and they are stitched [glued]; and therefore, they're not gonna come apart. You're gonna have to be really determined to get these to fall apart.

The paper that this is put on is actually 100% cotton. It's a fabric; it's like it's been printed on a shirt.

In the middle ages, when they started making books using the Gutenberg press and making book blocks, they learned that insects will destroy the book; they'll eat the interior. And so, gilding on the edge is actually an innovation that was developed in order to preserve the book against both moisture getting in ('cuz it's a metal barrier to the moisture) and insects. It preserves the thing.

The leather that is on these is dyed with vegetable dyes, which are both extremely durable but also very leather-friendly. There are some dyes that look great, but they have a propensity to degenerate the leather. And so, the book doesn't last as long with those kinds of dyes.

We had a fellow who helped with this whole project who knew about leathers and dyes and paper and all of the componentry that's involved. And when the decision was made to go with the printer who promised to match all of the specifications at the lowest price, then the issue became what kind of leather was he going to use? And our committee member said that he knew a group in London that supplied vegetable-dyed leather—it was durable; it was high-quality; it was some of the best—and in all the world, he thought this London supplier was the place to go to get leather. So, he contacted this supplier in London that supplied leather for books that he put together and found out that they sourced their book leather from India. As it turns out, the factory that produced these is located not very far from the leather supplier that got used to provide the leather that got used in the binding of these.

We ran into some issues as we were going along. A paper that we really wanted to have for the book was unavailable 'cuz you had to buy 'em in bulk. It came in a spool that was enough to print a million volumes or so. We were only gonna print about seven thousand books. The factory gave us a different kind, and it was not coated. This is coated. But while they were putting together their program for this, a fellow who wanted to buy some copies of the Quran looked at the project that they were doing for us, chose the paper we wanted, and ordered a half-million copies of the Quran to be printed, which resulted in the paper that we could **not** afford to use on our projects, suddenly becoming affordable and usable for our project. So, this is not only 100% cotton paper, it's also the coated paper, which means that if you're writing with ink on it, it will not spread. The coating will hold the line, and it also helps with bleed-through. Although, if you're absolutely determined to get something to bleed through the page, just hold that felt pen on there long enough, and it'll, sure enough, go through.

The thing that has surprised me in... Unless anyone... Does anyone have any questions about the manufacturing or the quality of these things or how they were put together?

The thing that has impressed me as I've begun going through them is that Joseph Smith was given the assignment of translating the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of

God. He translated the Book of Mormon, and the project was finished, and it got into print in early 1830. Shortly after it was in print—because of recommendations that were made to have legal protection—the decision was made to incorporate a church in April of 1830. When the enthusiasm for incorporating a church came along and inquiries were made, there were approvals given by heaven for the organization of the church. The initiative to do the Book of Mormon came from heaven. The initiative to organize a corporate church came from people, and heaven said, "Sure, this was what you can do and how you can do it." But heaven had another initiative that it wanted taken. Before the end of the first year, after the Book of Mormon was done and in print, the Lord gave another command, which you'll find in—I think it's section 18; I don't have a copy of it with me.

(Does someone have the Teachings and Commandments? You've got Teachings and Commandments? Yeah, let me look at it... I like the idea of walking off-screen for these people on Skype.)

This is almost... Shortly after the first meeting between Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon (it's on the 7th of December of 1830), and this is toward the end of a revelation: *And a commandment I give unto you that you shall write for him, and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in my own bosom, to the salvation of [mine] own elect, for they will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep...* (T&C 18:6) and so on. This is the command that started the production of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. They began with Genesis, and what is now in the Old Covenants book of Genesis, which used to be (in part) in the Pearl of Great Price book of Moses (that's now been moved into Genesis where it was located in the Joseph Smith Translation), that is what tumbled out right after the command was given to begin the translation process. In fact, I think in the Pearl of Great Price, they date almost all of that Genesis material we find in the book of Moses—they date that in the December 1830 timeframe as it began.

So, that project was undertaken beginning in December of 1830. As the translation goes forward, there's an alignment that happens sometime early in the next year—it was in, actually, September of 1831. A revelation and a revision to Exodus happened almost simultaneously. In the revision to Exodus, the text is corrected and changed at the point that the second stone tablets are to be produced. The first one got destroyed; so a second one is gonna come out, and it's not going to be the same as the first one had been. The second one is going to include things that were omitted from the first, and the material relating to a higher form of priesthood (contained in the first) is omitted from the second.

And in the command that's given, there's a conversation between Moses and the Lord, in which He talks about how Moses would be part of a holy order—something that we had learned about much earlier in Genesis. Moses would be part of a holy order, but that was gonna be withheld from the balance of Israel because of their disobedience.

At the same time as that, there is a revelation that comes out. In it, it talks about how when the Lord removed Moses from Israel, He removed the priesthood from Israel. That portion that allowed you to come face-to-face with God was removed from the people of Israel so that it was discontinued. The revelation in the Teachings and Commandments (or Doctrine and Covenants) relating to that and the text of Genesis agree with one another. And I had an exchange with a fellow who's been a real valuable research assistant to the committee working on all these things. He's got all of the documentation about all of the changes that were made to the Joseph Smith Translation—a project that he has worked on for many years **before** the Scripture project; he joined the Scripture project late, and we literally were done with the Joseph Smith Translation. When he joined, we found out that everything we'd done was inadequate, incomplete, and that his research exceeded (by far) what anyone on the committee had done. So, the Joseph Smith Translation of the Old Testament and the New Testament was thrown out, and the work started over again. And the Joseph Smith Translation spilled out.

We exchanged some emails as I was looking at the comparison between the end of Exodus and the September revelation in the Teachings and Commandments, and it appears that they are both absolutely interrelated—that the Exodus text and the Teachings and Commandments text are both September 1831. But you can't tell which happened first. They were more or less simultaneous with one another. Joseph had been through that text and had edited it and then (apparently because of the revelation) went back and re-did the text and apparently re-did it again before we got the final version that appears now in the Exodus text.

Then there is a commandment that's given... It's actually not a commandment; it's a permissive "Okay, you can do this now." They were tired of the Old Testament. They really wanted to get to the New Testament. Sidney Rigdon being a Campbellite evangelical minister (basing most of his ministry upon New Testament text), they really wanted to get there. So, another revelation (I've got it marked in another set—I didn't bring a marked-up set here to pass around, so handing me it won't help)...

In any event, they get permission to go ahead and start translating the New Testament. So, they begin in the New Testament. Shortly into the revision of the New Testament, they come across a description in the book of John about the resurrection of the just and the unjust. And it appeared to them that there had to be more than just a resurrection of the just and the unjust in the afterlife, and so it provokes an inquiry—and what we get is D&C section 76 (T&C section—I think 69... You gotta become ambidextrous with these Scriptures; eventually I will only be able to cite the T&C; right now I'm still a novice. I think it's 69), the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory. That was simultaneous with working on the book of John in the Joseph Smith Translation.

Later, you can tell when they are in the book of Revelation because there's a series of questions and a series of answers about "What does it mean to have four beasts? What does it mean to have a sea of glass? What does it mean..." Now, the answers to the questions are not put into the Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament because he wasn't required to change the text of the New Testament. But the answers to the

inquiries about what these things meant that are in John's vision of Revelation are in the Teachings and Commandments, and the dates that you'll see on those are the dates in which they're working on that part of the New Testament translation. In short, when (in December of 1831) the command was given to start a revision or translation of the Bible —

And the revelations **all** call it "translation," k? What Joseph was doing was not looking at a Greek text; he was not looking at a Hebrew text; he was not looking at some source material and then figuring out that there is a better way to convert that source material into English. It was purely revelation. It was... Nothing existed that allowed for the book of Moses material to spring out of the text of Genesis. He had the text of Genesis, and it was altered/it was augmented/it was supplemented/it was elaborated upon by revelation which the Lord and the revelations always referred to as "translation." So, you're looking at a text; you're getting a revelation; you're expanding the text. **That's translation**, according to the way in which the language is used in these texts.

So, as he goes along and he does this project, he will acquire some papyri in...what? 1835? And then they'll begin the translation of Egyptian papyri, and out will tumble the book of Abraham—a **translation**. And now we've got a lot of scholars trying to figure out, "OK, if this symbol in Egyptian (as far as we know) means 'that,' and Joseph says that it rather, instead, means 'this'—A-ha!! We've discovered that we can criticize the translator!" If you're looking at what's going on in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible and the revelations that are occurring that are recorded in the Teachings and Commandments, you are really headed into a dead-end street if you believe that you're going to be able to capture what Joseph Smith did by saying it's simply a word-for-word movement from one language into another—because it was nothing like a one-for-one movement of language from one to another in the translation of the Bible. There's nothing like that in what happened in D&C section 76 (T&C 69)... And I've said 69 like three times—can someone look? It's... Do you have a T&C?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's 69.

DENVER: Is it 69?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

DENVER: Dude! I rock! Just like that! I mean, look, I've only been looking at these since a week ago Thursday, so that's pretty good.

...which is one of the reasons why everyone who lacks a conviction that the Book of Mormon was generated by the gift and power of God and that Joseph Smith was actually accomplishing something in furtherance of what God intended to do in the last days... Everyone who lacks that conviction wants to be able to explain, in a way that is satisfactory to the skeptical mind, what it is that Joseph Smith was up to. Because if you can satisfactorily explain it to your own mind, then you're halfway to being able to dismiss it because methodologies are not without basis to criticize/reasons to quibble

over/reasons to say, "Hmmm...that's not so good." Look, criticizing the work of Joseph Smith by an intellectual approach to the Egyptian Book of Breathing material (that was in the Joseph Smith papyrus that was accompanying Facsimiles 1, 2, & 3) is a dead-end. It will never get you there.

First of all, Egyptian understanding of the language begins with the Rosetta Stone; and the Rosetta Stone reckons from about... Well, it's Ptolemaic; it's what? Maybe 160 BC? Languages change so much over a period of 500 years that the very same language you are speaking right now is the language Beowulf was written in, it's the language that Chaucer wrote in, it's the language the King James Bible was written in, and it's the language that is spoken today. Do you think if you went back to the King James folks and you simply spoke in today's vernacular that "dude, like, they'd dig and understand what was happenin', man." Do you think they'd dig that? Do you think they'd be with ya? You'd connect? Is that gonna happen? Not.

Everything I said is comprehensible to you because you watch and listen to what's going on in media today. Beowulf is so gibberish-filled that unless you get a translation into more modern English... There are people today that can't even read the King James version of the Bible, and what's that? 1611? The further back you go in the very same language, the more it disconnects from what's happening. Every 500 years, the language is so revolutionized you can't read it.

The text of the book of Abraham reckons from something that is about two millennia before the text that was produced in the Ptolemaic period that is the source from which Joseph derived the inspiration to produce the book of Abraham. Scholars get frustrated because scholars can't capture... They can't capture what it is that Joseph Smith did. They want to be able to do what Joseph did/to explain what Joseph did so that they might stand a chance of also doing **that**. But (to borrow from Mark Twain) the difference between what the scholar can do and what Joseph Smith did is the difference between a lightning bug and lightning. Joseph was doing something altogether different, on an order of magnitude that scholars will never be able to replicate.

And so, when you hear the scholarly criticisms of anything that Joseph did, you are hearing the words of fools that are holding in derision the very thing that the wise and the noble and the pure in heart will constantly seek to obtain as a blessing under the hand of Joseph. Eventually, I assume, they may become wise enough in their efforts to finally catch up with what Joseph Smith did.

But **you**, with these new Scriptures—having what has tumbled out of Joseph Smith—have access to the very thing that the Lord said was in His bosom. He wanted us to have the Scriptures *even as they are in my own bosom, to the salvation of my own elect* (T&C 18:6). That's the purpose of Joseph undertaking the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. It was called by him the "fullness of the Scriptures." Well, if you just reflect for a moment on the concept that the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible is what generated the fullness of the Scriptures and without it, the Church would fail (Joseph prophesied), then what you get from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible are the

most substantively-informative, doctrinally-rich, historically-surprising sections of the Doctrine and Covenants or the Teachings and Commandments.

That effort provoked another effort that was qualitatively different because of what Joseph undertook in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. And then, because of the failure, once the command was given to bestow for the first time the higher priesthood inside the organization of the Church and that happened, there was an absolute failure on the part of every one of those who had been ordained. The marvelous gifts, the wonderful spiritual experiences, the great power that was supposed to accompany that, turned into apostasy after apostasy, ex-communication after ex-communication, and if you've read *A Man Without Doubt*, you see the preliminaries for why Joseph produced, then, Lectures on Faith. That failure in the initial ordination to priesthood authority that turned out to be a complete debacle, if Joseph Smith were a fraud would've represented a serious set-back. It would've been discouraging. It would've said, "Maybe all of this stuff that I'm up to is just not going to amount to anything." But what Joseph Smith did was he responded and reacted exactly like a person who knew that this was the work of God and knew that God would ultimately not only stand behind it but vindicate it and bring it to its successful conclusion. And so, instead of getting discouraged, he set about to write T&C 110, which is Lectures on Faith.

Lectures on Faith was intended to be a remedial book to **fix** people whose doubts overwhelm their ability to move forward in faith, people who would like to believe but want the Lord to help their unbelief. *Lord, I believe! Help [thou mine] unbelief* (Mark 5:9 RE). And Joseph sets about to do **exactly** that. He doesn't do anything that suggests his **own** crisis of faith. Nor does he do anything that suggests that he doubts God's behind the work. He proceeded as a man without doubt in God and in the process of what was unfolding at that point. And so, we get Lectures on Faith, designed to be remedial—for all of us, as well as anyone that got them.

This T&C 110—at one point this was considered to be the curriculum of the School of the Prophets. It was in the Doctrine and Covenants as the doctrine; it was the very first section; and when it was originally type-set in the first publication of the Doctrine (Lectures on Faith) and Covenants (the Book of Commandments)... When it was originally published, the print size for the Lectures were larger than the print size in the rest of the book. You'll notice, oddly, that the print size varies in the Teachings and Commandments,—out of respect for exactly the same thing. There are bigger words because... well... they're bigger words. Okay? And so, **this** mirrors what Joseph had done when he put the Lectures originally into the text.

There's a section in the back of this that tells you what was excluded. It's called "Excluded Revelations." And it tells you what was left out of **this** that is included in the Doctrine and Covenants. And some of them are excluded because the people voted and said, "We see no value in that." There are a number of sections that are included in this that are dealing with administrative problems in an organized church that we haven't felt the need to organize.

The Book of Mormon rolled out when there were already people, and the Lord had already defined what His Church was. He defined the church as those who repent and are baptized and come to Him. That church existed in three separate groups in three separate locations at the time the Church was incorporated on April 6th of 1830. But the incorporation on April 6th of 1830 distracts everyone from the fact that there was a larger body that existed that had not become part of the corporate Church. Over time, the corporate Church has its own interests, its own concerns, its own wealth, its own priorities, its own needs. And so, it has **redefined** what the Restoration is about to **emphasize** the Church organization and to **de-emphasize** a number of things that result in the suppression of the gifts of the spirit, the suppression of people receiving revelation—in fact, the fear that people will **receive** revelation is trying to be hedged-in, controlled, curtailed by saying, "You only get to get revelation for yourself in the **calling** we've given you in the Church."

But as you look at the structure that they gave to the organized Church, literally every position within the organization is an elected office—"all in favor, indicate; all opposed, by the same sign." You **elect** a bishop; you **elect** a Relief Society president; you **elect** a high councilman. Their position is elected office. And then they can be voted **out** of office by the same vote that put them in, and someone else can be voted in.

Priesthood existed separate from the organization, independent of it, and before the organization came around. As you read these new Scriptures and as you read the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, what you will find is that outside, independently, wholly-separate from the structure that was created at the time of Moses—as a means of governance and establishing temple worship and establishing a hierarchy within the temple of functionaries to perform various Aaronic priesthood functions—wholly separate from that, there are people that are given one-off assignments (from the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Judah), they're given an assignment (from the tribe of Benjamin) by God, directly to them, and then they discharge the responsibility. And very often, they're killed as a result of the ministry that they were asked to discharge.

So, the structure that you get in the Teachings and Commandments that reflect organizational concerns once the Church was incorporated represent, in one respect, the same kind of thing you see in the Old Testament. Joseph Smith said all—**all**—of the prophets of the Old Testament held that same priesthood as Moses, but they were ordained by God Himself—meaning that there was not this continuity of succession or laying on of hands from one to the next (to the next, to the next), down in a continuous line. The function that was being discharged by the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron operated automatically by reason of their descent from father and mother. Outside of that, there was another form of priesthood that did **not** descend by father or mother. It came by the will of God. (There's an explanation of that given in the book of Genesis, dealing with Melchizedek and his ordination. It was conferred upon him in the same way as it was on the Fathers—by the voice of God.)

In the tracking of priesthood in the earliest lineages, there's a direct line that comes down from Adam through ordination, and every single one of them not only got an ordination, they also got the word of God conferring upon them that authority that had been ordained to them. In the case of Enoch, he was ordained under the hand of someone holding that authority when he was 25. But he was 65 when God then conferred that authority upon him. In the case of the Old Testament prophets, the authority came directly from heaven. It interrupted everything that was going on. And despite the fact that they were expected to give heed to the words of the prophet—because those words came from God; a message from God, delivered by a messenger means that that person is operating in the role of a prophet. And therefore, they're telling you something that comes from God, and you're expected to give heed to that.

On the other hand, if the message that is being delivered comes from vain ambition or from a false spirit, then what you are getting is the message of a false prophet. The false prophet delivers a message—doesn't matter how good it may be—it does not originate from God. A true prophet delivers a message that originates from God, and that's the difference between the two.

Throughout the Old Testament, we have examples continuously of a benighted people who are struggling along to give slavish observance to a hierarchical establishment in order that they may be regarded as righteous because they did what they were supposed to do. Their garments had the appropriate hem; they killed the right animal at the right place at the right time. If you're a woman on your period, you were unclean, and you respected that, and you stayed away. If you were a man and you touched something dead, then you were unclean, and you had to go and take care of that. Every bit of these details were part and parcel of becoming "righteous," and they did them. And standing apart from all of that, God sent messengers that said, "I have enough of your sacrifices. I am sick of the blood of animals. What I desire is in the heart. Bring to me that heart." And they kill these people because they're unorthodox, offensive, and they're preaching a false gospel—because everyone knows that if you're not adhering to the ordinances that had been established in the law of Moses, that you could not be good. You could not (certainly) be righteous.

The colloquy between Christ and the tension between those established authorities that come through in the Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament really are stunning.

I have to admit, the Joseph Smith Translation has been so difficult to access, and the online version of the Scriptures are so... I can read on a computer screen 50 times, and it doesn't sink in. But you give me a book and let me read it, I'll be able to tell you something. I can remember the place on the page where it's located. I knew where to look in 18 'cuz I've seen it. I know where to look in 20 because I've seen that too. I can't do that on a computer screen.

So, the only place that I was aware of in all of the Scriptures where it was clarified that a new dispensation mandates a new baptism, the only place where I knew that existed

was in the Testimony of St. John in the exchange between Nicodemus, on the one hand, and Christ—where he's making inquiry, and Christ essentially says, "Your ordinance work..." (Because they were practicing baptism—no one went to John the Baptist and said, "Why are you baptizing?" They went to John the Baptist and said, "Why are you... What authority are you using to do your baptism?" Because baptism was a common thing.) When Nicodemus went to Christ in the Testimony of St. John, Christ clarifies that new dispensation mandates new baptism. That shows up in the Teachings and Commandments as a revelation, where it says your dead works under your old law won't cut it; new baptism is required, even if you've been previously baptized a hundred times. It also shows up in the Joseph Smith Translation with a change that clarifies baptism, once His dispensation begins, mandates that there be a new baptism that take place. So, there are details that creep in (in the new Scriptures) that are completely missing from the existing canon of Scripture, other than these.

On Friday evening, I was talking about the Lord's acceptance of the Scriptures in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, and in the Answer, He says that the Scriptures (as they're presently being presented to Him for acceptance) are adequate for His purpose, meaning that it's really not a glowing endorsement: "These are the best; these are the best of the best! I'm shocked that you guys are so good! You've really impressed the hell outta heaven!" Instead, what He says is, "This is adequate. We can work with this. We can get what needs to be done, done with the text that we now have."

The text is revolutionary, and you may have to search it to find all of the threads to pull them together to have it all add up to the picture that the Lord wants to have emerge, but what He's given us, He tells us is the Scriptures as they exist in the bosom of God. It may be that every single one of the texts omits some important stuff. But whatever is omitted from one has been picked up in another. And if it cannot be fixed through any other means—not through the Joseph Smith Translation, not through restoring the Lectures on Faith, not through going back and getting the original text of the Teachings and Commandments instead of the perverted text that has been put in the Doctrine and Covenants—if it can't be fixed through any of those means, then the rest of it has been fixed by filling in with new information that exists nowhere else other than in the Teachings and Commandments. There are things in there... Two portions of the Doctrine and Covenants that are thrown out are replaced by two insertions into the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant. And so, all the things that are necessary to round out the basic understanding required of people—in order for the Lord to move forward to the conclusion of the Restoration and the establishment of His city of Zion—has been adequately put into the Scriptures and are acceptable for that purpose (to both God and to us). And they more fully reflect the bosom—what is in the bosom—of the Lord, His intent with these Scriptures than anything that we have had heretofore.

So, if anyone has any questions, I'd be happy to answer them. But I think I've managed to keep it under one hour, which was the objective. And we'll get out of here before the sun gets any higher and any more of you are in the sun than are presently.

[Responding to a raised hand] Yeah, yeah...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Your T&C, where is that?

DENVER: It's floating around somewhere... Oh, she's gonna be making covers. She's measuring them/came today to look at them and measure them. She's gonna make covers so you can carry them and look rather LDS-like. [Laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a question.

DENVER: Yeah, yeah...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When you were talking about John the Baptist, Vern and I had a discussion (about Nicodemus and Christ and the conversation) on the way up here. John the Baptist is an Elias, correct? He's the messenger for Christ.

DENVER: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, wouldn't he have had the authority to do baptism? Obviously he had the authority to do baptism...

DENVER: Yeah, yeah. He was ordained by an angel when he was eight days old. John the Baptist had authority. Look, when you are dealing with dispensations... It's not abundantly clear in Scripture, but there's enough there to be able to understand what I'm about to say. When you're dealing with dispensations, you almost always have a beginning of a dispensation, and then a take-down of that dispensation at the end. Moses established the dispensation of Moses, and John the Baptist came under the right lineage to the right family to a priest who was ministering in the temple immediately before his conception, who was named by an angel and came into that lineage in order to close down the dispensation of Moses. And so, you have two people. You have the beginning (which is Moses), and you have the end (which is John the Baptist). And they both belong to the bookends of the dispensation.

The Mount of Transfiguration, when Christ began yet another dispensation immediately in the wake of that, had appear to Him the beginning and the end of the prior dispensation. The beginning with Moses; the end with John the Baptist, who appear on the Mount of Transfiguration—and at that point, Christ's then the sole authority—the sole governing authority—presiding appropriately over the kick-off of yet a new dispensation. He would then commission Peter, James, and John, and you can argue about how long it took for that dispensation to lapse into apostasy. But no matter when your argument is, there is no question that John was around. So, it began with Christ, and John was around at least to the end. And among those that came to minister to Joseph Smith were Christ (in the First Vision) and John is mentioned also (in the letter of September 1842, while Joseph's in exile—D&C 128—I have no idea what the number is in the T&C, but I will one day be able to say, "T&C so-and-so").

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So where'd the... I have a follow-up question. The people that were baptized by John the Baptist...

DENVER: Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: ...would have needed to be rebaptized under Christ's new dispensation.

DENVER: And they were.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 'kay.

DENVER: They were. They were heeding the words of a Mosaic dispensation prophet by going to John and being baptized. And they were accepted and justified, and they pleased God because they submitted to the forerunner. But as soon as Christ's dispensation kicked off, people were baptized anew. And that's why it says that Christ's disciples and Christ Himself were busy doing baptisms—only the disciples did more than did Jesus, but they also baptized.

But there was a hand here first... Yeah?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, I... what is the end of Joseph Smith's dispensation? Or is it on a hiatus?

DENVER: Well, it depends upon the view that you take. And so, one view that I think can be reasonably justified is that the death of Joseph and Hyrum ended it—just ended it. However, at the time, Hyrum Smith had a son who was five years old who had been blessed by Joseph, and that son would ultimately become a Church President, Joseph F. Smith. And he would've had, if not the priesthood, he would've certainly enjoyed the blessings of the priesthood that had been conferred upon him because those blessings persist even when the one from whom they came is gone; the blessings persist. You can argue that it persisted until then, or you can argue that—based upon the language of the January 1841 revelation (D&C 124; T&C "I have no idea")—based upon that, the dispensation in one anemic form or another persisted until either the release in '75 (I think... '78?), either the release or the death of Eldred G. Smith. But at that point, it's clearly been abandoned. And so... I mean...

My personal view is: didn't matter how much good faith and well intentions there were, the death of Joseph and Hyrum brought to an end something that was irretrievably compromised at that moment. There was no way to land on their feet. And it didn't matter that there were...

Heavens, by the time Joseph F. Smith gets access to the Church Archives, they've been altered deliberately by Willard Richards as Church Historian and the Kabal that were working in the Church Historian's Office. I mean, you see evidence of the manipulation

of the texts in the photocopies that they put online of the *Joseph Smith Papers*. You know, you remove Joseph and Hyrum, you literally...

If you take a more kindly view of Emma and her son—her **sons**—and the people that remained behind and rejected the leadership that the Quorum of the Twelve (at first) and Brigham Young (ultimately) offered, it's really apparent that, conceptually, Joseph's immediate family got something out of the Restoration very different than what Brigham Young, the Twelve, and the Kabal that followed him got out of the Restoration. And then, based upon what the most successful group (the LDS group in Salt Lake City) then did, they magnified, they amplified, and they successfully grew this different view of the Restoration into something that to this day has become one of the biggest enemies of understanding the truth that there is.

And the family of Joseph Smith did a good job of portraying the very big differences in the heart and in the mind of those that were most immediately connected with Joseph at the time of the Restoration. But as that group has gone along, they've gone adrift and become... Well, they became vulnerable in numbers, and then vulnerable financially, and then vulnerable in popularity, and they made accommodations all along the way in order to try and scramble and to become more popular in the world—something that the Book of Mormon absolutely advises everyone against—and the LDS Church seems to be tracking pretty much what the RLDS Church/Community of Christ did. They're only right now, oh, 60 years behind. Well, they're about in the 1960s, I think. But they'll get there. Based on where they're going, they'll get there.

Yeah, yeah, yeah... You had a hand up.

AUDIENCE COMMENT: Do you see a correspondence between in Third Nephi when Christ came to the Nephites and, of course, they were all baptized, you know, with that, at that point. And... But just previously, maybe a year, maybe even less, or at some point or that they'd all been baptized as well. Is that the same correspondence?

DENVER: I think it's exactly the same thing. All of those people that came to Bountiful were faithful, believing, and they practiced baptism openly in the Book of Mormon. So, they would've been baptized. Christ comes, and He gives authority to baptize, and they all get baptized again. And all of the baptized people are baptized again because it's the same phenomenon you see in the Testimony of St. John, Joseph Smith Translation, and in that revelation in the T&C about "your old baptisms don't matter; there's a new thing afoot." And once the new thing's afoot, then you have to be baptized.

So, one of the reasons why I think after September 2017 Covenant Conference—Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise—probably there's nothing wrong with being baptized again. Might be advisable. And if it's a hot day, and it's cold water, it's refreshing.

What? What? You don't have any questions! You got answers! What are you talking about?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, my question is about the covenant that the Lord offered. There's individuals that have been rebaptized but aren't sure about taking the covenant. Do you have any thoughts on that?

DENVER: Good for them. Whatever they're willing to receive, welcome them, and love them for what they're willing to receive. And whatever they're not willing to receive, bear with them in patience. Because, literally, we aren't through the Restoration yet. You don't even know what you're gonna reject yet because as it continues to roll-out, everyone gets offended at some point about something! It just is the way things work. Tim—

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ok, so I have a question about the new Scriptures...

DENVER: Yes...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: ...And my question's a little long, so please bear with me. So, my understanding of the new Scriptures is that we're supposed to, you know, we're supposed to read these Scriptures, we're supposed to internalize the lessons so we can develop into the kind of people that can have a temple and receive more.

DENVER: I think that's part of it. Yeah, I think that's part of it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, my understanding of the actual changes to the new Scriptures is it's mostly minor things, like changing verse—not order—but verse length and other things. So, my question is: how do the changes to the Scriptures bring us to where we need to be when compared to the Scriptures we've had forever?

DENVER: It's a good question. This is a handout about the Scriptures and where you can order them that someone brought. Here—do you want to start passing those around?

The differences are not minor. The differences are not just formatting. There are substantial changes that have been made. Just last night in reading the new Scriptures, I put up a post after reading the content of T&C section 59. Part of the content of T&C 59 got lifted out and put into something that is in the Doctrine and Covenants as section 107. Bruce R. McConkie called Doctrine and Covenants 107... I probably shouldn't do this; you know, apologies to Matt—to Sarah, really. [Mimicking Bruce R. McConkie's voice]: "The great revelation on the priesthood, Doctrine and Covenants section 107, beside which there is nothing greater that has ever been given by the voice of God to man to explain the function, office, duties, and privileges of the priesthood..." except Doctrine and Covenants 107 is a mess. It's not a revelation; it never tumbled out as a text. It's an amalgamation of a quilt work of stuff that got woven together and palmed off as if it were, in fact, a revelation, and it's not! But some of the material within it does exist in revelations, including what I was looking at last night in T&C 59, which is now a post on my website.

In T&C 59, it's clear; it's talking about people that are gonna have positions of authority within the Church, and it mentions the president. Then it says, the president... This is his responsibility: to be a seer, a revelator, a prophet, a translator; and then immediately after that it says, "and anyone that's in any of these positions better learn their duty and show themselves approved, or else they're to be removed from office." In Doctrine and Covenants 107, that same kind of language appears with something about the president who holds all the gifts and him being a prophet, seer, and revelator. And then it goes on to talk about Seventies and about a bunch of other people, and then there's this stern warning that follows after all these other offices; it says, "And everyone that stands in any of that, they better show themselves approved and learn their duty; otherwise they're gonna be removed." Putting so much in between the president and the duty that he has to the point that it gives the warning, that you can altogether miss the fact that the warning is being given to the **president**.

The warning is: You better rise up, and you better become a seer; you better become a prophet; you better become a translator; you better become a revelator. And if you do not, you do not stand approved in your office. Get out of there. Now, can you imagine if that were the way that the Scriptures had been worded all the way back in the beginning. These are seismic changes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay, so you're saying there's these stumbling blocks in the old Scriptures, and this removes them. So...

DENVER: Innumerable.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: ...in 107, they took a Scripture of **responsibilities** that the prophet has to us, and they twisted it around to **privileges** that the prophet has...

DENVER: **Over** us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: ...that we need to honor him.

DENVER: Yes, "privileges over" verses "duties required."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, so it's a complete 180.

DENVER: There's a lot of that in the Scriptures. There's a lot of that. In fact, in reading... As I've been reading the new Scriptures, I'm actually reading all three volumes at once. Right now I'm in... I think I'm in Numbers; I'm in Luke; and I'm in T&C 59, which is where I got last night. Reading them all at the same time. It's amazing how they fold over into one another, how they all move together, how they all express one central common idea.

Yeah, what's wrong with you this morning?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There seems to be a real parallel with Abraham and with Nephi in recovering the brass plates, Abraham having the records of the Fathers, and what's happening today. The emphasis on "the word," rather than some outward show with a building or whatever, a pomp and circumstance. It's curious to me that in my conversations with believers over the years, there's one person that was an instigator for what's happening now, and that's Hugh Nibley, and at least in people's studies. And I'm wondering if maybe he was a forerunner. 'Cuz you've taught that he is almost solely responsible for the Book of Mormon being finally in our consciousness.

DENVER: Yeah. Yeah. When Hugh Nibley died, Tom Nibley spoke at the funeral in the Provo Tabernacle. The First Presidency sent a letter. Dallin Oaks was there. Bateman was there. Jeffrey Holland was there. I believe that Dallin Oaks read the letter from the First Presidency. And there was a lot of nice things that were said, but it was Tom Nibley's comments at the funeral of his father that sort of got a murmur in the crowd—about how his father had now completed his assignment on earth and could rejoin the council of the prophets in the heavens now that he'd moved along. And the reaction of Bateman to that was like someone had just poked him in the groin with a broom handle. Dallin Oaks and Jeffrey Holland suffered those comments graciously, but it was really problematic to have a mere professor who'd never been a general authority be held in such regard.

When David O. McKay asked Hugh Nibley to prepare the priesthood manual on the Book of Mormon and Hugh Nibley took the Book of Mormon seriously—as if it were right out of the 600 BC timeframe, that it fit absolutely hand-in-glove into that time period—up until then, people weren't even taking the Book of Mormon seriously. Whole Stake Presidencies, High Councils, Bishoprics had never even read the Book of Mormon. And then it turns out to be a manual on—a Melchizedek priesthood manual—on the Book of Mormon because of the work of Hugh Nibley.

Yeah, he was perhaps a lone voice crying in the wilderness about something that had been pretty much neglected. To his credit, of all things, Hugh Nibley took the mission, the ministry, and the life of Joseph Smith seriously and searched long and hard to find how to make everything that he learned and understood fit comfortably within the message, the ministry, and the life of Joseph Smith and the revelations that came through him. Hugh Nibley was singular in that respect and was a formidable—a formidable—force.

He used to come over to the law school when I was a law student at BYU. He hated lawyers; he thought it was just a vocational school and that we were wasting our time. But he'd come over to talk to the law students in the moot courtroom, and he'd walk in mumbling about something and get upfront and just start talking. And he said he was just over at the math building or the history department or—depended on which occasion it was—he was just over... And he said, I went there to talk to them about "this," and we never got time to talk about "this," and what I was gonna say to them was... And he goes on, and he gives the talk that he was supposed to give the preceding hour. We ran out of time, and he left, and I thought, well, someone at the law

school oughta follow him to hear what in the hell he's gonna say to the lawyers, 'cuz that's coming out at the next talk he's gonna give!

"Oh Lord, forgive us for being assembled here in the robes of the apostate priesthood to bestow upon ourselves the honors of men, which are nothing in thy sight," was Hugh Nibley's prayer at the commencement when they asked him to give the prayer. And then a few years later, he came back to give the commencement address (imagine inviting him back after that), and he explained why he prayed that way in the commencement prayer, and that talk ("Leadership to Management: the Fatal Shift") is in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, and it is a sobering, sobering assessment using government, education, and business to tell you what's happened to the Church.

Hugh Nibley never approached it directly; it was always with guile. And that's the best way to deal with egomaniacal leadership.

Well, okay, now we're well past an hour. K, so, dude, we're done. Except I need to take at least one Old Covenants (buffalo skin) and then a New Covenants and T&C (calfskin). This is two of them. No, no, they all got mixed together. All I need is a T&C in goatskin.

Thanks for coming. Good to see you all.

NOTE: This meeting was held at the home of Bryce Bartel, and was simulcast worldwide by Zoom Video.

2020.09.06 Ether 3 Discussion

"The Sermon on the Picnic Table"

September 6, 2020

Living Waters Ranch, Challis, Idaho

From Vaughn Hughes, via text message to Reed Larsen on September 8, 2020 in response to a request for context and a general explanation regarding what was discussed prior to the start of the audio recording:

Several people expressed interest in what his [Denver's] comments were, and this will be really helpful in relaying them much more accurately than I could alone. I'll do my best to personally record the main points shared prior to the beginning of this, too.

I'll have to think a little more, but I'm pretty sure that was when he discussed how the United States (it's economy, government, military, etc.) is really what is holding the worldwide conspiracy and scheming in check right now, and that this is why "the cabal" (his words) is so focused on it. He pointed out that they only need to succeed in getting someone evil in place one time in order to remove the obstacle of the US from its plans. Then he began discussing how they have attempted to do that in the past versus what they are doing right now...

[Audio begins after Denver has already begun speaking to a small group of interested people, while sitting on top of a picnic table just outside of Celebration Hall at the Living Waters Ranch in Challis, ID.]

Denver: ...then the game is over entirely, the effort is to compromise the way so that the voice of the people are not allowed to choose. You have to substitute for the voice of the people something **other than** the voice of the people.

Now, one way in which they attempted it (during past national elections) was to use the words of "virtue," to use the words of "goodness" to sell a lie. They're not saying, "Hey, come do something evil." They're saying, "Hey, come do something good."

[Directed to Stephanie] I'm answering a question about the Book of Mormon.
[Crosstalk.]

So, the method of selling falsehood through propounding a lie can only get you so far. No one's gonna say, "Yeah, yeah, I'm all in for that evil stuff." They're gonna say, "No, no, I'm in for virtue. I want **tolerance**." Well, "tolerance" is another way of concealing permissiveness, which is wickedness.

Vaughn Hughes: Packaging.

Denver: We're not going to sell you permissiveness, which is wickedness. We're going to sell you tolerance, which is virtue. That only got you so far. Right now, the new scheme is: find a way to get rid of the voice of the people altogether.

We choose who we choose to lead. And the Teachings and Commandments warn you that when the voice of the people uphold wicked men in high places, then the people mourn because of wickedness in high places. We don't generally do that. As people, we generally say...

And it doesn't matter how many perverted people there are in the country, the majority of people are fundamentally sound, fundamentally moral, and fundamentally know the difference between good and bad. They're governed by the light of Christ; it's still present. It's still influencing people, and they're still willing to do that.

So, when the voice of the people were heard in the last general election (and there's only **one** office where **every** single person gets to vote), they elected a guy who had never been in Washington—because Washington has become odious.

The reason Barack Obama got elected is **exactly** the same reason that Trump got elected. They may come from two **way different** places, but it's exactly the same. Here's a Black outsider that talks about re-doing things. He is not part of the cabal in Washington. We want that outsider to have an opportunity to fix it. He got elected, but in fact, he was not who he presented himself to be.

So, the next president after him was an outsider that said, "I'm gonna drain the swamp." And everyone agrees, "It's a damn swamp; let's drain the thing. Let's get rid of..." So, he gets elected. And the swamp now has been very vocal in opposition to him for years. If you listen to his Inaugural Address, everyone that was standing there in the podium was **shocked** at what they were hearing. They were **offended** by this guy.

Vaughn: Both parties.

Denver: Both parties. The outgoing president and the one before him thought this was a complete **maniac** that was at the podium. We don't **get**... We don't **get** what he was doing.

[Directed to audience member] You're cold? [Crosstalk.] You were supposed to open your mouth. It's like Benihana's; we're flipping shrimp... [Audience laughter.]

Okay. So, we elect the outsider, and what does he say? He's not talking to anyone that's on the podium. He says, "You—out there, you folks—**you** have now taken back **this** place." If you listen, it was a **radical, radical** statement.

Now we've had nothing but pissing and moaning for four years going on because he's actually trying to accomplish that. You may think he's a barbarian; you may think he's uncouth. He's a New York construction... building... I mean, with all that that implies,

that's all you've got. You listen to Bloomberg, you listen to any New Yorker, and you listen to Trump—you're getting the same personality. They're coarse; they're rough; they're vile—in many respects. But he's all about "the people."

Whoever gets elected next is going to be for the exact same reason that Obama got elected and Trump got elected, because the voice of the people is gonna want someone that is not part of that cabal. They want something different. We don't trust Washington. The government's broke. All you have to do is convince them. Sooner or later, there is gonna be some smooth-talker who will come along and say, "Yeah, let's drain that swamp." And he's gonna be right there among them; he's gonna be part of the same cabal.

Vaughn: The swamp.

Denver: If they can get the system reworked so that the voice of the people is **not** heard—okay?—that they "get above you"... If they can get it so that your vote, and my vote, and his vote, and the vote of the people (in general) no longer matters, but the system itself is compromised so that it is **not** what people want, but it is what the cabal wants... If they can get this Vote By Mail (cheat by mail)... If they can get a system in place that allows them to **substitute fiction** for the voice of the people, at that point, at **that moment**, the game's over.

Vaughn: And is that where we've "suffered them to get above us"?

Denver: Yes. At that moment, the game is over. Because as soon as you can get...

It does not matter what the words of the Constitution state. If a corrupt judge can say those words mean something **other than** what those words say/that it means whatever... I mean, one theory of constitutional law is that "law" means what judges say. As soon as you adopt the theory that law means what judges say, you no longer have **anything** except what the judge says.

Vaughn: You're unanchored.

Denver: You're **completely** unanchored. It becomes **whim**. It becomes...

Male Comment: It's what happened in the Communist regime. That's what Solzhenitsyn points out in his book.

Denver: Yeah. They have elections in the Soviet Union, but they mean nothing. They have elections in Banana Republic, but they **mean** nothing. And the **reason** they mean nothing is because the voice of the people is not heard.

Vaughn: So, how do we not suffer...

Denver: In this **context** of this passage [Ether 3] warning the Gentiles... At **this** moment, the **plan** is not to get a liar to tell you **smooth** things that mean something other than what those words he uses mean (because he's redefined them). He's telling **you** a lie because he's motivating **you**.

What it means at **this** moment... Because they've attempted **that**, and it hasn't worked. The new attempt is to say, "Okay, we simply need to subordinate the voice of the people into something else." That's **this** moment. If this doesn't work, because eventually...

I mean, voter suppression is now viewed in terms of, "Let anything-that-pretends-to-be-a- vote in, because otherwise, you're discriminating." If instead, it turns around (because of judges) to mean, "Voter suppression means your vote needs to count, and **your** vote needs to count," and if what we're doing is we're taking something that is unanchored in an actual citizen voting, then I am depriving **you** of a vote, and I'm depriving **you** of a vote and **you** of a vote because I'm counting **fiction** instead of the voice of an actual citizen—and **that** ought to be the standard that gets applied, and it's still possible that that is going to be the outcome.

The one thing that everyone ought to be absolutely sure of is that God knows what's going on—**everywhere**, among **all** people, at **every** moment, from second to second. He knows **everything** that's going on down here: what's going on in Pakistan; what's going on in China; what's going on in Alaska; what's going on in Nicaragua is **every bit** on the mind of God as much as what's going on right now in Challis, at this moment, here. He takes it **all** into account. He knows how the reverberations at some obscure corner of the world affects what's going on everywhere. He's got **everything** in mind. He knows the hearts of people.

Conspiracies **always** have the same objective—that is, to "get above" and to dominate and to subjugate and to have power so that free agency is abrogated, and with "blood and horror," you manage to reign and compel people to accomplish evil purposes, to frustrate the ends of the salvation of man. It's **always** been the same.

However, the Lord is capable of frustrating the plans of the adversary in order to fulfill covenants, promises, fulfill prophecies to accomplish **His** objectives. Nothing that is going on is going to succeed (on the adversary's side) that will frustrate the fulfillment and vindication of the covenants and the promises and the prophecies that have been made on the Lord's side. So, whether **we** suffer this to happen or not depends not just upon our own steps that **we** take, but it depends also upon how the Lord is gonna go about vindicating His word, accomplishing His will, and doing what He **promised** the Fathers that He was going to have done. But I can tell you that **if we get Zion**, even if it is an absolutely **minimalist** accomplishment...

You look at the vindication of all of the prophecies about the coming of the Lord into the flesh that were given from the days of Adam down to the time that Jesus got here, and when Jesus appears on the stage, it is an **extraordinarily local, modest**, almost **inconsequential** event—so much so that from the vantage point of Rome (or the

vantage point of the Chinese Empire or the Huns or Egypt—because Egypt was still, though Ptolemaic at the time, still an empire of sorts), Jesus was inconsequential. But He fulfilled all of the promises and the prophecies.

It may have taken a third of a century before the significance of that life found its way into the Roman Empire. It may have been a long time before its significance was recognized, but it accomplished exactly what the prophecies said would happen. To think that in order for **Zion** to be vindicating what the "Lord has promised will happen" must be front-page headline news is actually kind of silly. I mean, how many people heard Noah's warning?

[Directed at Stephanie] Hey, I'm glad you brought a book, but it's too dark to read, hon.
[Audience laughter.]

Stephanie: I have a phone flashlight!

Vaughn: She's ready for the long haul.

Stephanie: You've got about ten more minutes, and then we're...

Denver: ...we're **outta here!**

So this... I mean, it morphs. It changes. When they get frustrated in one direction, they go in another direction. The direction in which it was once headed was "lies." The language of "virtue," the vocabulary of "goodness" (in order to conceal the corruption and the desire for power, control, and compromise) now has turned into a new program. And the new program at this moment is fraud and deception—that allows the voice of the people to be suppressed while the pretense of "open voting" and "voting rights" is exalted. And whether **that** will be the flavor of the month that the adversary employs in the next election (or six months from now or five years from now) depends upon how things morph. Everything changes from moment to moment. Everything worldwide changes from moment to moment.

There was literally a time (it's actually in the new T&C)... There was literally a time when our Lord was more focused on events going on in Baghdad (because what would happen there would **affect**/it would reverberate all the way to right here)—more focused on that than He was on anything else that was going on in the entire world. I mean, it's in the T&C, but at the moment...

Vaughn: So, it's a point in time description...

Denver: That's a **point in time** that literally, I was so surprised by that, that my reaction to Him was, "Does the God of the whole world **care** about **Baghdad**?" I mean, I'm in my own mind... I grew up in Idaho. I mean, I'm kinda... It's like, "Are you shitting me?" [Audience laughter.] But you don't say **that**. I mean...

Vaughn: It's not the right comment.

Denver: "Does the God of the whole world care about Baghdad?" He's a lot more somber and careful a character than am I.

Female comment: He cares about the whole world.

Denver: But yeah, the Lord cares about everything, everywhere, all the time. And we are in an extraordinarily delicate balance—everywhere, everything that goes on. You may think your life doesn't matter. **Your life reverberates everywhere**—what you do, what you choose, how you live. Sodom would have been spared had there been a handful more to leaven. You're supposed to be the leaven! You're supposed to be the preservative/the salt. What you do, how you fight against individual compromise, what you do to hold on within yourself—however faint and flickering that candle is—everything you do to hold onto that **matters!** Everywhere—in the whole world!

This place is a dark, horrible, difficult, challenging place. The father of lies has as his objective putting a chain around the entire world, based upon people acting in reliance **upon lies**. And every time you permit a lie to govern the choice you make—every time you permit a lie to motivate you to go do or say or think something—you've become yet more part of submission to the father of lies. We're supposed to be fighting that.

And every time you manage to pierce through the lie and to see something that's true, you've done something to preserve **this world**. Not just yourself—**this world**. This is a **very** delicate ecology. And that little bit of light that you have within you? Do everything you can to preserve it. Do everything you can to hold on to it. **It matters** in the ecology of this world, in the preservation of this world, in your status as salt/as leaven/as something that is a preservative. Because **that** battle that's going on...

Vaughn: That's "His commandment to us" is what you're saying?

Denver: Yeah.

Vaughn: That's the "suffer not" is what you're describing.

Denver: Fight against it. Fight against it. I mean, we don't have the ability to keep it all intact. But He will preserve it—in order to vindicate His promises—for so long as we still need His preserving hand to give us the opportunity to vindicate the promises/to vindicate the prophecies.

And so, that was **my** introduction for the act that will follow: Kirk Strong who's got a... [Audience laughter.] He's got a great stand-up comedy act.

Hey, my wife told me that I have to be out of here. So, Kirk, carry it away! [Audience laughter and banter.]

Vaughn: Thank you, Denver. Thank you.

Stephanie: You don't have to leave until [indecipherable]. [Audience laughter.]

Kirk Strong: The funniest thing is you said after... [indecipherable]... Well, we don't use your name until you're dead! [Audience laughter.]

Vaughn Hughes: Wow. Wow. That is beautiful.

[Addressing those who came late] Ether chapter 3 is what we were talking about. There's an admonition that Moroni gives to us as Gentiles about "suffering not" that certain things happen. And that was my question—is, "What does this mean? What does it mean for us to do—individually?" And it's very individual; it is not something where it's...

Denver: It is. It is.

2020.10.04 The Search for Truth

Worldwide Zoom Conference

Sunday Main Session

October 4, 2020

Kurayoshi, Japan

Greetings to Nihon, the Land of the Rising Sun.

I am grateful you have come to this conference. It is about "The Search for Truth" because we seek to find and understand all truth. The people who organized and speak at this conference are not part of an organization or church, but let each person search for truth with us. We welcome anyone who also seeks for truth.

Religion should be truth. But while all religions do have some truth, every religion has lost many truths and therefore are all incomplete. We are a small group of people on a quest for truth. We welcome all truth we can find, for truth is our religion.

Across all the world's nations and cultures there are stories about the earliest times when gods created this world and put mankind here. Those stories tell us that in the beginning there were great truths taught to the earliest fathers by gods. But records written at the beginning do not exist, therefore our memory of the beginning is incomplete.

You live in an ancient land, but the name Nihon for your island-nation was first given your land at the same time Moses was leading a group of Israelites to freedom from Egypt. Before Moses, the Israelites had only oral traditions about the gods and the earliest times. But the gods revealed themselves to Moses and taught him about the creation of this world. Using what he was taught by the gods, Moses wrote five books called the Torah, telling about the creation of this world and the gods' commandments for Israel. Those became the first five books of the Bible.

After Moses, generations of Israelites had men who also wrote sacred books in which they recorded that the gods continued to speak to them and reveal truths. For more than 1,000 years Israelites added more books to the five written by Moses, which together became the *Old Testament* of the Bible.

Like the Israelites, your ancestors had only oral traditions about the creation of this world handed down for generations. The Emperess assigned imperial court scholar Ono Yasumaro to write down the traditions that became the first record, *Kojiki*, Nihon's oldest book. At nearly the same time the *Kojiki* was written, an Israelite prophet named Isaiah was adding his sacred book to the Bible.

Isaiah's record was added as the 22nd book of the Bible. He foretold of a time in the distant future when people who love truth will be gathered together from all over the world, including some "from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for

the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts ... from the four corners of the earth." (OC Isa. 5:5) We believe Isaiah wrote about what is happening now and we will see this gathering of people happen. We believe that Nihon is one of the islands of the sea from where some will come to be gathered. People from Nihon will bring truths with them that we want to gather. We believe the gods want all of us to search to find truth.

After writing down the *Kojiki* or '*Records of Ancient Matters*' Ono Yasumaro assisted in recording a second record book, *Nihon Shoki*. Both the *Nihon Shoki* and the *Kojiki* are to followers of Shinto what the first five books of the Bible are to the Israelites.

All these books, the Bible, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* tell of the earliest history of the creation of this world, at a time when gods made this world.

The Bible tells the story of the first seven generations of mankind, or the patriarchs. The first man was named Adam and in the seventh generation from Adam was his descendant named Enoch. The *Nihon Shoki* tells the story of the first seven generations of the gods. In both of these accounts of the creation, this world and the people in it all are created by, or descended from, the gods.

The records of the Israelites were important to prove that the Israelite people were specially chosen by the gods to help the world understand the truth. The records of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* were important to establish that the emperors of Nihon were descended from and chosen by the gods.

Like the genealogy used to prove the authority of the emperors, the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the Bible is used to show that Jesus Christ was chosen by the gods to be a 'second Adam.' The Bible reports that the first man, the father of all mankind, Adam disobeyed God. Because of his disobedience the gods decreed death for him and all his descendants as punishment for that disobedience. The gods sent Jesus Christ, a son of god, to repair Adam's disobedience.

The record of the life of Jesus Christ was written in four books that began a series of 27 books comprising the New Testament of the Bible. All 27 of these were written by a single generation of writers.

The Bible tells us that unlike Adam, Jesus Christ obeyed all the commandments of the gods, and therefore He did not deserve to die like all others. Adam's punishment of death was just, but Jesus Christ's death was unjust. Therefore, death could not hold Jesus Christ in the grave. He rose from the dead, and broke the power of death.

After Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He commanded that everyone everywhere be told the story in the Bible, and that they learn He rose from the dead so that all people who have ever lived will also be brought back from death and live again. It was no longer important for people to be Israelites. All people, in every land, are invited to come and learn about their salvation from death, disobedience and error by learning of Jesus Christ and following Him. Teachings of Jesus Christ are the basis for the religion of "Christianity."

Old Testament Jews are divided into dozens of different sects and disagree with one another about many things in their scriptures. Christians are divided into 34,000 different sects and disagree with one another about many things in the *New Testament*. The same words are used to define these faiths, but believers understand the same words very differently. There have been wars fought over these disagreements in understanding.

Buddha lived and taught 200 years after the *Nihon Shoki* was written down. His teachings have also come to Nihon and both Buddhism and Shinto beliefs have become part of your belief systems.

Like Jesus Christ, Buddha taught how to live a peaceful life, with harmony between people. The Bible and Christianity teach mankind to value one another and care for each other. Buddhism also teaches mankind to pursue a path to peaceful existence in harmony with others.

At about the same time Buddha's teachings came to the people of Nihon, two families and a servant led by the gods left the people of Israel and traveled by boat to the Americas. For a thousand years they also kept sacred records of their history and contact between them and the gods. The story of those people is told in the *Book of Mormon*. Their record was carved into metal, buried in the ground, and hidden for over a millennium and a half.

Beginning in 1820 the gods started to restore the lost truths from the beginning. A young man was shown where the sacred record of the ancient Americas was buried in the ground. With the help of the gods, that record was translated into English and printed in 1830 for the first time, so we can now read it. Like the Bible, this record is also scripture.

People who believe the *Book of Mormon* to be scripture are called "Mormons." But, like the Jews and the Christians, Mormons also disagree about many things in scripture. There are over 80 different Mormon churches making competing claims to be the one that is true.

No Jewish sect has all the truth. No Christian church has all the truth. No Mormon church has all the truth. I can say that for certain because the Book of Mormon confirms that what every religion on earth has is also only part of the full truth, and the *Book of Mormon* promises that more will be given to us by the gods, so we can increase in knowledge and wisdom.

The most correct book about this creation is the *Book of Mormon*. It is the standard of truth for today. All truths from any source should be measured by the standard of truth in the *Book of Mormon*.

But the things recorded in the *Book of Mormon* were written nearly 1,500 years or more ago. One book recorded events that took place more than 4,000 years ago. We can read the record of the Book of Mormon today, but to understand a different people, different culture, different society, who wrote in a different language makes understanding the *Book of Mormon* challenging. Because one person sees and understands words from one background, and another person sees and understands the same words from a different background, the words of holy books should be able to help us agree with each other. But instead the words have been used to make disagreements, conflicts, and even violence. It is not enough to have true words in a book. We must also allow the truth to be seen.

Sometimes we see only darkly because of what is inside us. We have a story about how we see only what we want to see, and understand only what we choose to understand. That story is "*Hope and Tarwater*" and I will tell it to you:

HOPE AND TARWATER

Two towns bordered a woodland. Each of the towns had a tradition about the woods. In the one it was said: "the woods are dangerous, and many things there can hurt you. The animals include the mountain lion and wild boar, which have been known to injure many a man; and the bear, which has killed many a man."

As the course of civilization develops the woods are always subdued and tamed. The wild things are domesticated and the dangerous are killed. In time the woods become a backyard, no longer threatening to humanity.

In the other it was said: "the woods are beautiful and many things there can surprise you with their loveliness. The animals include the bluebird and chipmunk, which have been known to sing for hours; and the wild deer, which has inspired many a painter and poet."

As the course of civilization develops, the woods are always subdued and tamed. The wild beauty is domesticated, and many lovely creatures are killed. In time the woods become a backyard, no longer providing humanity with rare scenes of wild beauty.

The first town was named Tarwater for an explorer who had survived there against all odds. He came in winter, and had to find warmth, food and shelter while battling the elements. He felled trees, built a cabin, and burned trees for warmth which he cleared from around his homestead. He slew animals to eat and kept their hides for clothing.

The second was named Hope for a woman who raised her children there against all odds. She came in summer, settled in a meadow, and found everything she needed to survive in or on the land. She placed her tent beside a hot spring, which provided her warmth in the cold weather. She ate berries and wild fruit, and found pine nuts plentiful. She was able to weave the flax growing wild beside her stream and make linen clothing for herself and her children.

The children of Tarwater never entered the woods unarmed. They expected to find danger, and were prepared to meet and oppose it.

The children of Hope never entered the woods without a basket or bag. They expected to find food and flowers, and were prepared to gather them in gratitude.

Lance was a son of Tarwater. James was a son of Hope. They each entered the woods on the same summer day.

Lance entered quietly, expecting to give any lurking danger no notice of his presence. Stealth was one of his weapons. Lance brought a bow and arrow.

James entered singing, expecting to greet the forest's beauty with the joy of his song. Music was his often companion while in the woods. James carried a scroll.

From Tarwater there were no paths into the woods. Those who entered always took their own way, fearing to leave a trail to teach predators there was a place frequented by men. Lance crept about in the shadows, watching for prey and hoping to avoid anything which might cause him harm. From Hope, however, there were paths which led to the meadows and berry patches known to bloom in the woods. James walked along a path from Hope which led into the woods, hoping to find new food to gather and share with his family.

Many bears lurked in the woods near Tarwater. Near Hope, however, the frequent human visitors along well known pathways made the bears leave, for they did not like the company of mankind.

Lance moved with care. His bow ready to set in flight his arrow. He intended to bring meat back for his village and hoped to encounter prey without a long hike. He knew every step he took away from Tarwater would be a required return step while he carried his game. He moved in cautious arcs spreading his search ever wider with each arc that penetrated into the woods. He passed the morning searching without success. Just after mid-day the sky began to cloud. To Lance this meant the shadows may be leaving and could not be used to orient him for the return hike. To mark his way, he took out his hatchet and stripped the bark on one side of a trunk to maintain his orientation using what may be the last shadows.

Now, because of the clouding sky, Lance's journey was changed from arching to a straight line. When the mark on the trunk was still faintly visible from the distance, he cut another mark on the same side of a new tree, and after stripping the bark cut two ax-marks below it to signify this was the second of his marks. When he was six marks away from where he started, he stopped and waited for such game as may cross his path.

It began to rain. Animals would settle down in the rain, and would not wander into his concealed position. It was an unfortunate development, which meant hunting this day was coming to an end. Reluctantly Lance began his walk back to Tarwater.

His return was less cautious than had been his advance. The sound of the falling rain concealed his footsteps, so he needn't take care for his footfalls. Now he was alert for only danger, and not for hunting game.

Bears do not need sounds to help them hunt. But the intermittent sound of the chopping was what originally caught the great bear's attention. It was not familiar to him. He had closed in to site Lance from the sound. But he waited to

begin his hunt of the young man until after the rain began to fall. The sound of the rain would conceal the bear's steps until he was close. Then a charge would allow him to attack Lance before the young man could repel the charge.

Over the sound of the falling rain, Lance heard a distinct "crack" from behind. He knew in an instant it was not rain, but the sound produced by some much heavier object breaking a twig or branch. For the son of Tarwater, instinct took over. He turned behind a tree while loading and drawing back his bow in a single movement. The charging bear was more than his bow could kill. But Lance was taught how to respond to danger of this kind.

He knew bears could run fast uphill, but could not run fast down. Their legs were built for uphill speed, but downhill they were awkward, even clumsy. There was a depression to the left of him, but Lance was unfamiliar with this part of the woods. He could not know if the depression was a bowl inside of which he could be trapped, or a hill, which would put distance between him and his predator. He also knew that his arrow would do the bear no harm if it struck his head, but it might be of great advantage if it were lodged in the front shoulder. It would take some luck, as well as skill, to place the arrow in a spot which could rescue him. So Lance took careful aim before letting his arrow fly.

Immediately upon releasing the arrow, Lance took flight. He could not afford the time it would take to see it hit. His aim had been just to the left, so that as Lance sprinted away toward the depression the bear's changed route would intersect the arrow.

Luck was with him, and Lance's arrow had some effect. When he glanced back over his shoulder, Lance caught the view of a bear tumbling forward. That could mean only one thing: the arrow had struck a shoulder and momentarily caused a front leg to fold. This would add time for his escape.

To his relief, the depression was a hillside. Lance flew to the bottom, then cut sharply downwind and looked for a way to retreat in secret. He needed to find a place where he might not be seen before the bear reached the hilltop. If he was seen, then concealing his scent with the wind wouldn't matter.

He found a rock outcropping that allowed him to change directions yet again, and was certain his dart concealed him before the bear reached the hilltop. This was very hopeful.

The bear took time to bite at the pain in his shoulder. It stung him, and had momentarily cost him the use of his arm. Arrows do not dislodge by pulling at them, and so the bear could only break away the arrow. He could not dislodge the arrowhead.

Ever since God taught Nimrod the secret of making arrows mankind has benefitted from a weapon which always drives deeper after striking its target. The shape takes advantage of muscle movement, and pushes deeper and deeper into the animal once hit. The bear's arrow sank on impact into the shoulder, and his struggle to remove it dug it deeper. In his anger at the sting, the bear recovered his senses and returned to hunt his prey. This time not just for food, but also to vanquish a challenger to his territory. When, however, he reached the spot from which the young man had been lost to his sight, the

young man was nowhere to be seen. He studied the area below, but could detect no hint of movement or scent. The bear moved cautiously into the valley.

Lance, however, was moving quickly beyond the valley, changing directions to conceal his retreat. It was many hours later before he rested for the first time. By then the rain had stopped, and he could listen again for the sound of any movement behind him. He was well, alive and perhaps even now safe from his dangerous pursuer. But he was lost. And it was getting dark.

Most predators fear fire. However a wounded bear pursuing an attacker would not. Lance knew if he built a fire this night he would announce his location to the bear. So he would remain wet, cold, lost and on guard throughout the night. The cloud cover remained, though the rain had stopped.

At first light Lance searched for a clearing from which he might see the horizon. When he finally discovered an opening it must have been mid-day, he thought. He studied it carefully for any sign of a threat both within the meadow and around its perimeter. He thought he saw a man carrying something moving away at the far end, but his view was distant and he could not be sure. When satisfied, he entered quickly to the center, then scanned the horizon for the highest point. He memorized the scene and left quickly and quietly in the new direction. It was half a day's hike to the highest point. On the way he found water, and killed squirrels for a meal.

It was dark when his ascent ended. He would have to await daylight to reorient himself again. Overnight the clouds finally cleared while he slept for the first time since entering the woods. In the morning, from the highest point of the horizon, Lance knew the east from the rising sun, then studied the direction from which he began for anything familiar. Shortly after sun up he found what he was looking for: a small plume of smoke rose in the distance. This would be Tarwater. From where he was standing Lance estimated it would be a day and a half to walk back to his village. He would wait to hunt again until the second day. Until then he would only be journeying toward home.

When James entered the woods from Hope he followed the main path until its first fork, where he followed the path to the right. This he knew would lead to the great meadow deep in the woods. He intended to gather a full load of pine nuts which the sun had dried along the meadow's perimeter. His mission served two purposes: first, to gather food; second, to prevent new seedlings from encroaching on the meadow. By turning these seeds to food, the people of Hope preserved what was a valuable, large meadow in their woods.

When he had hiked half a day, clouds began to gather. James was in no hurry and determined if it started to rain he would take cover off the path. It did rain. He took a forked branch, along with a straight branch. With the straight branch he lifted a dense patch of ferns, propping the branch at one end with the forked one. This made the rain drain away from the raised center, where he sat and waited. It rained until nightfall, and so James determined to sleep on his dry spot beneath the ferns. As the last light of day lingered, he wrote his thoughts upon his scroll.

Early the next morning he set off again in the direction of the meadow. When he arrived he walked the perimeter until he found where pine-cones remained un-harvested. He took out his bag and began to remove their seeds. When emptied, he threw the pinecones back into the trees and off the meadow perimeter. The process was slow, but not monotonous. He enjoyed the work.

James was nearby the fawn for hours before he noticed it lying there. Fawns have only one defense: to lay motionless and hope to escape detection. When he noticed it, James knew by its stillness it was hiding from him. He watched it for a moment to confirm it was breathing. Then he withdrew in reverence. He walked along the perimeter until he found where the pinecones started again in the other direction. Then he resumed work.

Although he intended to leave the fawn alone, he noticed its mother did not return that day. It was late in the evening when his bag was filled, and so he thought it would do no harm to spend the night and see the fawn was taken care of by its mother.

In the morning James checked to confirm the fawn had not yet stirred, then retired to a hiding spot on the meadow perimeter. By mid-day the fawn was moving, and stood. This was a sign to James that the fawn was now in danger, and its mother was not going to return. He walked to it, and it did not flee. He took it in his arms and returned to pick up his bag. As he left the meadow a man with a bow entered the far end.

James' return to Hope was slowed by the load he carried. But the fawn needed care and so James was grateful to repay a debt owed to the forest.

When Lance entered Tarwater many gathered to find out what had taken him so long. He told them the tale of his days of danger and flight in the woods. Tarwater was reminded again that the woods are dangerous, and many things there can hurt you. The wild still needed to be subdued, and its dangers overcome.

When James entered Hope many gathered to find out what had taken him so long. He showed them the fawn and told them the story of his walk. Hope was reminded again that the woods are beautiful, and many things there can surprise you with their loveliness.

Our ideas control our perceptions. We interpret everything through our own filter, our personal point of view. Our cultures tell us what ideas we should value, and therefore because we come from different cultures we hold different ideas.

Today the gods have spoken again to us, and we have also been given more truth from heaven. We have been told we must search to find all truth here on earth, and gather it together into one complete set of beliefs.

Your first ancestors had messages from the gods taught to the first generations by holy men sent to teach truths. The *Book of Mormon* records, "And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins and rejoice with exceeding great

joy," (NC Mosiah 1:15) We believe anciently your ancestors were given truth from the gods.

We come here to Nihon to tell you about how the gods have been working to return truths to the earth. But we have also come to learn truths from you. Your history, your traditions, your rituals, and even your culture have truths we seek to understand.

The people of Nihon on average live more than 5 years longer than people of the United States. There are many reasons for this, and some of them are based on truths we hope to understand and add to our own.

Truth is not always welcome. The truth can require us to change our minds, acknowledge our mistakes, and do things differently. But truth is compared to light in the scriptures. Errors are compared to darkness. We are promised that if we welcome the light, then the light will grow. "And that which does not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light, and he that receives light and continues in God receives more light, and that light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day." T&C 36:4.

Of all people in the world, you who live in the Land of the Rising Sun should understand how growing light is a blessing from heaven. The light of a perfect day is when you have all truth, and no darkness remains in you.

We plan to build a temple where mankind and the gods will associate with each other, like it was in the beginning. We know that the gods expect us to accomplish this, and we are now preparing to do this. When that temple is built, it will be the "ensign" Isaiah wrote about when he described today. People will come from the four corners of the earth, and from the islands of the sea, to assemble in that temple. Isaiah said those who come to that temple will learn about the gods and truths of this world. Isaiah wrote, "But in the last days, it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." OC Isa. 1:9.

We believe the gods intend to keep every promise they made to mankind. We believe Jesus Christ will restore all of us to life. We know that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose from the dead. He has instructed us to be baptized in His name as an initiation to follow Him. Baptism is a ritual to symbolize death, burial and resurrection. We are put under the water, to symbolize being buried in the ground. We are brought back out of the water to symbolize rising from the grave or returning to life following death. We have authority from Jesus Christ to teach about Him and to baptize any who choose to follow Him.

Baptism begins a new life. It is sometimes called being "born again" because it represents living a new life, laying down the old life. When we begin to follow Jesus

Christ, the light begins to grow. Increasing light comes as a blessing from the gods to those who follow the path of Jesus Christ.

Increasing light inside our spirits lets us understand this creation. The search for truth is the search for light. In a dark room, many things are hidden from our sight by the darkness. Eyes cannot help you in darkness. You can feel carefully, and slowly with patience and effort, you can discover chairs, and bookcases, and other things in the darkness. Yet you will not understand any colors, nor fully comprehend what is hidden in the darkness.

But in the same room, with the help of light, you can see everything. Even the colors of the objects are easily understood. There are many reasons why we do not see this creation clearly. There are many forms of darkness.

The standard of truth for today is the 1,000 year record of the people who migrated to the Americas. That record was revealed and translated in 1830. All truth from every part of the world should be measured by that record.

Having a record does not mean you understand it. Like Lance who saw only what he expected to see in the forest, and like James who also saw only what he expected, we also read the *Book of Mormon* to see what we want to see.

You have different minds, a different culture, and different ideas in you. When you read our sacred books you see, understand, and interpret them from your vantage point. You can see what we do not. In the search for truth, we can help one another to see more of what is really there and to notice what is hidden from one point of view. The most accurate book of truth is still not fully understood.

We must all be willing to accept light when the gods offer it to us. The *Book of Mormon* tells us: "he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries;" (NC Alma 9:3)

The *Book of Mormon* tells us that the gods have given every nation some part of the truth. We are looking to find and gather again truths from every nation. We are taught: "the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have;" (NC Alma 15:13) We have been told: "There will yet be records restored from all the tribes, that will be gathered again into one," (T&C 157:47)

According to the *Book of Mormon*, your nation has been given words from the gods. They are wise words to guide your nation. Even if the original words have been lost or changed, the ideas from above remain as part of culture, tradition, and attitudes. Help

us to understand your greatest wisdom, and we will share what wisdom we have with you.

Our scriptures declare: "Truth is Mormonism. God is the author of it. He is our shield. It is by him we received our birth. It was by his voice that we were called to a dispensation of his gospel in the beginning of the fullness of times. It was by him we received the *Book of Mormon*, and it is by him that we remain unto this day." (T&C 138:24.) If you have truth, then it is part of our religion.

This is the time that was promised thousands of years ago when God "might gather together in one all things in Christ (both which are in Heaven and which are on earth), in him." (T&C 140:4)

To keep the promises, God will lead faithful people from all over the world to be gathered into one body of believers who will be commanded to begin: "building up of the New Jerusalem, which is hereafter to be revealed, that my covenant people may be gathered in one in the day that I shall come to my temple." (T&C 26:8)

If you want to follow Jesus Christ and receive light and truth that He offers, the first step is to repent and be baptized. He has commanded that first step for everyone. There are people in this conference with authority given to them by Jesus Christ to baptize you.

Even if you do not want truth that we offer, we will accept any truth you can share, because our religion is truth.

We believe Jesus Christ was sent to this world as a savior, and that He will bring all mankind back from the dead to live again. And we believe He is the judge of the world. We practice our religion in His name, and testify of His Divine status.

Thank you for listening. I close this talk in the name of Jesus Christ.

2020.10.10 Youth Presentation of Steel Plates

October 10, 2020

Sandy, Utah

DENVER: So, tell me about the plates you've brought.

YOUTH: They're awesome. [laughter]

YOUTH: They are awesome.

YOUTH: They're silver.

DENVER: Yeah...

YOUTH: Metal... We made them.

YOUTH: 13 plates.

YOUTH: 26 sides.

YOUTH: They're also not silver; they are stainless steel. But...

YOUTH:: K, I was talking about coloring; the coloring is silver.

YOUTH: Yeah, we lasered... So we... It was actually really cool 'cuz we had to, like, sand them all down and get rid of the...get rid of, like, the finish, so we could laser on the words. And it was really cool to see the difference between when you sanded it and when you didn't sand it—'cuz, like, you really could not read it if you have that original finish on it. And so, it was really cool to see, like, the hard work that we put in and see, like, see the difference if we didn't put, like, the hard work in. So, I thought that was really cool.

ADULT: Why don't you (we did a fellowship with them right after) tell them your thought on destruction.

YOUTH: Oh, so on the way up to Idaho, it was really cool 'cuz we were driving up, and we saw this, like, sunset, and it was super red, and that's because of all the smoke and the fire from California. And we're just talking about how through destruction, there's beauty and all that stuff. So, then we come up here, and we were given these, like, beautiful stainless steel plates that we still had to destroy (practically) to put on the Word of God. And so, through—again—through destruction, there comes beauty, there comes... And so, like, I was kind of, like, realizing how much beauty comes through, like, this destruction. Even in, like... We can even, like, look in ourselves, where, like, we kind of have to destroy our past selves to, like, improve ourselves—things like that. So, I thought that was really cool.

DENVER: That is cool. So, Christian told me that you guys actually burned the laser print on.

YOUTH: Yes.

DENVER: Who operated that?

YOUTH: Cameron.

YOUTH: So, Cameron was kind of supervising over there, but his daughter actually ran a lot of that.

ADULT: But these guys were all in...

YOUTH: We all took turns.

YOUTH: We were all kind of the helpers. We would, like, clip them all together, put them in there, line it up perfectly—because pretty much you just have to, like, push "play" then.

DENVER: What surprises me about the plates is that in bright sunlight, the more light you have, the easier they are to read. You don't even need anything to magnify them if you look at them in bright sunlight—which is another one of those symbols like "the more light there is, the more you comprehend."

There's about anywhere from a few inches to a few feet of organic material on the surface of the Earth that is possible to farm, possible to grow things in. That's because that few inches to a few feet consists of life that passed on and left behind organic material needed for life to continue. It's a constant cycle: life and death.

How heavy are they?

YOUTH: I think we weighed one of them [one set of plates] at 13 pounds...

DENVER: Wow...

YOUTH: ...and then the other one—a little bit less, because it's a little bit less [fewer plates in the set].

DENVER: Yeah, wow.

ADULT: A pound a plate—1lb, 1oz.

YOUTH: 1.1 pound, right?

ADULT: And so, there's 13 plates in the Book of Mormon. Seven in the other, or eight in the other.

DENVER: Wow, very cool. And there's cloth in between so they don't rub. Yeah, very nice. Thanks for the work; thanks for doing it; thanks for volunteering.

YOUTH: We loved it.

YOUTH: Yeah, it was great.

YOUTH: And there's, like, also a pair of gloves in each of these because...

DENVER: Oh, right...

YOUTH: ...they don't want the fingerprints on them because that will also make them hard to read.

DENVER: Even though it's stainless steel, you, yeah... You can crud up the surface of it.

Your description of what they looked like before you polished them reminds me of something I was explaining about the liahona. We tend to think of the liahona as something like this [held up mobile phone]...

YOUTH: Right.

DENVER: ...'cuz messages showed up, and the message would change from time to time. And we think, Oh yeah, that was God inserting a "handheld" earlier in history, and of course, it was magical to those people... It's a bunch of crap; all that is just nonsense. I want you to think of the liahona as something that had **numerous** facets on it, deliberately put there but small, and it was just not a consistent surface. And if the light struck it from a different angle, different facets would reflect the light. And you could see (from whichever angle it was being illuminated from) letters—a message. It was absolutely natural, absolutely... I mean, when God wanted them to have a lesson or to understand something, it just required different atmospheric light/reflective properties, and oh, it's a new message on here! And if there was nothing to be said, it was just a disorganized bunch of small irregularities on the surface of things. We tend to impose our own environment onto places where our environment doesn't belong to try to make sense out of things.

Okay, so I thought about the season we're in/what's going on right now, and I thought about making a few comments about this political environment/the nonsense that's going on to you guys—'cuz it's spilling over into your life. You're hearing all about bad, orange man, and you're hearing about hair-sniffing, senile Biden, and...

I mean, some of the nastiest, ugliest, most degrading political fighting-during-campaign happened really early in the history of the United States. What's going on now is not unprecedented or particularly more degrading than what has gone on before. And the people that are running for office are no less-honorable than the crooks and cats and idiots that we've elected to be the leaders of the country in the first place. We've had very, very, very few noble, wise leaders in our country. It's the extraordinary exception; it's not the rule. So, I want to read you something from our Scriptures:

And now verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatever I command them, and [the] law of the land which is constitutional, supporting the principles of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges belonging to all mankind, is justifiable before me; therefore, I, the Lord, justify you and your brethren of my church in befriending [the] law which is the constitutional law of the land. And as pertaining to law of man, what[so]ever is more or less than this comes of evil. I, the Lord your God, make you free; therefore, you are free indeed, and the law also makes you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men you should observe to uphold; otherwise, whatever is less than these comes of evil. (T&C 98:2)

So, that's a enormous endorsement by God of the Constitution. But here's the real secret behind our Constitution: The Constitution absolutely assumes you will not have wise and noble and honorable people running this country. It assumes you're gonna have vile, self-interested, proud, arrogant, selfish, even mean-spirited people in charge of our government. And it has made provisions for that by dividing things up into three different branches:

- you have the Executive,
- you have the Legislative, and
- you have the Judicial.

This separation was done so that this office [pointing to "executive"] and this office [pointing to "legislative"] are in conflict with each other, and these people [pointing to "judicial"] are supposed to act as a referee of that ongoing fight.

There's been a trend to do some things which (I'm hoping, in a case pending before the Supreme Court) may nullify a lot of what's going on. The legislative people have given over rulemaking authority to the Executive Branch. They authorize something, and they send it over to the Executive Branch, and they say, "Okay, we're gonna have an Environmental Protection Agency; you make the environmental rules." That's really a legislative responsibility. Securities and Exchange Commission, taxes... Authority is given here [pointing to the Legislative Branch], and then the rulemaking is made over here [pointing to the Executive Branch]. And that means that the Executive Branch is also assuming some legislative power that was never at first intended. And we finally got a case that's going up that says, "Wait a minute, this is a confluence of authority that

the separation of powers was intending to keep apart." And if that happens, then an enormous amount of regulatory rulemaking (that every one of us suffer under) goes away, and the legislature has to pick it up and deal with all kinds of little legislative issues. The division of this authority and the three branches was done precisely to protect you and your rights from evil, wicked, stupid people that wind up—you know—evil, maniacal people who say, "Hey, hey, vote for me! I want this power; I want this authority," so that when they get there and they have that authority, there's not much evil they can do to you—because they're fighting with one another.

But this thing was intended to be the primary repository of power because this legislature is where all of the initiative gets taken to accomplish things. And they took this power, and they divided it into two halves.

One half is elected based upon the amount of the population that you have for... The reason the census is important is because ~~every year~~ or every 10 years they reapportion, and as the population grows in one area, they get more members of the House. (And so, if Utah's population is growing and California's population is shrinking, Utah gets another congressman, and California loses one—'cuz it's based upon population.)

But on the Senate side, every state gets two senators. And so, the Senate is intended to represent the interests of the state, and these guys are supposed to slow everything down that these people [Congress/House] want to do (they're [the Congress/House] elected for two years; they come and they go; they have the power to initiate taxation; they do a lot of things/they have a lot of authority). The Senate is supposed to be the place where they're elected for six years; things slow down. They ratify treaties; they have a whole bunch of authority that doesn't exist over in the House.

When our constitution was first established and before an amendment was passed, the Senate was not elected by you and me. There's no such thing as a Senate running a campaign to be elected. The senators were chosen by the state legislatures. In order for someone to become a senator, the legislature of the state had to choose them so that the senator (who's sitting in Washington, D.C., chosen by the legislature) has to be amenable to whatever the state legislature wants. That means state legislatures become considerably more powerful. We passed an amendment, and we got rid of that—these people are elected directly. I gave a talk about how much that compromises the original intent. In fact, if this [senators chosen by state legislatures] were still around, there's a lot of legislation that gets passed in Congress that could never be passed—because senators chosen by state legislatures would never vote for it. It could never be done.

The talk is called "Constitutional Apostasy." I think it's recorded. I know that there's a transcript of it; it's on the website. At the time the talk was given, I was really talking about two things:

- I was talking about the history of this "erosion of power" by the change of the election of the Senate, which is a very real thing. And if you're trying to understand how befriending the constitutional law of the land was a revelation that was given back before this change was made, this change is "come of evil," and it's eroded a considerable amount of constitutional protection.
- But that talk was also about the change of affairs in the LDS Church. It was just an analogy for what went on in the LDS community.

When, originally, you had the First Presidency, you had the Twelve, you had the Seventy, and you had the high councils, and every one of these were (according to revelation) equal to one another in authority—every one of them were equal, which means that no one could consolidate authority.

- Joseph Smith had a number of vacancies in the First Presidency; he **never once** took a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and put them in the First Presidency. This was **separate**. It was **never** to overlap.
- Members of the Quorum of the Twelve (the first ones) were chosen by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, meaning that the First Presidency didn't put their fingerprints on the selection of these people. They were an independent body.
- The Seventy got chosen, and they were supposed to be independent.
- And the high councils of the church were locally-elected by people.

All of these were power centers, equal in authority, intended to create potential conflict and impasses, and you couldn't get anything done. After the death of Joseph Smith, the Twelve assumed all authority—and everything changed, and everything went downhill. Anytime you begin to alter a balance of power, you wind up in a position where people that can project power and control and dominion and influence are always tempted to use that inappropriately; it's just the nature of men. It's just the nature of mankind.

We have probably had one (in the history of our country) president who didn't feel that way. He viewed his time as President as public service, and after he had served two terms, he resigned, and he went away—just like when he won the Revolutionary War and he could have been king, he refused to do that; just like when the Articles of Confederation failed and everyone looked to him to just take over, he refused. He walked away from power consistently throughout his life. Our founding first president (and the presidency was **written for** George Washington) was the only guy that didn't have that kind of ambition to have power, control, and authority. That example set a two-year term limit on the presidency until World War 2. And then, following FDR's death, a constitutional amendment was passed to enshrine, as a matter of law, the example of George Washington: two terms and you're out, can't be re-elected.

Anytime you get power and authority based upon office or position—anytime you've got **that**—the only thing it takes to corrupt **everything** is to have the wrong person in that position. One person can cause the whole thing to collapse. Joseph's original structure was intended to avoid that concentration. This system: it's been damaged, but it still intends to divide the power, divide the authority, and protect **you**.

In **our** particular (whatever it is we are...) movement/group, there have been two different occasions where people organizing conferences have asked me if I would be willing to let them "sustain me" in a conference as (I don't know...) "something." And both times I've said, "No, absolutely not. You don't do that. It will not achieve what you think it will achieve. It will hurt you, and it will hurt me." I have to be no more than you are. I have to be on the same level. Because as soon as you get this, it doesn't matter if you've got George Washington in that position. Sooner or later, you have Bill Clinton in that position. Sooner or later, you're gonna have someone who's intending to use **that** to gratify their pride, to cover their sins, to exercise control and compulsion and dominion over the souls of men in some degree of unrighteousness. And at that point, this is no longer a blessing; it's something that corrupts and corrodes.

You are the beneficiary #1: of a constitutional system that limits and fractures the power and that protects your individual rights. But you are also, right now, the beneficiaries of a group of believers who have rejected the idea of office and control and authority. And for so long as I'm around, I have no intention of rising above you/of being any different than you/of being any better. If I can persuade you, if I can teach you something that tastes good, that makes you say, "That is desirable; that's light, and that's truth," then I will do my best to accomplish that. But as soon as you hear me say, "Do it because I said so ('cuz, dude, I matter)," rest assured, I no longer matter.

The only thing that matters is truth. The only thing that matters is the religion that belongs to Jesus Christ, the faith that Christ taught, the example that He set. He didn't come to be an emperor. He didn't come to become a centurion. When they asked Him what authority He had, He said, "Okay, okay. I'll talk to you about authority. First, tell me what you think the authority of John was when John baptized."

And they huddled among themselves and said, "Crap, if we say he had no authority (which is really what we want to say because we want to say **you** don't have any authority; John was popular, and he was martyred, and people really respect him now that he's a martyr...), we're gonna get in trouble with the people."

So, the response is, "Well, we can't answer your question."

And He said, "Well, I'm not gonna answer your question. You won't answer mine; I'm not gonna answer yours."

What was the authority that He had? I mean, we say this was the Son of God. And what did the Son of God do? He knelt down, and He washed people's feet (which was the menial job of the servant, to clean the feet of the houseguest). He turned himself into the lowest servant—and this is the Son of God! So, why would any of us want to have something that makes us honorable when the Son of God made Himself subservient, servile, and (essentially) dishonorable in the eyes of people?

He went about doing good. Go about doing good. The good that you do will be noted; the things that you bring (that are light and truth) into the world will be valued, will attract the right kind of spirit by the right kind of people. But chest-thumping and bragging and asserting control... There's only one way that ends, and it always ends in a very, very bad way.

Hopefully, **you** will be able to continue the tradition of saying, "If it's light and if it's truth and if it appeals to my heart, that's what I want. It doesn't matter who it comes from, I want light; I want truth." But if we're trying to organize ourselves into a community that's a beehive—with someone at the top that gets to run things and collect tithes and support himself off of that (or herself)—that's headed towards the same end of all the Christian churches that the Lord said to Joseph Smith, "They're **all** corrupt. There's not **any** of them that I can call mine." In fact, right now, **everything** in Catholicism, in the Greek Orthodox traditions of the East, in Protestantism, and in Mormonism, everything has either been rejected or condemned by the Lord except for one **tiny** group of people. And that's a group of people with whom the Lord has said, "I'm gonna call you Mine. I'm gonna work with you. You're not what you need to be yet, but I will call you Mine," the only group that doesn't stand condemned. Part of the reason why I believe that He treats us so is because every one of you are equal to one another in this community. And I'm no better than you; I'm no greater than you; I'm no lesser than you; and I'm doing everything I can to help elevate you. And as long as I'm here, that will be the only role that I find acceptable.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Thanks for coming, and thanks for the plates.

2020.12.20 Christmas Fireside

December 20, 2020

Lehi, Utah

As I understand it, there are some people who are joining us from a distance, and I wanted to start on time to be courteous for them. This is about the Christmas story, but we're gonna back into the Christmas story.

When Joseph Smith was in the Liberty Jail, given the frantic pace of everything that had gone on in his life up until the time of his arrest and incarceration, Liberty Jail really constituted the first time that Joseph Smith had an extended opportunity to **think**. He would lose that opportunity as soon as he got out of Liberty Jail. And by the time you get to Nauvoo and the things that occur there:

- He becomes the postmaster—because they were afraid that the prior postmaster was stealing money that was being sent in through the postal service that was intended to help fund the temple, and it was being misappropriated.
- He was the Mayor—because the Mayor of Nauvoo had proven himself to be a liar and an adulterer and, ultimately, got excommunicated.
- He was the Major General of the Nauvoo Legion—because the predecessor had been caught in a compromising position, and he had to go.

And if you read the journals and diaries of what Joseph was going on, that's just a short list.

- He was also trying to manage the affairs of the Church.
- Oversee the people (that should not have required being overseen) in handling financial affairs.
- He was corresponding.
- He was sensitive to the issues that created political conflict when the Mormons tipped the vote in a state (because of their sizable population). And one way to neutralize that animosity was to run for the Presidency. And so, if the Mormon vote got canceled out because they were voting for Joseph Smith as President, that would leave the other parties to decide the popular vote, and no one could be offended by how the Mormons voted.

He was managing a mess. And it took all his time and more.

But in Liberty Jail, he had a brief opportunity between the mess that had happened in Kirtland that resulted in people conspiring to kill him who were members of the Church... (They wanted him dead because of the failure of the bank. He was chased out of Kirtland, and he left in the middle of the night to try and get out of there with himself still alive. He was followed for about 200 miles by people that were trying to kill him.) When he arrived out in Missouri, there was a mess underway there. Ultimately, they wound up with the siege at Far West and the surrender of Joseph Smith into custody. And then there was this respite (for nearly six months), in which Joseph Smith

was confined to prison. Now, on occasion, he was brought out, and paraded around, and shown off as the prisoner, and ridiculed and laughed at. But for the most part, he had peace and quiet.

What's interesting about how he used that time is that at the end of the incarceration, without knowing when he would be released, he wrote a letter. (It's a single letter, but it came out in two installments. So, it constitutes two sections of the Teachings and Commandments. In the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, it comprises Doctrine and Covenants sections 121, 122, and 123. But those are just excerpts from the letter, and they're not even continuous excerpts. They are excerpts that grab and mix together and miss the discussion that ties together what went on. In the Teachings and Commandments, the entire letter—in its two installments—is reproduced.) And this is some of what was on Joseph Smith's mind when he finally had the opportunity for reflection and thought.

*A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination be aware of, because the things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been **our** spirits, **our** conferences, **our** councils, **our** meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world... (T&C 138:18-19, emphasis added)*

This is what Joseph contemplated in the quiet opportunity of confinement in prison: We've wasted too much time because our minds have been too frantic to consider carefully and solemnly and deeply the things that **really** matter. And if that was a problem during the confinement in 1838 and '39 in Missouri, think of what the problem is with minds today (with the Internet, with social media, with hand-held opportunities to text and communicate—beginning at 10 years old). How badly have we damaged our ability to engage in "time, ...experience, ...careful...ponderous...solemn thought" that is required in order to understand the things of God? What a wreck has been made of your own minds as you've been exposed to this current environment.

Joseph is talking in a rural, agrarian, quiet society, where you couldn't even hear a train in the distance. Shortly after I was baptized, a friend of mine (Steve Klapproth) came to Mountain Home, Idaho where I happened to be at my parents' house. And he and I were out in the backyard late at night, and he commented, "It's so quiet here." The only sound you could hear were the crickets that were nearby and a train, miles away on a railroad track, giving out its hum and its churn as it moved across in the distance. Today, people spend money to get white noise to allow them to flee from the racket, from the

cacophony inside of which we live! So, one of the challenges that I face in coming here is: What can be done in these circumstances to get us to focus, carefully and solemnly, for just a moment on things that really matter?

When Christ came to visit with the Nephites, after He had done the Sermon at Bountiful (which is a mirror of the Sermon on the Mount) and after He had spent the day with them, He makes this observation to them:

I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which [I'm] commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time; therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask the Father, in my name, that ye may understand and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. (3 Nephi 8:1 RE)

He would come unto them again. And the next day, He would pick up, and He would teach them further. Same people, same audience, same Lord minister, but their minds were unprepared to take in what it was He had been commanded to tell them. And so, He had to take a hiatus, interrupt what He was going to do, and tell them, "Go and ponder what you've heard so far, and come back tomorrow. Maybe we can get somewhere because..." careful and solemn and ponderous thought can only lead to the understanding that's required in order to focus the attention of the mind so that they can grasp what the Lord is trying to convey to them.

My wife told me that she saw where chess champions in a chess match (sitting down and studying a board and focused on the chessboard) will burn six thousand calories in the course of a game because of the mental exertion that's required to look at the board and to see when this piece is in this spot and all of the options that are available, how that interacts with the other pieces and the other squares, and how they multiply—until the study requires you to take a risk and guess what your opponent may do, to try and force the advantage by the choice that you make. Six thousand calories! There are professional football players that don't burn that many calories in a football game, and they're out pushing and shoving and running and jumping and hitting and tackling. And all the chess player's doing is sitting at the table and focusing his mind.

As the prophet Joseph was called upon to render a new translation of the Bible, in the course of looking at the Gospel of John, it became apparent that there had to be more than one condition in the afterlife. And so, they prayed to try and understand what the afterlife included, and (it's Doctrine and Covenants section 76, but it's in the Teachings and Commandments as section 69) something comes out by revelation to help explain some of what goes on in the afterlife. And as that vision is wrapping up, the conclusion of that has these words:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he shewed unto us, which surpasseth all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us that we should not write while we were yet in the spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man

capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the holy ghost, which God bestows on those who love him and purifieth themselves before him, to whom he grants [this] privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves, that through the power and manifestation of the spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (T&C 69:29)

...understood by the power of the spirit, which surpasseth the ability of the tongue of man to communicate it so that what you take in can be far greater than what the tongue of man is capable of conveying to you, far greater than what you are able on your own to either articulate or to hand to another. But what you can do by your presence is to invite a shared experience, through the spirit, to gain light and truth—which is why the same Lord, talking to the same audience that He would see the next day, tells them, "I perceive that you're weak, and you cannot understand the words I'm commanded to tell you."

So, let me see if I can put out a picture that, if you'll take it in and entertain the picture, may help you grasp that there is something **immensely** bigger standing as a barrier between "us" and "understanding" that **can** be overcome, that **can** be lifted, if you will. I'm not gonna use a "pillar of light," because the pillar of light descending is something you've probably seen portrayed in First Vision video stuff, and that'll wreck it for you (just like Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy wrecks the excitement of what you would get right now by reading Tolkien's book for the first time)—it's now been packaged, and you can't see it without that interfering. So, not a pillar of light.

I want you to instead imagine a **wall** of light so bright that it hurts you to look at it. It's like snow-blindness. And the wall of light then moves and encompasses you, and you are now inside it.

There are times when the pupils of your eyes struggle to shut out the light, and you get a sharp pain in your eye because you can't get that pupil narrow enough to exclude the light that is all around you. And you can see nothing. You can make nothing out except you're in the midst of this blinding, brilliant light. And it is incoherent. It's so bright that you're blind—because all you see is the brightness of this light.

And after a moment, you begin to make out, vaguely, a figure. And you realize that the **light** is emanating from **this figure**. As the presence of this figure becomes more stable before you, you begin to behold features: the hair of His head is as white as the snow, His eyes appear to be a flame of fire, His countenance is like lightning, and below His feet, a paved work of pure gold. And it is altogether beyond you. Frightening. Intimidating. You want, like Isaiah, to confess, "I'm unworthy. I'm a person of unclean lips. I dwell among people of unclean lips, and I'm not worthy to be here."

But then the Personage speaks and says, calling you by name, "Your sins are forgiven you," and your guilt is taken away, at which point, something more

remarkable altogether happens. You begin to see this person has color in His eyes and color in His hair, and beneath His feet is no longer a flaming, golden surface, but there's life beneath Him, as well. And now this glorious Personage is something that you can, at last, take in because He's made Himself known to you. Your guilt was removed because of a word from Him—that God who you know cannot lie. The difference between coming into the blinding wall of light and now beholding that this Person has a normal color of hair, a normal color of eyes is the removal of your guilt by the words of this Person.

Imagine (as you're standing there, before this Personage) that there are colors you've never seen, and if you got out your 96-crayon box and you searched through it to try and locate a color, there just isn't one. And so, if you had to identify a color you've never seen before, you would use a word like "joy" or a word like "love" or a word like "warmth," "care"—colors that animate you to the very core.

So, if you'll take that picture and ponder on it, and then consider that the stories that we've got in our Scriptures are not necessarily perfect/are not necessarily complete/are not necessarily even the best way to put something, but they have been approved by God because they are **adequate** for His purposes, at this point, to get "what needs to be done" accomplished. They are the best that anyone has, and they ought to be the anchor that we use in order to take our own minds and to ponder—carefully, solemnly—and to try and reach through to see what it is behind these words that the Lord is trying to convey into our hearts, into our minds, into our understanding.

Well, the account that we get by Paul... Luke wrote the story, undoubtedly after having come into contact with Paul, because it's clear from the text of the Book of Acts that Luke wrote it and that Luke would not encounter and join up with Paul until some time, years later, in the events that took place. And so, Paul had to report to Luke, and then Luke had to write the account, and...

Paul—on Mars Hill—goes up to preach a sermon to try and get them to understand that there was a God who came and lived among them and died and was resurrected—and his point is preaching Christ to the people of Athens on Mars Hill. And this observation is what's made about **those** people on that hill, after identifying that they were philosophers, epicureans, and stoics on the hill (who debated endlessly). This is what is said about the Athenians:

For all the Athenians and strangers who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing... (Acts 10:13 RE)

That's not how one gains access to the truth, to be continuously titillated with some new thing. Thinking and pondering carefully and solemnly does not involve the kind of robust voyeurism that oftentimes permeates **our** councils, **our** conferences, **our** conversations, **our** meetings. We're **like** these people, and that's too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the things of God. The things of God aren't titillating. We go about as if we've achieved some new and highly satisfactory result when we've had a **good**

gospel conversation when, in fact, what we lack is more of the heart and character than it is of "hearing some new thing."

Now, as it is written, the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way (Matthew 1:5 RE). This is Matthew, okay? Matthew's gonna tell you a story, but what's the story Matthew's going to tell?

Now, as it is written, the birth of Jesus...happened [on] this way.

Where was it written, Matthew? Because I'm reading your account, and I don't have another account.

After his mother, Mary, was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the holy ghost.

So, who is this Mary character? What does it mean to be "betrothed"? Why was the betrothal to Joseph? Who was he? How do these people emerge into the story?

There's a lot of evidence to suggest that Mary was someone that worked in the temple itself, among the priestly class—that she was someone who wove the veil. I don't know if those stories are true or reliable. But think about the symbolism of what it would mean to have a young woman weaving a veil, engaged in the act of creation. See, the veil in those days was made of four colors, and the four colors symbolized the four elements looked over by the four great guardian angels of the four cardinal directions. And here is a young maiden who is managing the weaving of the veil—whether it be literally the case that she did or not, the symbolism of it all suggests something very profound about a very young lady.

Well, we have... (I mean, I don't know how to talk about these things in a way that is delicate enough so as not to offend.) But in the law of Moses, one of the reasons why a menstruating female was considered unclean was because... In those days, they did not have the same kinds of hygienic capacity that we have today. And so, when Mary (working among the priests) had her first period, the priests would have known that. It (because of various issues) would not have been concealable, and she would not have been permitted into the ceremonially-clean places, and she would have necessitated performance of sacrifices for ritual purity in order to return/in order to continue on in the service that she gave. And it also marked the moment at which she needed to be married.

Tradition has it that it was the priests who arranged for accomplishing the marriage—because she needed to be married. If she was now "of age," then the circumstances required marriage. And there were, apparently, several people approached by the priests to marry her, and they uniformly declined. My suspicion is that there was a reason why she was declined by those first approached. My suspicion is that even though she was a child, she was intimidating. She frightened these older men. And Joseph was someone (perhaps third, fourth, maybe fifth on the list—an older man) who

had already raised a family who was asked, widowed Joseph, to marry this young maid. Estimates of his age vary—I've seen, generally, someone in their 70s being the guess for how old he would have been; we don't know. I mean, those sources... Certainly, that's not the way that the story is shown in theater, in movies, and in storytelling.

[audience comment]

Yeah, so, you've got a woman at the very commencement of fertility and a man who has already raised a family, and you've got a relationship that is primarily motivated by religious concerns. And so, the bargain is reached, the commitment is made, and **now** Mary is found with child.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away in private. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a vision, saying, Joseph, you son of David, fear not to take unto yourself Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the holy ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

Jesus is the Greek version of the name Joshua, in the anglicized version of the Hebrew name, which would have been Yeshua in the Hebrew tongue, and the name itself would have had meaning.

Now this took place that all things might be fulfilled which were spoken of the Lord by the prophets, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel — which (being interpreted) is, God with us. Then Joseph, awak[en]ing out of his vision, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took him his wife, and knew her not [un]til she had brought forth her firstborn son. And they called his name Jesus.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is the child that is born the Messiah of the Jews? For we have seen [a] star in the east and have come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard of the child, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them, saying, Where[s] the place that is written of the prophets in which Christ should be born? For he greatly feared, yet he believed not the prophets.

Well, isn't that just typical: The Scriptures scare the hell out of me, but I don't believe 'em. So, if there's gonna be this Messiah, I really need to rid myself of him, because the Scriptures predicted He would come, and if He comes, then that means the Scripture's been fulfilled. And if the Scripture's been fulfilled, that means the prophets knew what they were talking about. And if the prophets knew what they were talking about, that means that God spoke to them. And if God spoke to them, that means God exists, and

He will judge things, and I just don't want to think about it. So, how do I go about killing this Messiah?

And they said unto him, It is written by the prophets that he should be born in Bethlehem of Judea...

So, I went through that to show you how disbelief requires a great deal more mental energy than believing. It requires a phenomenal amount of effort to summon the faith to reject the prophets. It requires constant effort to defeat the evidences that God continuously [phone dings] puts before us. (Hey, hold my calls, will ya? I'm doing something.)

...for thus have they said: The word of the Lord came unto us, saying, And you, Bethlehem which lays in the land of Judea, in you shall be born a Prince who is not the least among the princes of [Judah]; for out of you shall come the Messiah who shall save my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had called the wise men privately, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child. And when you have found the child, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed.

And behold, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them [and] it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down and worshipped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

And when they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a vision, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. And then he arose, and took the young child and the child's mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt [I have] called my Son.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceedingly angry, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and all the region thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Ramah there was a

voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for the loss of her children and would not be comforted because they were not.
(Matthew 1:5-11 RE)

See, there's more than one statement in Scripture about the coming of the Messiah into the world. One of the others that would have been expounded upon as Herod continued his insecurity over the potential loss of his kingdom at the birth of this Messiah would have undoubtedly continued to plague them, and they would have continued to read from the Scriptures the things that speak of this coming Messiah. Isaiah wrote:

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; [and] they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shone. ...For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the **government** shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of government and peace there is no end, **upon the throne of David** and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.* (Isaiah 4:1 RE, emphasis added)

If you're Herod and you hear those words, what you realize is: taken at face value, this child is about to displace you, take over that kingdom, and there will never come a generation after this in which a descendant of Herod's is gonna be on the throne, because this Messiah (and those that come after Him) will have the "government upon their shoulders." So, Christ is born in circumstances in which there is a local suzerain king, subordinate to a Roman empire, ruled over by a fellow who has the authority and the ability to send out soldiers and murder children—all of the children in Judea—and yet, Christ is coming into the world to establish a government, the increase of which will never end, in the most improbable of moments, in the most improbable of circumstances, with the smallest of reasons to say that the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty Prince, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Everlasting Father accomplished exactly what the Scriptures say He was to accomplish.

From Herod's vantage point, Christ was a mere inconvenience. The slaughter of the children was another day at the office. And when that miserable, syphilis-ridden monarch would die a few years later in his madness (because that's one of the things syphilis attacks is the brain), he knew no one would mourn for his death. So, he had representatives of all the chief families in the land brought, when he was on his deathbed, to a single place, where he ordered all of them killed when he died so that there would be mourning throughout the land at the death of this great king. This is the guy that set out to slaughter the child that Joseph—being commanded in a vision, being awakened at night—took into Egypt in order to secure the Lord there.

Well, there's another story; I did not read it. It's really the opening of the New Testament. That occurs in the Holy Place. The priest Zachariah goes in to offer a **set prayer** on behalf of Israel. He's not in there offering a prayer so that Elizabeth will conceive and bear a child; the set prayer that he would have recited included words asking that the

"light of God's countenance would return again to Israel." And so, when the angel stepped out... (And the description of how the angel emerges on the right side of the altar in the Holy Place is exactly the location that you would have to emerge if you were in the Holy of Holies and you moved through the veil to emerge into the Holy Place and speak.) And so, the Angel Gabriel's presence conforms with the divinely-established pattern for the temple layout and the temple choreography, and he announces to Zachariah that his prayer had been heard, was being answered, and that God would send a son to him (Zachariah), and that son would go before the face of the One who would return the light of God's countenance to Israel; he would prepare the way.

This isn't Zachariah in the Holy Place trying to arrange family relations and secure a child. This is him, in the priestly office, asking that the nation that he represented receive a blessing to the nation from God, and it's not a personal prayer. It's an institutional prayer; it's a prayer on behalf of the people. And the answer that he is given is on behalf of the people. And so, Gabriel (who announces his name and that he stands in the presence of God) has come to say the light of God's countenance will return, and he's gonna have a son, and that son is gonna go before the presence of God to prepare the way before him.

So, the story that we get in Josephus (who's considered reasonably reliable about these things) has, at the time of the slaughter of the children in Judea, Herod's guards going to Zachariah and asking where his son was. Jesus' birth was obscure; the only people that learned about it (which Luke records) are shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over the flock by night, who have angelic ministers that tell them that the King has been born, and they go to find that out. John's birth was an extraordinary publicity stunt. Zachariah praying (as was his drawn-by-lots course to perform) comes out from his prayer, and he can't speak. And the people perceive that he's seen an angel. This is in the temple. This is in Jerusalem. This is in the capital. Can you imagine the buzz? I mean, think about it!

An angel appearing in the temple, and it was Zachariah, and now he's struck deaf and dumb, and he has to write in order to tell them. And he goes his way. And then Elizabeth conceives. And then the son is born, and the son is brought to the temple, and he is presented for the sacrifice and the circumcision, and they're debating: None of his family has ever been named "John"; what is Elizabeth talking about? And they turn to Zachariah, and he writes "His name **is** John"—not given by Zachariah; not given by Elizabeth. Gabriel named him. And when he does that, his tongue is loosed!

Well, he's spent nine months all quiet. Who knows what erupted on that day out of the mouth of Zachariah! The notoriety of this child would have been **immense**. William (born to Dian[a] and that funny-looking fellow with the big ears, Charles—"Charles" [said with a British accent]), William didn't have as much notoriety as would have John at his birth. So, if you're Herod, and you want to make sure that you kill the right child...

I mean, he kills every child two-years-old and younger. Based upon the account given in Scripture, the conception of John and the conception of Christ were six months apart.

Christ would have been born at one season of the year; John would have been born exactly six months earlier, in the opposite season of the year. John came into the world to close down a dispensation; Christ came into the world to open up a new dispensation. The birth of Christ would have—in all likelihood—have been in the spring. All of the debates that have been made about and all the reasons that have been given, based upon the festivals, notwithstanding, Christ would have been born in the spring, and John in the fall (John having been born first and would have been six months older than his cousin).

So, when the slaughter took place, what that would mean twelve years later, at the Passover—when they would have come to be presented—is that the 12-year-old kids arriving would have been from Galatia and Athens and other communities. But locally, hailing out of the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, there would have been two, and they would have been cousins. It makes me wonder if the conversation that they interrupted and started asking questions of Christ didn't begin as a conversation among two cousins before the doctors of the law intervened and began to question the Christ themselves.

And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus...

Caesar Augustus is Octavius (of the recent killing of Marc Anthony and the suicide of Cleopatra—after the conspiracy to kill Julius Caesar and the triumvirate that resulted in the group turning on one another and Octavius winning in the subsequent fighting—and upon ascending to being emperor, changed his name to Caesar Augustus). That's not a pompous name at all, is it?

...all his empire should be taxed. This same taxing was when Cyrenias was governor of Syria.

Cyrenias is the Greek version of a Latin name, and turns out, we know a lot about that Latin fellow: He was actually raising the chosen heir to Caesar Augustus as the mentor-leader (because he had been such a successful leader in battle and administrator). Caesar Augustus opened up opportunities for common people to rise up in the ranks in a way that they never had before because he was trying to displace the Roman Senate. And in the process of displacing the Roman Senate, one of the beneficiaries of that was this Cyrenias. And he was so close with Caesar that his heir was entrusted to him as mentor. They went off to battle, and the heir got killed—oh, he got wounded, and he died, subsequently, back in Syria—but Augustus didn't hold that against Cyrenias. In fact, it didn't trouble their relationship at all. He named a new heir, and that would be Tiberius (who would destroy the temple).

And all went to be taxed, everyone in his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David which is called Bethlehem — because he was of the house and lineage of David — to be taxed with Mary his betrothed wife, she being great with child. And so it was that,

while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was none to give room for them in the inns.

And there were in the same country shepherds staying out in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. But the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the way you shall find the babe: he is wrapped in swaddling clothes and is lying in a manger. And suddenly there was, with the angel, a multitude of the Heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill to men. (Luke 2:1-2 RE)

...and the shepherd said, "Let's go see **this!**" And so, they went and found the child.

We have promises that God is up to something and intends to accomplish some things (at a time when it appears unlikely that God is going to vindicate all that He has purposed to accomplish) in a single generation at some late date in history. But the purposes of God in bringing Christ into the world occurred in far less likely circumstances for the Savior to have been born and survived, grown to adulthood, and been able to minister as he was able to minister. Now, it's true that the people misapprehended what God was doing, and they misapprehended what the first mission of the Lord would be—but people misapprehend what the Lord is doing and how the Lord is going to accomplish His purposes now, at the end of times, as well. The ability of God to accomplish a matter (while He is also concealing the matter from the understanding of the world) should never be questioned—because that is exactly how He has accomplished, over and over again, the things that He said He intended to do.

I'm getting ready to give a talk at a conference in the spring, and I've been going back and looking carefully at the revelations that have rolled out **in our day, speaking to us**. One of the things that is very apparent is that the statements, the guidance, the commandments, the instruction, the lessons that we've been given are not given to **individuals**; it's given to **the people**. Right now, the biggest challenge that remains as an obstacle to the accomplishment of what God has told us that He intends to do is the rising up of a **people**—not as those who can cleverly parse Scripture or who can endlessly go on about minutia related to the gospel—that's not the challenge at all. The challenge is to have **us** regard **one another** in a way so that we can live in peace with one another, and we aren't a threat to one another.

I'm hoping he doesn't mind me mentioning this, but in a recent conversation I had with a friend, Rob Adolpho... He and his wife are living on an Indian reservation, and she's a Tribal Chieftain leader; he's Polynesian. But the two of them and their children have actually performed Indian dances in full garb, dancing at various locations, celebrating

Native American culture, history, and peoples. (I think they performed at the Calgary Stampede in full garb.) And we were having a conversation, and Rob was frustrated because he'd been talking to someone who wanted to do some work in an outreach to try and approach Native Americans with the continuation of the Restoration and bringing them the Book of Mormon and bringing them to a knowledge that God is actually up to something and that the native peoples matter. And the fellow who was talking to Rob said, "It's just too bad we don't... We need someone that can bring that Native American point of view and can..." And Rob was frustrated, because he's on the phone, and he's what they're looking for. And I said, "Rob, Rob, the next time you come down, bring all your dress and your garb and do a dance, and maybe they'll figure out who they're talking to." We had a good laugh.

But the problem and the challenge is to take and bring people together—not because you have subdued me with your arguments or because I have subdued you with my arguments. There shouldn't **be** any arguments. You know, the cure for disagreement is "time and patience and careful and solemn and ponderous thoughts." We don't hear one another because we don't have the patience to allow the issue to unfold. We are in a hurry, and we want to get the result.

It's obvious to me from reading the revelations that have been given to us that the Lord is far more interested in the **process** than He is in having us present a **result**. The process of working together and learning to cooperate, respect, and deal with one another is far more valuable and meaningful than is knocking out a result in a hurry.

(And speaking of a hurry, I've been talking too long. We're more than an hour, and I didn't want to do that.)

Look, use the Scriptures as the starting point. The Book of Mormon, in particular, was given to us in our day as something from which to pry open and look into things that are real, that are beyond the veil. I was going to read (but I'll just commend to you) the account of the condescension of God given by Nephi when he's talking about the tree of life. In the new Scriptures, it's First Nephi chapter three, really beginning at paragraph six—but paragraph seven and eight and nine make it clear that the condescension of God begins with Mary. I've talked about that in "Our Divine Parents," but you should re-read that as part of the Christmas story, as part of thinking about this season—because it took an enormous effort on the part of heaven to bring to pass the coming of the Savior into the world. And although He wasn't born on the winter solstice or near it, we celebrate His birth at this time—and we look a little nutty if we don't celebrate it at this time, so... (We're regarded as nutty enough, already.) We celebrate it now, and so now is the time to think upon, reflect upon, and to look carefully at the Scriptures. If you will allow careful and solemn and ponderous thought to inform you as you read those verses of Nephi's, you may be shocked at the things that the Lord has been willing to tell us, in plain language, if we were willing to hear it.

God lives. The prophecies are true. The Scriptures that we have are adequate for God's purposes in our day, and we really needn't go too far away from them to find our way

back to what we need. And the most important material of all that He has given us, is the Book of Mormon as a covenant and the revelations and instructions that have been given as commandments to us in our day. They are a blueprint for the establishment of Zion, if we'll just give heed to them.

We don't need to be like the folks on Mars Hill, always wanting to hear some new thing, when what we have heard already from the Lord challenges us to our core to become more united as a people, to be more patient with one another, to **listen** to what each of us have to say. We're too busy coming up with our own response to hear what the other person has to say. Maybe, taking time to listen (and then waiting a day or two to figure out what the right response would be) would be the best form of a conversation, instead of how quickly and how rapidly we want to have things take place now—in an instant, suddenly!

When God says things are going to happen quickly... There are watches; there are calendars; there are glaciers; and then there's tectonic plates. God moves them all. And so, for Him, the movement of a tectonic plate may seem quick. So, don't think that you have to hurry up, because the opportunity, it's here; it's now. It's given to you. But it's the process, not the result. God will take care of the result. The only thing we can engage in is the process itself.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2021.02.06 Understanding Your Soul, Part 1

Transcript of a Talk Delivered to the Youth

Sandy, Utah

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Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

I'm actually using a new set of the Scriptures that came as a sample set. The ones that are finishing up now will be slightly better than these sample sets because the spine on this one is not reinforced; they missed that step. So, these have floppy spines, but they are (other than that) exactly like what the finished product will be. And I get to use them today.

Can you hear me in the back? Is there a problem? Okay, good. I think the time's arrived, shall we start?

I've written a word up on the board—"glory"—and tried to illustrate that with some coloring. There's a verse I wanna read to you out of the book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament (in the new Scriptures, it's chapter 21 verse 27):

Afterward, he [this being the angel of God] brought me to the gate, even the gate that looks toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like a noise of many waters, and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar. And I fell [on] my face, and the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up and brought me into the inner court, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house. (Ezekiel 21:27 RE)

That's a description of an event involving the prophet Ezekiel, in which he's in the presence of God; but what he refers to is the **glory** of God, not the **person** of God. The Scriptures in many places refer to "the glory of God" as a substitute for God Himself.

I went on a hike; it had been snowing earlier that day, and the ground was covered with snow. And it just so happened on this particular day on this particular hike, I wore my sunglasses for no particular reason (because I never wear my sunglasses when I'm hiking). And a break in the clouds happened, and the sun shone down on the snow, and it was blinding if you didn't have your sunglasses on. But on this occasion, I just got lucky.

Sometimes when you've been in a dark place and you step into a light place, the light is blinding. Oncoming headlights at night when you're driving (particularly if the driver coming toward you has their lights on bright) can blind you. Light can prevent you from seeing what is past the light.

The glory of God doesn't allow you to **see** God; as the Scripture tells us, no man hath seen the Lord except he be quickened in the spirit. You have to get your sunglasses on in order to not be blinded by the glory of God.

So, the "glory" of God is a substitute for describing the person of God Himself (even though that passage in Ezekiel is about God coming and going into a specific place in the temple). We have a definition of the glory of God in Teachings and Commandments section 93, paragraph 11: *The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth.*

Intelligence is the glory of God. Keep that thought in mind for a moment while we look at another couple of Scriptures about where we find ourselves right now, today—living in these tabernacles of flesh that are made of the dust of the Earth (and after your life ends, these tabernacles will turn back into dust eventually). This is what it says about occupying these "things": *Men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God* (Genesis 4:7 RE). Well, that doesn't sound good: carnal, sensual, devilish. Those words sound like we're just inherently bad.

- But the word carnal means that the body has appetites. You get hungry. You get sleepy. You get tired. You get sick. You get weak. You get sore. All of those things are carnal.
- Sensual means "indulging an appetite." You oversleep. You overeat. You do things that satisfy the appetite of the body, and you do it in excess so that you become addicted/subordinate/a slave **to** the appetite.
- And devilish means you're at odds with God.

So, when you look at the words and you realize what they're describing, it's not that we're all really, really corrupt; it means we are all vulnerable. Every one of us is weak and vulnerable and **can be compromised** if we don't work to protect ourselves against that compromise.

Well, there's another Scripture (probably equally distressing), *For the natural man...*

See, that word "natural" is actually used in a lot of advertising as something really good. You want natural hair color (or at least natural-looking hair color out of a bottle, which is not natural at all). You want natural-healthy skin. You want natural-looking eyes, and therefore, you use something artificial to put over your eye in a contact lens. But everything is supposed to look natural. "Natural" is advertised as the great wonder product of whatever it is you're doing or selling; it's natural.

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be for ever and ever but if he yields to the enticings of the holy spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a little child: submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 1:16 RE)

"Enemy of God" means the same thing as devilish. It means you are at odds with God. You're not in sync with Him. If you're not in sync with Him and you're out of the way He would like you to live, you're at odds with Him—and He's inviting and enticing you to change what you're doing and to become more like Him.

Well, there are two parts to **you**. This is in Teachings and Commandments; this describes the two parts of you: *...and the spirit and the body is the soul of man* (T&C 86:2). The soul consists of two parts: the spirit and the body. Everything that I have read from the Scriptures talking about being carnal, being sensual, being devilish, being at odds with God, being an enemy to God, all of that is a description of the condition of the weakness of the physical body.

The spirit **isn't that**. The spirit is called "intelligences" that are organized by God (see Abraham 6:1). Intelligence or the glory of God (the Scriptures tell us) cannot be created or destroyed; it is co-eternal with God Himself. So, when God becomes God and is a Being of Glory (or intelligence, or light and truth), that intelligence coexists with God. He emanates that. From the moment He is God, He emanates intelligence. But that "light and truth" can be organized **itself** into "intelligences." Your spirit—that that is inside you, that which is eternal in you—is made of the glory of God, it is co-eternal with God, and it is filled with light and truth. That's one part of you.

The other part of you is a body made of dust, which—in the book of Genesis (I won't bother reading it; it'll go quicker if I don't)—in the book of Genesis, describes how God created man, organizing him out of the dust of the Earth. He made man, and then He made a companion for man. And He called the man "Adam," and the man Adam called the woman "Eve." And the description of the Creation is: *...in the image of [God] created [He] him. Male and female created [He] them* (Genesis 2:8 RE). So, this is the image of God that was created after the same pattern **as God**, and therefore, the image of God is Adam and Eve in their physical bodies modeled after God (male and female). God the Father and a female counterpart to Him created mankind after the image of God Himself.

Well, we have a description of what the body is like and what its characteristics are like. And we also have a description of our spirit and what our spirit is like and what its attributes are. This was written by the apostle Paul: *Now the works of the flesh...* (that's this body of dust that has all these weaknesses)...

...the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel[ing], and such like.... (Galatians 1:21 RE)

So, what you've got in the body of flesh is a lot of weakness, temptation, and what I will just call generically "sin"—because all of those things are simply at variance with/

contrary to/opposed to God and what God would want to you. So, that sounds rather pessimistic.

There's another part of you. Your soul does not consist merely of this weak body. Your soul also consists of a spirit.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Ibid., ¶22)

So, the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, kindness—in a word, "godliness." And why is it that your spirit is like that? It's because your spirit is composed of something that is natively already inclined to **this**.

Look, when you came into this world, when you were born here, the spirit was fused into the body. Admittedly, that's not gonna last forever. That body of dust is gonna wear out. It's gonna fall apart. It's gonna droop and sag before you get to the end of the finish line. You're gonna find stuff you don't like. It's gonna start to creak and groan and complain. And eventually, if you live long enough, you'll say, "Hey, death is kind of merciful, really. I get to vacate this crappy apartment built out of dust that I'm living in." Now, if you die young, of course, you die in health and vigor, and you don't wanna vacate that particular body. But eventually, all of us are gonna wear out, wear down, and it's gonna lay in the dust.

Because your spirit is fused into that, the only way in which you, in this life, gain any understanding is through the brain that operates this mechanism. But the brain is exceptionally literal, vulnerable, and all of these things. If you watch a TV show and you see a murder, your brain cannot tell that that's just story-telling. If you play a game in which you shoot and kill other people or *Walking Dead* or you hash off the head of a zombie in your game, to your brain, part of your life's experience is shooting and killing, chopping and destroying, and so far as the body is concerned, every bit of that that you take in is **real**.

Now, your spirit knows the difference. But there are actually two voices going on within your soul at any given moment. At any given moment, your brain has the capacity on its own to gen up all kinds of foolishness, mistakes, improprieties, submission to the lusts of the flesh. Your brain can do all that on autopilot. And if you catch yourself doing that, you also have the ability, in the spirit, to say, "I hate that thought; I reject that thought." In fact, if you take any of the wretched, sinful thoughts that come into the mind and you allow your spirit to ask the question, "Well, what's the consequence of pursuing that? What's the consequence of doing that? What's the consequence of acting on that impulse?" within your soul, you have the ability to discipline the body, to call it back into a form of godliness in which the acts that you commit are governed by the light and the truth that is the glory of God or intelligence.

If you have a bad thought, that's pretty normal. In fact, with the entertainment that we watch, with the games that we play, with the social media that is out there, everything is designed to stir you up to envy and jealousy and ambition and carnality and to look for sensuality and to be at odds with the will of God and, therefore—because of your odds to the will of God—to make you, by definition, "devilish." And your spirit has the capacity to interrupt that and to say, "Not so! I'm not that. I don't do that. I don't believe that. I don't act on that."

Inside of that approach of the spirit, there is peace, there is joy, there is happiness. King Benjamin said wickedness was never happiness. But wickedness is really the playground in which, because of this environment, our bodies are naturally vulnerable and inclined to those failings. Your body gets tired. Your body gets sleepy. You have to go to sleep at night in order to give this frail body an opportunity to rest. Does your spirit need to sleep? Does your spirit get tired? Does your spirit wear out? It's co-eternal with God. Very often, what's going on at night when you're having dreams is not your body—but it's the fact that your body can't contain the activity of a spirit that never sleeps. There are **numerous** instances (in the Scripture) of God communicating a message to someone in a dream. There are numerous instances of God appearing in the night vision.

The apostle Paul talked about how he was caught up to the third heaven. And when he was caught up to the third heaven, he makes the observation: *...whether in the body...or...out of the body, I cannot tell* (2 Corinthians 1:41 RE). But he was caught up to the third heaven because the bodies of your first parents (Adam and Eve and all of us as descendants of them) are made in the image of God. If you are in the presence, caught up to the third heaven, all of the things that you have now—fingers and toes, a body composed of intelligence and made of light and truth—appears to be the same thing that you're walking around here that's composed of dust. You can't tell the difference between the two. Everything about that is just as physical in its appearance/in its experience as is what we experience here in these bodies of dust.

But he was caught up, and he experienced the presence of God, and he saw and he heard unspeakable things. Well, why are they unspeakable? They're unspeakable for largely the same reason that Ezekiel describes the "glory of God" instead of "God"—and the glory of God inhabiting the place in the temple that God went into. Because it's hard to get past the limitations of this dust in order to get your hands around and to describe what it is that gets experienced there. It is "unspeakable" because the only way I'm able to communicate to you today is either using my mouth or writing letters on a board. That's pretty limiting. What Paul experienced was not limited in that way. **You** have the same capacity as Paul. **You** have the ability to take into you, through the spirit, the light and the truth or the intelligence that is coequal and coexistent with God Himself.

In your physical body, there is one and only one organ that allows you to see. Now, you get a side-by-side in order to have depth perception—because the only way you can perceive depth is if you have two points of origin in order to see that you're closer and

you're further away, and depth comes from the triangle. It gets used in order to triangulate to figure out distance all the time; computers do that for us all the time. But in this physical body of dust, the only way you can see is through your eyes. If we injure your eyes, we can blind you. Do you think that your spirit can only see with eyes? Well, the answer to that is your spirit can see as a native part of every bit of the person of intelligence or light and truth. If you were in the spirit and you could behold God, and God were at your side (or above you or behind you)—in the spirit and quickened, so that you weren't blinded by the body, but you could behold—you would not need to turn your eyes or to turn around; you could behold the presence of God in the spirit from every source. All of the powers of the body that are limited to the particular organs are a function of **this** organization [referring to the body]. The spirit has capacities far, far greater than the body.

When you say (assuming you sing that old song) that you are a child of God, you are **literally that** in the sense of your spirit. It was and it is connected to that couple who created you, that image (male and female) that organized the first parents—it's part of them. It resides within you. It was organized to exist and to experience things to help it grow and increase in understanding. You have to come down here and to live in a body of dust in order to spend a time experiencing things that let you comprehend the difference between light and darkness, goodness and badness, weakness and strength, eternal life and mortality. This body is going to go (that you occupy), it's going to go through not only a lot of changes, but it's also going to be riddled with mistakes and errors, some of which are going to be relatively serious. That body is going to experience a lot of regrets. Well, the regrets are because the spirit has learned something from the error or the mistake that got made and will wish that it had not happened, it was not done, you did not fail. But you did. So, how in the eternal scheme of things does God's will play out in your life, in my life, with this body of dust that has made mistakes and made errors? Temporarily, while we're still here, we have the opportunity to repent and return to God and be forgiven.

There's a book (...has a great title), and the title really does profess a profound truth; title of the book is *The Body Keeps the Score*. You simply, within your body, keep the score of all this. The spirit can forsake, repent, and be forgiven of that, but the body still keeps the score. A merciful God allows that body, at some point, to be laid down, and all of those weaknesses and all of those frailties and all of those appetites and all of those mistakes and errors to dwindle into dust and to be put behind you. And what your spirit **takes** from that is the wisdom, the understanding, and the intelligence to go on, to look back, and to say, "From that experience, I have gained. From that experience, I understand."

Throughout your life, you're going to encounter problems, dilemmas, challenges, and thoughts (some of which are going to be not just challenging but quite ugly). You still have within you something connected directly to God that can extract itself, that can call you back to repentance. Don't think the thoughts that come to you, if they are offensive to God, originate in the mind of the spirit. Much of the fight that you're going to undertake in this life is a fight that will be **inside of you**. Overcoming the weaknesses of

the flesh and gaining experience to understand the difference between "carnal, sensual, devilish, and an enemy to God" (at odds with Him) and "love, joy, kindness, mercy, forbearance, goodness"... You see examples of the difference between these two in the Scriptures.

Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane preliminarily to being crucified and struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane ~~with~~ the dealing with the sins of mankind. He asked three of the apostles to accompany Him a little further. And then He asked them to stay there and to keep watch with Him while He engaged in this struggle. He went and separated Himself from those apostles, and He came back, and they were all asleep. And He woke 'em up, and He asked them again, "Please, keep watch with me." And he makes this statement to them: *The spirit...is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Matthew 26:41 RE). "I know you guys want to do this," Christ is saying to Peter, James, and John, "I know you would like to be able to stay there with me, but I recognize you're weak, and your body's weak." And when He came back again and He saw that they were asleep, this time he said, *Sleep on* (Ibid.), and He returned to the task of the atonement.

When mankind submits to the weaknesses of the flesh and are controlled by these appetites, the Scriptures call this "a beast." Ecclesiastes talks about how this is a beast or, in our vernacular, an animal. Well, why is the body of man (when he submits to this side of his soul) considered an animal or a beast? It's because man's doing the same things that animals do: They eat, they sleep, they mill around, they fight, they reproduce, they do animal things, much of which is done thoughtlessly. When a man does not awaken to the spirit within him, the Scriptures regard him as a beast or as an animal. You are not a man (and man includes both male and female), you aren't that until you awaken to and submit to the spirit and the inclinations of the spirit. Until you do that, you're regarded as an animal or a beast.

Thoughts originate both in the dust, and thoughts originate in the spirit. And when you allow the spirit to control and lead you back towards God, that's often referred to as "the heart of man" in Scripture—the heart of man where these things originate or "the bowels of the spirit." **We** don't tend to view the heart as anything other than an organ that pumps and the bowels as anything other than something that processes food. But in the Scriptures, referring to the heart and the bowels very often is referring to the inclinations of the spirit—because the spirit is filled with intelligence. And the reflection of what the appetite of man is—if he submits to the spirit—is a reflection of the will of the spirit.

Now, there's a couple of points I wanna make, and then I'm hoping some of you young people have questions. And if so, we can talk for a few minutes on that (but we wanna get out of here on time).

There was a fellow from the East who came to actually set up shop in California—Yogi Bhanjan—who was a very successful spiritual teacher who came here and began teaching in the 1970s in California. He taught until 2004 when he died. And after he died, it now appears beyond all dispute that he was involved with sexual, physical,

emotional, and financial abuse. And a lot of the accusations against him appear to be proven at this point.

So, here you have someone who is enlightened and has some great spiritual truths to share, but he gets into a position of influence, and he succumbs to the appetites of the flesh. Why is it that you can have someone who has absolutely astounding spiritual capacity who winds up submitting to the appetites of the flesh? Well, it's because the spiritual capacities were developed in isolation. Going alone in a mountaintop and meditating and having profound spiritual breakthroughs doesn't make you a good neighbor. Going out and dealing with God in reflection and meditation does not equip you to live alongside other people. Living with other people is a challenge all its own.

There are so many profound, great, spiritual leaders who succumb to adultery. Why is that? It's because their spirituality was developed in isolation and not in community. That's one of the reasons why we need fellowships so that we labor alongside each other to become civilized, both body and spirit, among others.

I think it is an absolute distortion of the record of the history to say that Joseph Smith succumbed to adultery. I've studied his life. I've read all of the accusations. I've gathered all the material that exists to this point in publication, and I'm satisfied that Joseph Smith was a virtuous man who was surrounded by men who were **incapable** of disciplining **their** bodies.

Well, there's a Buddhist story that I think's worth telling about an enlightened monk who lived near a city that had a lot of infighting, conflicts, and difficulties in the city. People from the town asked the monk to come into town and to guide them so they could resolve their conflicts, but he refused to go. He preferred living alone and meditating. The town sent more representatives to ask again, and the monk refused again. Finally, a great crowd of people went to ask the monk for his help because, without it, they could never reach peace. He at last relented. On the way back to town in the joyful crowd, an old woman stumbled into the monk and pushed him to the ground. This made the monk very angry.

It's far easier for a hermit to live in quiet meditation than for the **same** hermit to live in harmony within a community. We're not called into a dispensation of only individual salvation. For the salvation of souls today, the primary focus of God's religion is to gather a community. God's purpose for the end-times is focused on making **people** of one heart and one mind. In order to do that, your **soul** needs to be disciplined by, subordinate to, controlled by the glory of God or the spirit or the intelligence that is inside every one of you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Do any of you kids have any questions that...? Yeah, yeah!

[Youth Question]

It can be, but...

The question is: Is being quickened in the spirit like the baptism of fire?

It can be, but what you're talking about in "no man hath seen God at any time," you can have the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost and have your mind opened up so that you comprehend things that were not comprehensible.

One of the best descriptions that we've got of this in the Scripture is what happened after Joseph and Oliver went out and baptized one another based upon the commandment that they were given by John the Baptist. Afterwards, Joseph makes the observation in his history, T&C 1: "Our minds being enlightened, we were able to comprehend the more mysterious passages of scripture in a manner we could never previously attain to" (see Joseph Smith History 14:4). What that meant was: Having been quickened by the spirit, having been enlightened by the baptism of fire, having received the Holy Ghost, this awareness came to mind.

See, the Scriptures become an extraordinarily valuable basis for unlocking (with the power of the Holy Ghost) the understanding of eternity, whether it's opened up in a vision or simply comprehension as you read the Scriptures. Scriptures got composed by people under the influence of the Holy Ghost. And so, they reduce what their understanding, comprehending, or "having opened to their mind" to words on a page. But the words on the page are **not** the content. The content was what the spirit inspired. So, if you **read** with the power of the spirit like Joseph and Oliver were doing, then what comes **alive** in these passages is the same extended view, comprehension, light, and truth that extended knowledge as a result of that.

But being "quickened in the spirit in order to behold God" is actually dealing with an impediment that we have in this [the body] because the glory of God in a fullness is actually dangerous to this body. It's toxic and destructive. It would be like stepping in front of a—you know—a thermonuclear explosion. I mean, God is capable of occupying everything within His creation. He can occupy any of it. Temperature at the corona of the sun is what? Twenty million degrees? God is not damaged by that. Well, if He were to unveil all His glory (which He intends to do at some point around the Second Coming), it will be destructive of anything that He doesn't pick out to preserve and to save by quickening—which is the same thing as wearing sunglasses in the bright, sunny, snow-filled terrain.

I think we've got time for maybe one more. Does any... Yeah?

[Youth question]

Why is God displeased with premarital sex?

The commandment—the first command that was given to these two [Adam & Eve]—was to multiply and replenish the Earth. Therefore, it's an obligation to marry and to multiply. But the obligation to marry and to multiply does not attach until the union of the male and the female has been put together by an oath or a covenant of marriage. That's because the effect of sex is reproduction.

Every child that comes into this world is entitled to have the image of God (or the father and the mother) be the one that introduces them into the world—because every child enters this world very much like Adam and Eve entered this world: innocent, without sin, in a physical body, but protected and guided and insulated against the dangers that attach.

There's no more vulnerable creature in nature than a human baby. A giraffe—moments after the giraffe is born—can run. The same would be true of a horse. I mean, human babies are exceptionally vulnerable. Therefore, if you're going to take an innocent and vulnerable new life and introduce them into this world, you need to introduce them like Adam and Eve were introduced into this world: in a state of innocence that's protected and watched over (in the biblical analogy, it's called the Garden of Eden). But every child comes into this world cuddled, held, warmed, protected, fed, clothed, kept dry, kept warm by parents—much the same as the Heavenly Parents watched over and protected Adam and Eve in the Garden. If—contrary to that model—a child gets introduced into a bickering, uncertain, unstable, warring couple that extends outward to parents that are offended on both sides, then you have not followed the divine pattern of introducing life into this world.

(And in case the thought occurs to the body that there are ways to prevent conception, I can tell you that there is no such thing as a foolproof—doesn't matter which option is chosen—nothing's foolproof in terms of preventing pregnancy.)

And therefore, the model that was set by God in the beginning (which is the model that ought to be followed, the one that will bring joy and love, kindness, peace, and represents godliness) is to refrain from premarital sex but to get married, in part, in order to have sex and to produce offspring and to introduce them into the world and to care and nurture and raise them.

I can tell you that children... They're maddening. They're frustrating. They're delightful. They're hilarious. They're funny. They're stupid. They're an experiment. They're extraordinary... Children make the life of parents ten-thousand times richer, experiencing joy that comes from no other source in as great a magnitude... **and** pity and anger. It's just... It's a rollercoaster ride. But your children create **in you**, as parents, a whole new life. It's the most marvelous undertaking that you can have, to produce children. **And** there is nothing that will matter more to you in your old age than your posterity.

Thank you for coming. We've about used up all of our time. What?

Audience Member: Can I ask a question?

Denver: No, you're not a kid! [Laughter.]

Audience Member (continued): I know. But I think it would be interesting.

Denver: You think it would be interesting? [Laughter.] Well, he doesn't. He doesn't want to hear anything about that. What is it?

Audience Member (continued): When the Book of Mormon says that God put a curse of the skin of blackness on someone, what would that be in terms of the body or the spirit?

Denver: Yeah, okay, so now we've got the question that comes up forever about, oh, what's the curse of the skin of blackness?

Look, these guys were (for lack of a better word) Bedouins. K? They're Bedouins. How does one dress? I mean, essentially, you wear a headdress, and you wear a robe. And how did the rebellious Lamanites dress? Well, they wore a loincloth made out of lambskin. And when they weren't decorating themselves with blood, they were otherwise naked.

What happens to you when you strip down to a Speedo and you hang around outside all summer? It's cultural. It's behavioral. It's... You darken. It just happens.

And the Nephites didn't dress that way. They didn't behave that way. They kept the culture from which they reckoned. And their [the Lamanites] behavior reflected that they'd gone back to the natural man, and they indulged what the natural man indulges—which is generally at odds with God and, therefore, an enemy to God.

So, see, he wasn't interested. He didn't care about that. [Laughter.]

Thank you for coming, and I hope this made sense over the Zoom. I could see the reflections coming off the board. They probably... You should take a picture of this and put that up so that they can see what was written. Thank you.

2021.03.06 Understanding Your Soul, Part 2

Transcript of a Youth Talk and Q&A
Denver and Stephanie Snuffer
Highland, Utah
March 6, 2021

Denver: Why don't we go ahead and start? And we'll just spend the first few minutes doing a review. I've written up on the board some of the same kinds of information that was up there last time. I hope you listened to that so that the continuation of that makes sense.

The definition is given about what the soul consists of, and there are two components to the soul of every individual: The body and the spirit are the soul of man. And we talked last time about how the body has a variety of weaknesses that are associated with the body of flesh that's essentially appetite-based.

- Every body has to be fed. If you deprive the body of food, its weakness and need for food will become readily apparent: first, by hunger; later, by starvation; and ultimately, by death.
- The body has to have rest. If you deprive the body of rest, it will experience exhaustion. Ultimately, if you don't allow a body to sleep, it will eventually lose sanity, and eventually, you can die from that, as well.
- The body requires a whole lot of periodic maintenance.

It's like buying a 1945 Ford and expecting that thing to run for an indefinite future. With modern oils, you might keep it going (maybe even a '45) maybe even 150,000 miles, but eventually that '45's gonna wear out; it just isn't gonna hang around. That's what you're walking around in right now: vulnerable, weak, filled with appetites, and susceptible to anger, rage, a whole lot of problems that are associated with the body of dust. And I've written a list of some of the things that the Apostle Paul includes in his letter that describes what the flesh is all about [adultery, uncleanness, idolatry, hatred, envy, drunkenness].

Then there is a spirit which has a coexistence that goes right back to God Himself. That spirit is composed of intelligence or light and truth, which is a big deal as we get into the topic again today. The spirit does not have the same kinds of vulnerabilities as does the body. Therefore, if you can link up to the connection within you of the spirit, you will not be vulnerable to many of the weaknesses of the flesh—because the spirit is fortified and capable of enduring through all kinds of things that the body would succumb to.

As it turns out, in the religious and intellectual traditions of the world, Christianity and the West have largely focused upon the body. But in the East, the religions and the philosophies have largely focused upon the spirit. Buddhism does not claim to be a religion; it claims to be a way of life and a way of understanding life. Its focus is primarily upon overcoming the weaknesses of the body and getting into connection with the spirit.

Assuming I can impose upon her to do so, I'm gonna ask my wife to talk a little bit about that topic as I finish up today.

But if you were to look at—carefully—at both the teachings of Christ and the T&C revelations given through Joseph Smith, what you would find is that Christ's doctrines and the teachings of the Restoration marry together both the body and the spirit. It is a kind of religion that Christ taught that expected you to come into the flesh, do battle with the flesh, overcome those temptations, subdue the appetites, and ultimately, win a battle so that you are not tempted to do, succumb, or submit to the appetites of the flesh, but instead, you make the **flesh rise up** to live and contemplate, exist, and enjoy the fruits of the spirit. Because few things are as rewarding as having the opportunity to have spiritual experiences while occupying a body of flesh. It is enlightening. It is enlivening. It is (according to the description given by both Nephi and Alma) a fruit that is most white and most delicious and more to be desired than anything else that there is. There is no thrill that you can have in the body that is equal to the thrill of overcoming and connecting with the things of the spirit. It's called the "search for enlightenment." It's called "attaining to the Church of the Firstborn." It's called "enjoying the fruits of the spirit." That's the religion that Christ taught. That's the thing which Joseph Smith was in the process of restoring.

Unfortunately, the converts that came aboard the Restoration while Joseph Smith was alive were drawn largely from Protestant Western Christianity and Catholicism (largely Protestants, but some Catholics). The problem with that is their basic orientation (when they came aboard) was: "If you can circumscribe your physical appetite, then you're a good guy. And if you're a good guy, you get to feel proud of yourself, and you get to look down your nose at everyone else that succumbs to that." It kinda worked, and it kinda held together—until you got to Nauvoo, and then:

- They discovered the whole imported "spiritual wife" system,
- Which gave rise to adultery,
- Which, in turn, gave rise to conspiracies to commit murder (which succeeded in the case of Joseph and Hyrum),
- Which, in turn, gave rise to lying and deceit and ambition and the desire to displace Joseph and to engage in submission to the appetites of the flesh.
- And after that, the vote was held. The Twelve ostensibly won the vote, but in fact, it was Brigham Young. They come west, and it turns into a religion that is holding up adultery as a sacrament, and
- It's all downhill from there.

You're emerging from, basically, either Mormonism or Christianity into a continuation of the Restoration which has extraordinarily high ambitions for what **you** are supposed to be. One of the reasons why I wanted to talk about this subject with the **youth** is because if you can figure this out early in life and if you can engage in this struggle early in life, you stand a far better chance of developing into the "full measure of the person of Christ" than does someone who has basically spent their life looking at things through

the lens of basic Western-orientation without understanding the difference between the body and the spirit and the **significance** of connecting to the spirit.

So, with that introduction and brief reference back to what went on before, I want to take a look at a statement that is made. (This is actually Enoch, but it's found in the book of Genesis.) Enoch recorded this about Father Adam. So, he's describing Father Adam's experience accompanying the baptism of Adam, okay?

You are baptized with fire and with the holy ghost.

...is stated to Adam. This fire in the Holy Ghost,

This is the record of the Father and the Son, from henceforth and for ever. And you are after the Order of him who was without beginning of days [and so on]... (Genesis 4:10 RE)

It is given to abide in you: the Record of Heaven, the Comforter, the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, the truth of all things, that which quickens all things — which makes alive all things, that which knows all things, and has all power according to Wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. (Ibid. vs. 9)

That's what the spirit includes. So, among other things, it is the Record of Heaven; it is the truth of all things; it is that which maketh alive. That's **the spirit**.

How on Earth can the Record of Heaven and the truth of all things be embedded in you [pointing to audience members]? You are walking around with that **in** you! And think about that for a moment: how on Earth can it be that you possess something that reaches back into "the truth of all things"?

Well, before you got here, you lived somewhere else in something that is called a "first estate." It's called the first estate because it was "before this one." It may not have been your first estate: It may have been your 100th; it may have been your 10,000th; it may have been your 100,000th. But as to here, it was first—before here. How much went into that beforehand? It's not important; we aren't told about that. It's not included in the Scriptures, and it's anyone's guess. However,

...the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was, and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones.

"Intelligences" are spirits, and it includes you—because if you got here in this cycle of creation, the only way you got **here** to experience **this life** is because you were part of **that group** there. And within **that group there** (which were organized before the world was), **within** that group, there was another group:

*And among all these there were many of the noble and great ones. ...God saw **these souls**...* (Abraham 6:1 RE, emphasis added)

So, these "souls" [the noble and great] were good. Intelligences are spirits. What are souls? The vocabulary that Joseph Smith was using by the time he translated the Book of Abraham already had acquired the definition of what it meant to be a soul. So, among the group of people (the spirits that were there), there was a subgroup from among that group that were "souls." If they were souls, then they have already been through an experience that involved **this** kind of an existence. And they were **good**.

How do you know someone is good? Because as Alma writes, "In the first place, they were allowed to choose between good and bad, and having chosen good, they were foreordained according to the foreknowledge of God" (see Alma 9:10 RE), so that those souls would come down, and they would exhibit goodness—so that people could look at their example and understand the kind of example that would be set by the Savior. (It's in Alma. It's the old Alma chapter 13, verse...which I would have to look up in order to tell you where it is in Alma in the Restoration Edition, but it's the chapter about Melchizedek priesthood and who gets chosen in order to be an example.) They were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, because God knew—based upon their past experience—that they had already stepped behind a veil; they had already been tested and proven, and they had already risen up to the point that they could be trusted. But now, we're all the way back to preparation for another cycle of creation—in which we're organizing a creation, and we're determining who will be born when and where, and how this cycle of creation is gonna go down.

...the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was, and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones. And God saw these souls, that they were good...he stood in the midst of them and he said, These I will make my rulers. For he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good. And he said unto me, Abraham, you were one of them; you were chosen before you were born. (Abraham 6:1 RE)

The word "ruler" doesn't mean king, and it doesn't mean president, and it doesn't mean boss. Abraham was chosen to be one of them: Abraham lived and died with almost an insignificant number of people who gave heed to him. He lived, essentially, as a family man, but he was going to be made a ruler [Denver drew a ruler on the whiteboard—a measuring stick]. He would set a standard; he would be someone by whom you could measure the truth. In the Book of Mormon, the word "ruler" is equated with "teacher." That's who Abraham was. That's the rule that Abraham marked out as the plan or the pattern, the example, the baseline—the very thing that, if you follow, will bring you closer to God.

(Hey, there's a chair up here. Go through the kitchen.)

So, go back now in your mind to the idea that the spirit, the holy ghost, the thing that you possess (in particular, when you connect up with it following baptism) includes the Record of Heaven or the truth of all things, and realize that that is connected to what went on before this world was.

- You're standing there when **this** Creation was planned.
- You **saw**, and you **heard** what went on in the Councils of Heaven preliminary to the commencement of the Creation of this world.
- You **knew** what the plan was.
- You knew who the **Redeemer** would be.
- You knew who the **opponent** of that was.
- You **knew** about the rebellion, and you **chose** not to participate in that.
- You **elected** to come here and to take on all of the risks and vicissitudes, the troubles and the trials of mortality because you **trusted** that Christ would deliver on His promise to come here and to redeem and reverse from the blows of death that are inflicted through the fall of man by Adam and Eve, our first parents.
- You trusted that you would **get out** of the predicament that you're in presently because the Savior stood up and said He would go, and He would do as the Father commanded.
- And another one argued that, "Not so fast! Let me go down. I will destroy the agency of man, and I will make it possible for everyone to be saved without regard to whether they are good or bad, virtuous or unvirtuous, whether they are kindly or whether they are murderers. I'll just redeem them all, and we'll repack Heaven with that same crew that goes down (after they go down, and they indulge themselves in the flesh)."

Kind of a messy plan. It might get everyone back there again, but once you brought them back there, they're even **less** suitable for occupying the halls of Heaven than they were before they came down here in the first instance. And the objective is to come down here to be **added** upon—that is, to experience things and to make war against them; to let your conscience control your fleshly appetites; to reign in, not to give vent to licentiousness and worldliness and body-ness and ambition and hatred—all of the appetites that drag you down. And every one of you who's here, if you've ever engaged in an internal debate in which you were tempted to do something and you held yourself back from doing so, every one of you have been added upon. And the more you do that over the course of a lifetime and the more you connect to the Record of Heaven, the more you are able to understand and see and comprehend the truth of all things. It's what you're here to experience. It's what you're here to do. And every time you make a move in that direction, you're added upon.

This gives definition to what Christ was telling His apostles about when He described the coming Holy Ghost that would fall upon them. He says,

*But the Comforter, who is the holy ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you **all things**, and bring **all things** to your remembrance... (John 9:9 RE, emphasis added)*

How can you possibly remember the truth of all things? It's because it **resides** within you, and you can access that **by your heed and diligence**. Those are the very words that are used to describe how it was that Christ overcame the world: by His heed and diligence. The more heed and diligence that you give to the commandments of God, the more the light within you grows. It's already there. You're just permitting it to invade the body of flesh and to inform you by triggering your memory.

Now, before I got here today, a fellow who's a student up at Boise State University sent me an email that asked about a series of Scriptures (Ether 1:13, T&C 86:4, and T&C 93:10) about... Essentially, he's a physics student at Boise State University. And Dallin provoked some thoughts that I thought were worth repeating here. So, indulge me for a moment about...

It also fits in with what's on the board because you might be asking yourself, How can a soul—already has an experience—how can a soul then revert back to being a spirit? (...which is one of the things that Christ says in that Ether 1:13 verse when He appears to the brother of Jared, and He's talking about, "Hey, that same body that you see me in is the kind of body that I will appear in in the flesh when I come into the world"). Okay? It also ought to make you think about the virgin birth and about how if Christ was a **soul**, then He already had the capacity to come into the flesh with a body. On occasion in the Scriptures, you find barren women conceiving and having children. Mary's example is the most astonishing because, in the case of Christ, it's a virgin birth. But it's no less improbable a pregnancy than Samson's or John the Baptist's or Isaac's. If a woman cannot conceive a child and yet she bears a child, it's a pretty strong indication that this is one of the souls that were sent into the world that had proven themselves before. And in each instance, they performed in this world in a way that justifies capturing their story and recording it in Scripture as instruction, as a lesson, or as a parable for us to understand how to choose the right and avoid the wrong.

Well, if you were to draw a graph of the hottest temperature that we know about... In our neighborhood, it's not the hottest that there is—but there's a 20 million degrees temperature in our local neighborhood on the corona of our sun. If you go into space, there is a temperature at which you reach absolute zero, which means that atoms and molecules turn solid, and they cease to be moving. That is called absolute zero. And absolute zero is something like, I don't know, something less than 400 degrees below zero, okay? So, in the universe, we have temperature variation from 20 million degrees to -400 degrees in our little niche of the Milky Way. Mankind can only survive in a little place (I've been really generous in drawing the little red line there) in a little place that is capable of sustaining life. If you get too much colder than that, we die. If you get too much hotter than that, we die. But here in the temperate zone (that's what it's called)—in the temperate zone, we can live and move.

Well, one of the differences between what's going on at 20 million degrees and what's going on at -400 degrees, the difference between those two is how **animated** the elements are or how **fast** things are moving or how **quicken**ed the things are moving in

this Creation. "Quickening" is the word that gets used in Scripture, and oddly enough, quickening is actually a pretty good word to use to describe what happens when something approaches such power, such glory, such temperature, such heat that if you and I were exposed to it for even a second, it would destroy us—because we're living at a level in which we're tangible, we're hard.

So, when you hear a dialogue in an LDS Temple Endowment (which some of you have probably been through, and some of you may never go through), there's a colloquy that takes place behind the veil in which angelic ministers are gonna come and check on the man Adam and the woman Eve, and they say, "Come, let us go down" [Denver points to "decreasing temperature" on the thermometer he has drawn on the whiteboard.] Going down and engaging in physicality is a way of reducing the glory, reducing the temperature, reducing the elements so that it assumes a physical form. Those souls who have been here before have acquired the competency, through a physical experience, to know how to exist in this solid form. Solid, liquid, gas, plasma—at some point, what happens to the elements in the quickening is that they become pure energy, or they become a glorious being of such capacity that they approach (ultimately reach) infinite. If you had the ability to be quickened beyond the speed of light, all of our mathematical formulas suggest that, at that point, the amount of energy involved is infinite (meaning: it wouldn't be but a small exercise for you [pointing to the audience] with infinite power to move planets around).

All of the Scriptures where Christ is talking about "the body you see me now have is like the body that I will get when I come into the flesh" is Him explaining that "There won't be much difference, but I won't have to quicken you in order to **abide** in the flesh. I'm going to lay aside My Glory, and I am going to descend into the world, and I will take up my abode in the flesh—with all of the weaknesses that are associated with living here in this environment—and I will dwell among you. And while I'm here, I'll pray to the Father, 'Father, let Me come back to the glory I had with You before the world was,'" because He longs to get back into that state.

Well, all of those Scriptures are talking about this kind of subject. We get a kind of peek into it with what we know about the physical Creation, so far as we've been able to calculate it, examine it, measure it, and look at it. But everything that physics is attempting to talk about is already built into and embedded within the language of Scripture, and it's describing not just spiritual phenomenon. It's describing actually what God is up to and how this Creation reflects those kinds of realities.

Now, one of the challenges that we all face is trying to get in touch with this [the spirit] in order for that to subdue and to control what's going on in the body. You never want to wind up in a position in which this side [the body] is controlling that side [the spirit]. But you have the ability to check that from time to time and to reel in the body and to say, "Not so, I won't go there. I won't be that. I will submit only to the counsel of the spirit."

There's this saying that mental health folks have that if someone comes and tells you "they're God," they're probably crazy. But if they tell you "they're God, and you're God,

and you're God, and you're God, and everyone's God," they're probably not crazy; they probably just caught a keen insight into what it means to have dwelt in the presence of God at one time and to bring with you from His presence the Record of Heaven and the truth of all things. You already know it. The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to bring that into your remembrance. The purpose of that is to search for and to find a connection to God, and that connection is not on the other side of the world, up a mountain in Tibet. It's here, it's now, and it's accessible by you. But you have to give heed and diligence in order to find that.

In a very real sense, God the Father and God the Son have a mind that you share with them. That mind you share with them **is the Holy Ghost**, and that Holy Ghost, as far as each one of you is concerned, **is** the third member of the Godhead who dwells within you and can be accessed by you. And when you do that, it will lead to companionship with angels, and ultimately, it will redeem you from the fall and bring you back into the presence of the Beings from whom you originated.

That ends my part of this. I've asked Steph if you'll [directed to Stephanie] come up and say a few words about ideas that may help you connect to the spirit. I'm gonna stand up here, but you come join me.

Stephanie: If you want that [the notes on the whiteboard], take your pictures now, 'cuz I'm erasing it. [inaudible]

Denver: Oh, I should probably get out of the way.

Stephanie: I thought about just erasing it, but then I know, "No, Steph...!"

Denver: I'll erase everything except this. I wanna keep that up here.

Stephanie: The -400?

Denver: Yeah.

Stephanie: Okay. So, I am a "how" person. All of this stuff is great. And then there's this gigantic disconnect about, "Okay, yeah, it all **sounds** really good. Now, what are we supposed to do?"

I'm not an expert, by any means, but I have recently embarked on a new journey which is full of all kinds of interesting and edifying things. And one of them is that the language of "good mental health" is basically just Scriptural, written in secular terms—so people who are not religious can understand the same concept. There is a universality about God and about connecting to God. And so, if the soul is the body and the spirit, then you want to connect with the spirit, right? Okay. Connecting to the spirit can be accomplished by learning about and practicing **mindfulness**, okay? So, I'm gonna give you a few things to think about so that as you think about his talk and start reading the Scriptures again from a new paradigm, you have in your mind this idea of mindfulness.

So, at our basic level, human beings are down here to do five things, pretty much consistently. We are down here...

Audience Member: Can you use the black [marker]?

Stephanie: Oh, yeah—oh, I like color! Okay, we are down here to:

1. Seek pleasure,
2. Avoid pain,
3. Increase our social standing, self-esteem (or in the words of social media), "be liked," okay? We like to be liked, right? and
4. Protect our loved ones, and
5. Think constantly about how to accomplish 1-4, okay?

Does that sound about right? Okay, these five things are pretty much the reason all human beings suffer—okay?—'cuz we do; we suffer. It is why and how we find ourselves emotionally upset, emotionally dysregulated (these are therapy words; sorry, I got a new job), and there are a million reasons why we do this, okay? These are the basis upon which we do this (I'm not gonna write these down). So, here are a few of the ways we suffer as human beings:

- We worry about the future—yeah, all of the time, right?
- We regret our past: "Oh gosh, shoot, I shouldn't have done that! I can't believe I did that!"
- We are angry or we're sad for any number of reasons.
- We suffer from guilt and shame because of the things that we do.
- We enjoy physical pain: hips, knees, joints, gallbladders, kidney stones—you know, whatever.
- We find ourselves often bored and stressed.
- We have anxious thoughts, or we're depressed, or we worry all the time, or
- We engage in addictions or other kinds of things that really bring us down.

So, lesson number one: "Being human" is really hard; "being human disconnected from our spirit" is even harder—it makes everything harder. So... Just I'll get this out here; this is words to live by: **Pain is inevitable**, okay? You are down here in your human form (dust, flesh)—you are going to be in pain. Any number of these things are gonna cause you pain, just like I said. But **suffering is optional**, okay? We do not have to make our pains worse by making them our focus. We **can** let go of some of this. So, the question then is: How do we avoid **suffering** when we are in pain?

So, the way to do that is to connect to your spirit and set aside our preoccupation with our bodies, okay? That stuff that you took a picture of [on the whiteboard before Stephanie started talking], that's exactly what I'm talking about: body, spirit, all right? So, we want to separate ourselves from that.

So, here's a couple of definitions of mindfulness. Mindfulness means "relaxed, embodied awareness." (Whatever.) It means "paying attention—on purpose—in the present moment without judging (as if your life depended on it)," okay? So, what does all that mean? Well, at the root of mindfulness—which is not sitting cross-legged in a room on a cozy cushion with your legs crossed, ohming and ahming or whatever—mindfulness is awareness, okay? It is being aware of the present moment.

So, you're all sitting here, and I would venture to say that most of you are thinking about something else other than what's going on here, okay?

- "Crap, I can't believe I was late."
- "I wonder if I'm gonna get out of here soon enough to do something with my friends."
- "I think there's food in the kitchen."
- "It's Friday—is it Friday?—I don't have homework on Friday."

Denver: It's Saturday.

Stephanie: "Oh, it's Saturday. Holy crap! I've lost a whole day!"

Denver: That's life.

Stephanie: "Oh, my gosh! I'm stressed out." Right? Yeah, okay, exactly. I can't remember what I was thinking over there... Oh, I do know: I was thinking, "Pretty good! That was pretty good."

Denver: You were here "in the moment"??

Stephanie: I was! That's what I was thinking.

Okay. So, there are some very specific things you can do to bring yourself into the present moment—whatever that present moment is—because "present" is **now**.

Oh, it's gone.

Oh, nope—it's now.

Oh, it's gone again.

See? You only have one moment—ever. Anything in the past is gone, anything in the future hasn't happened yet.

Oh, there we go! Another one's gone. (See? It's kind of mind-blowing, actually.)

So, there are some actual skills, exercises, and things you can do to bring yourself into the present moment. There's something called breath awareness, okay? Breath

awareness is literally exactly what it sounds like: you **just** pay attention to your breathing. You don't have to "not think of anything," because your brain is absolutely **incapable** of not thinking of other things—but you can, "In, out; in, out," and just pay attention to your breathing. You'll be doing that, and you'll get one breath in, and you will think about whether there's food in the kitchen. You will get two breaths in, and you will think about, "Shoot, I didn't text that kid back!" You will get three breaths in, and your little "puppy brain" will be all over the place. And that's fine! Notice your puppy brain, and bring him back, and go, "In and out..."

My favorite breathing exercises go like this ([picking up a red marker and then changing to a black one] Okay this... Fine, fine, fine). There's visuals you can do. This is actually called "square breathing," but I prefer to turn it into a baseball diamond. And I go home to first (and I breathe in), and then I go first to second (and I breathe out), and then I go second to third (and I breathe in), and I go third to home (and I breathe out). And in my mind, I have this little diagram where I go up and over and down—and that helps me keep my brain at least focused on something else. Okay?

There's another one called "infinity breathing," and if you start to pay attention to your breath, you will notice that you breathe in, and you breathe out—and in the "in and out," there's a hitch—okay?—[breathing in...] and you kind of pause, and then you breathe out. Infinity breathing is working on breathing in a way where there's no hitch, so your breath looks like that [infinity sign] instead of like that [infinity sign with straight lines]. Okay? It's a really kind of interesting exercise because when you get here [to the pause] in your breathing (I'll just leave this to you to figure out), you want to make it smooth.

Now, I don't really care how you breathe. I mean, the object is not **how** you breathe; the object is to give your mind something to think about for the breath awareness. If this doesn't work, fine; whatever. Say "in and out," picture a tide, blow up a balloon, whatever—you know, just get something going in your mind so that you're focused on breath awareness. It actually calms you down, it changes the way your amygdala is activated, it puts you back in your prefrontal cortex, and it makes everything better immediately—even if just for a short time.

The other awareness is a body-scan awareness, where you literally sit in a chair, and you start at the top of your head, and you think about your head: "Can I feel anything in my head? Do I have a headache? No, I feel pretty good. What about my neck, my shoulders..." Just go all the way through your body, however you want: arms, elbows, fingers, toes. And then, when you get all the way down to the bottom, you come back up to the top. And your mind is all over the place, and pretty soon you forget that you were at your elbow, or you don't realize how you got to your abdomen, or whatever. And you just bring it back, and you just do it again.

All of this is designed to do is just keep you **aware** of what's going on without being **everywhere** in your puppy mind or monkey mind, which is what we also call it. "Sensory awareness," same thing. Finish your body-scan awareness or finish your breathing meditation or mindfulness, and then say,

"What do I hear?" A kid. A fan. I was sitting by Chris; I could hear his thing go in and out, his... Okay? So, literally, what are [do] you hear?

What do you see? I see people. Pink. Just that simple.

What do you smell?

Can you taste anything?

I meditate in my car right after I get a Diet Coke. You would be shocked at how noisy Diet Coke is—just bubbles like crazy; carbonated Diet Coke. Very noisy.

Denver: Devil's brew.

Stephanie: ...very noisy when you're listening to it in your car.

Emotion awareness. This is... We don't like this one, **nobody** likes this one because **nobody** likes to think about how they **feel!** 'Cuz sometimes we don't feel very good. Sometimes we're sad. Sometimes we're scared. Sometimes we're angry (which is usually because we're sad or scared). Sometimes we're, you know, we feel depressed. Sometimes we feel like school sucks. Sometimes we feel like, "If I have to put a mask on, I'm gonna rip someone's freaking eyes out!" Okay? We feel ways that we are uncomfortable with because we're not good at feeling our emotions. So, emotion awareness is exactly that: being aware of how you feel at any given time, okay?

All of this is designed to keep you in a present moment. I'm gonna say it again: The present-moment awareness takes us out of what we call our monkey mind or our puppy mind (the part of us that is usually disconnected from our spirit). That's what disconnects us from our spirit. It disrupts our connection with the Divine or the Heavenly because it's all over the place thinking of things that are **not divine**. "Oh, I think there's food in the kitchen." "Damn, I'm **not** gonna get out of here before it's...in time to do anything with my friends," okay? The present moment is all we ever have because the past is literally gone, and the future has not arrived. It's pretty mind-blowing, actually, when you start to think about it.

So, mindfulness is the antidote to being consumed in mind and heart by the natural man (the part of us that **creates** our suffering). This is an element of Eastern religious practices that focus on the soul and the spirit (or the spirit instead of the body). At its highest and best, mindfulness practices are designed to create a **path** for us to experience enlightenment, which is the connection to God ([addressing Denver] you used a whole bunch of different phrases)...

Denver: Oh, the truth of all things, the Record of Heaven...

Stephanie: Yeah, that's what it is. And if you read other things, honestly, like mental health books, the language is all over the place: Christ consciousness, enlightenment, they call it a mil... Oh, connecting with the universe, you know. I mean, there's a lot of non-godly words used to describe exactly the same thing, okay? This journey includes yogic traditions, as well, because yogi (or yoga) is not just stretching and contorting our bodies, okay? The word "yoga" actually comes from the Sanskrit root yuge or yuj (y-u-j), which means "to yoke or unite oneself with God," okay? So, yogis are the enlightened ones; yoga is what we do when we contort our bodies, but it is also uniting or yoking with God, okay? So, it's uniting or yoking with God, and it also refers to the practices and principles that are used to create this union.

So, mindfulness practices and yogic traditions have many benefits, the most important one being the ability to open ourselves up to higher states of spirituality, to have more direct experiences with God, and to begin to see things as God sees them. This is how we're making the connection. This is how we're moving (from his [Denver's] diagram) from the body to the spirit.

One of the obstacles of Western culture and Western Christianity is that we come from a "deficit model," meaning that Christianity in the Western world talks about mankind as deficient, all right? We are carnal, sensual, base; we have lust; we have appetite...

Denver: Enemy to God.

Stephanie: We are an enemy to God. We are a natural man, okay? And we need Christ as our Redeemer (who is the only perfect being to do all the heavy lifting, so that from our state of deficiencies, we can be redeemed). This kind of thing is offset by Mormon teachings where we learn that we are divinely created in the image of our Heavenly Parents, and we can actively participate (to some degree) in our salvation by repenting, being obedient, and living righteously. So, we **can contribute** to that.

The yogic tradition, on the other hand (which is the Eastern traditions), believe that human beings are whole and divine at their very core. Mormons tend to believe that, too —so Mormon teachings include the idea that we're born of Heavenly Parents, and we can live by that divine parentage—but we're down here in this cesspool of a mess pool (hah...that's funny), and we're disconnected from the divinity that is actually in us (again, which goes to the whole thing). So, the yogic tradition says that the Redeemer, our Savior, isn't necessarily **pulling** us from the depths of our deficiency, but He is **revealing** to us the true nature of God—which is the Record of Heaven, intelligence, light and truth, same thing that it says in the Scriptures, okay?

So, how do we tap into this principle of divinity and connection and awareness so that we can **pull ourselves** out of our natural state? Well, we begin by understanding the Scriptures. *Men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God* (Genesis 4:7 RE), which he [Denver] explained in the last talk (so, you can go find that). Understand this Scripture about being *the natural man is an enemy to God* (Mosiah 1:16 RE)—because it's not an enemy to God; it is just disconnected from

God. We are at odds with God. So, understand those two Scriptures, and then begin to practice mindfulness to quiet your monkey mind, to find the light and truth and intelligence, which is the glory of God which is **in you**—you just can't hear it or find it or see it because we're too busy trying to seek pleasure, avoid pain, be liked, protect our loved ones, and think **constantly** about how to make those happen.

So, I'm gonna end with recommending one thing—'cuz if I can recommend one thing to help you get in touch with your spirit, it would be to practice quieting your mind. Because the One whom we worship says, *Be still and know that I am God* (T&C 101:3).

That's my part.

Denver: Okay, now that you've heard from me and my therapist wife...

Stephanie: Who did you like best?

Denver: I liked you—because I wasn't talking. Any questions for her to answer? Any questions? Any questions at all?

[Inaudible audience question.]

Stephanie: I am a therapist.

Audience Question 1 (continued): You're certified?

Stephanie: Yeah, I am. Yeah.

Denver: Yeah, she finished her Masters and now is a licensed clinical therapist, which I think her marriage drove her to.

Audience Member: I was gonna say that, but...

Audience Question 2: Yeah, so in my studies and trying to understand the Scriptures, it kind of seems like most perfect beings are kind of identical in personality in kind of every trait that they have. Because you have to be a perfect being. You have to be just like Christ. And yet, it seems like you kind of stated that our differences should be celebrated. So, can you explain maybe how the Gods, maybe, are different and how that is?

Denver: Yeah, the question basically is "Does exaltation result in uniformity and sameness?" And I would say that exaltation results in remarkable diversity. The Creator has never in this Creation made two people that are the same. There are no two snowflakes that are the same. If God goes to all the trouble of making unique snowflakes—all of which are patterned after the same crystalline structure, and yet, no two of them are alike—then why would God expect **that** kind of uniformity? Now, set that on one side for a moment, and...

A lot of disagreements that exist between people are based upon their background, education, and experience, okay? If all of us read the same library, if all of us grew up in the same household, if all of us had the same basic education, shared the same friends, went through the same kind of socio-economic experiences, if all of us shared all of those things, there would be a whole lot of disagreements that would go away, and we would find ourselves agreeing on a whole lot more than we agree on now.

However, we would still disagree with one another. We would still find differences of opinion. We would still find ourselves really preferring different hues and shades, and you would buy an ugly-colored car, and I would buy a beautiful-colored car, and I would be so glad I wasn't driving that ugly thing you're driving around in. (But we would certainly all have four-wheel drive pickups; they just wouldn't have the same color.)

Christ's experiences completed a circuit that attained to the resurrection, that took him through an experience that allowed Him to attain to the resurrection of the dead. But after that experience was over—you can read it in the Teachings and Commandments — following that, the Lord was **absolutely exultant**, as was Mary when she met Him on the morning of the resurrection—never saw a happier being more so than the Lord on the morning of the resurrection. How He coped with that feeling and how you will cope with that feeling eventually and how all of us will cope with that will be uniquely experiential, uniquely yours, uniquely His. Even the same experiences are gonna lead to differences. No one is going to be uniform except in education, background, experience, knowledge; but their attitudes are gonna be uniquely yours, uniquely his, uniquely hers. It's all gonna be different.

Okay, so, now we're done, right? Yeah, no more questions. Go Jazz! Yeah, yeah. Okay, we're done.

Audience Member: We're done.

Denver: We're done. **Now** you can get the cookies!

[Crosstalk]

Denver: Why? What, what? Okay, here's someone:

Audience Question 3: Okay, so in the talk, you were kinda talking about how, like, people can develop spirituality in isolation, but that's not the same as developing it in community. So...

Denver: Right.

Audience Question 3 (continued): ...like, what would it look like to develop that in community and how can we do that?

Denver: One of the ways in which we develop in community is by sharing in fellowships, contributing tithing in order to relieve people's basic needs (shelter, food, education, medical care, transportation) **and**, when you are a person in need, **receiving** that. And in that dynamic, the giver needs to do it cheerfully (and that requires some amount of learning), and the receiver needs to do so cheerfully. And no one should think of themselves as "better than" and no one should think of themselves as "less than"—because we tend to develop unhealthy attitudes.

Fellowships in which tithing gets used locally is a vivid example of how resentments or jealousies or insecurities and feelings of inferiority can develop. And we're supposed to interact with one another in a way that puts that on display **to you, internally**, so that you can reflect upon **why** you're feeling that and whether that is godly or ungodly.

We have to cooperate with helping one another because there are all kinds of needs. There are people who are socially retarded, in that they're obnoxious, they're overbearing... They need to come to realize that, in some respects, that's ungodly. And then there are people who **notice** that someone is obnoxious and overbearing, and they need to come to grips with the fact that that too is ungodly. Because in a perfect society, everyone's inadequacies are accepted and noticed by **that** person, and tolerated and endured by the others, as **they work through their deficiency**. And to the extent that you can help them do so, it's a kindness to tell them so. (I tell Louis all the time about his deficiencies [laughter].) Yeah, yeah, there we go—you need to work on that, too—because he's a target-rich environment.

Yeah, there was another hand right here.

Audience Question 4: Why do you need to connect to your spirit?

Denver: Because your spirit is composed of intelligence, and intelligence is the glory of God, which is also light and truth. That's what your spirit is, all those things. It gets called a bunch of other stuff in the Scripture that I read today about the Record of Heaven, the truth of all things, and all that. That's **in you**. Now, if you can connect to that, God is absolutely able to talk to **that** on an ongoing basis (God has a real hard time talking to this [the body]). A whole lot of accommodations have to be made to talk to this [the body], including the power of God necessarily quickening the body in order to have it endure the presence of God.

But the spirit within you doesn't have those defects. Your spirit will not be destroyed by the glory of God being revealed. Joseph Smith once said that when God manifests Himself to someone, He does so precisely as if there were no body at all. Well, that's because God can do more with revealing Himself to the spirit without destroying it than He can to the body, because revealing Himself to the body requires Him to go to a lot of trouble in order to make this [the body] capable of **enduring** the glory of God: you have to be transfigured; if it's permanent, translated. You have to be glorified; you have to go through something. That's why when Moses descends from the mountain and the children of Israel see him, his face is glowing—because he still bears some of the glory

of God on his countenance; and Israel says, "Put a mask on, and stay six feet apart from us, and hide the glory of God that's manifesting itself on your countenance." Because it hurt, it frightens; it's off-putting.

Yeah, you had a hand up.

Audience Question 5: Yeah, if your spirit left your body, would the body perish?

Denver: Yeah.

Audience Question 5 (continued): ...and is the spirit ever **required** to leave the body in order to be quickened or...?

Denver: Yeah, let me... I got that. The answer to that question is T&C 147:12. Someone tree that. T&C 147. This is Joseph commenting on some claim of someone. 147, oh yeah...

Audience Member: Can you repeat the question?

Denver: Okay, what happens when the spirit leaves the body? ([flipping through the Scriptures] Oh, that's 146. Now I've gone backwards.)

Joanna Southcott professed to be a prophetess, and wrote a book of prophecies in 1804; [and] became the founder of a people that are still extant. She was to bring forth, in a place appointed, a son that was to be the Messiah, which thing has failed. Independent of this, however, [we do not] read of a woman that was a founder of a church, in the word of God? Paul told [that] the women of his day "to keep silence in the church, ...that if they wished to know anything, to ask their husbands at home." He would not suffer a woman "to rule, or to usurp authority in the church"; but here we find a woman [who's founded the] church, a revelator and a guide... (emphasis added)

...and so on. Then he talks about Jemima Wilkinson, and then, in verse 13:

...the idea of her soul being in Heaven while her body was living on earth is also preposterous. When God breathed into man's nostrils, he became a living soul, before that he did not live, and when that was taken away his body died; and so did our Savior when the spirit left the body, nor did his body live until his spirit returned in the power of his resurrection. But Mrs. Wilkinson's soul (life) was in Heaven, and her body without the soul (or life) on earth, living (without the soul or) without life.

So, he's saying, "Can't happen." Just so happens that **that** question is in the Scriptures.

Yeah?

Audience Question 6: So, we really wanted the LDS Church in primary, we would always have the description of, like, our hand being our spirit and the glove being the body. Now, I had a question on my mission of actually pointing out Christ was resurrected—he had a physical body—but he could also basically walk through walls. He could appear and reappear. He could come and go. So, would the attaining to the resurrection be the way I see it have our soul, our spirit and body be one substance? Or will it be a temporary spirit and a body?

Denver: One. One with the absolute capacity to manifest itself in any condition—from blinding glory destructive to the physical elements, at one end, or the retained capacity to go down and to say, *Handle me and see, for a spirit [hath] not flesh and bones as you see me have* (Luke 14:6 RE), and then to ascend (which a body can't do... Ahh, there's some carnival acts where they use a cannon, but they need a net, or it's gonna end badly)—but it's one; it's one. But it's—at that point—it's connected in a way that all of the capacities that existed in the physical body, all of the capacities that exist in glorious exaltation are combined into one being who is a being of glory and holiness.

Unfortunately (well, fortunately—I don't know; make your own judgment on it), the Father who is sitting on the throne emanating glory that sustains the whole of the Creation (and the word "the Father" is a title which, after the resurrection, applies to Christ) in that state of glory, sustaining all things while possessing the responsibility to sustain the whole of Creation, you really can't descend. The Father has to appear in glory. And at the Second Coming (when the Lord appears in glory), it will be in part because of certain rules that apply to how things work in eternity when you become the Father. But that's neither here nor there.

What's this?

Stephanie: I have a question.

Denver: Really?

[crosstalk]

Stephanie (Audience Question 7): [reading from a text message] "What does it mean to fear God?"

Denver: Respect.

Audience Member: Will you repeat the question?

Denver: The question is, "What does it mean to fear God?" It means to respect Him, to stand in awe of Him, to recognize the great gulf between you and Him, and to realize that you're dependent upon Him.

Stephanie: Okay, one more (which you'll probably have me answer). How do you... Okay, now that you've moved out of the LDS... Oh, I'll just read it exactly: Now that I have found a new perspective of the gospel in this movement, how am I supposed to find an eternal partner that will also have the same perspective on the church/gospel as I do?

Denver: You probably don't need to. Yeah, you probably don't need to. Find a spouse that you love, find a spouse that is a good companion for you, find someone that shares the kind of values you have, and eventually develop into the kind of unity and love in which that won't matter. Values are more important, according to my therapist wife.

Stephanie: No, no. Values are more important than interests, than religion, than activities. I mean, all this stuff is nice, and it will come. But values...! And if the language of God can be spoken in all kinds of languages, the values... Let's not mention it; I don't know.

Audience Question 8: Stephanie, there's a question that came in on the chat, and it is: "Could struggles with inherited mental illness and addictions, etc. be a way to learn (for the noble and great ones) how to quiet oneself when it's biologically challenging? And how does being still work with struggles in the body?"

Stephanie: Yes, and it's... I mean, it's the same thing just...

Denver: Yeah, they can't hear you.

Stephanie: If you want to strengthen a muscle you have to lift a weight, okay? If you want to run a marathon, you have to run a block or, you know, a mile. If you want to increase your connection to the spirit through mindfulness, you have to practice mindfulness every day for some amount of time, and the **distillation** of the **improvement** will go more or less unnoticed **except that** you will find **connection**; you will find **peace**; you will find that you have **quieted** even your **inherited anxious tendencies**. You will find that you have risen above even your **legitimate** physiological/biological depressing thoughts or depression. It doesn't make it go away, it just makes **suffering less interesting**. That's about it

Denver: Yeah, and inherited mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. It's something to be confronted and dealt with.

Eventually, if you're **really** lucky, you will live long enough to find out that you're dying from an incurable disease—that's who's lucky. Because then you get to reflect upon the transition that's coming. And you don't arrive there abruptly and without reflection. Someone contracts a disease that requires them to face the reality of coming death, you oughtta visit them, and they oughtta be cheerful, and you oughtta talk about what comes next. Because what comes next is better than what we got here.

Stephanie: "Nearly as important as the Red Sox"? [referencing something Denver wrote on the whiteboard].

Denver: Well, yeah, I was trying to talk about what **really** matters, although Pedroia retired, and they traded Benintendi and I'm not so sure. Today's game of the Twins—it was on the MLB channel—got rained out. I don't even know what we're doing this year. But Chris Sale's gonna be back, and he had Tommy John surgery, and in a good pitcher, that adds like five miles per hour, so we have that to look forward to. (You don't even need an offense if you got Chris Sale on the mound; just bunt a guy around until you score one, and let Sale close it out.)

Yeah, hey!

Audience Question 9: Since sacrifice is essential for part of this journey, if... Is it essential because when one is sacrificing in their right mind, it is slowly detaching them from the natural man or our carnal state? Is that why it's so important?

Denver: Yeah, you've nailed it, yeah. Because the sacrifice, it's **this** thing [the body]. Yeah.

Yeah, yeah?

Audience Question 10: So, when you have the baptism of fire, or like, most of the time when it's talking about, like, fire in the Scriptures is that talking... Is that like connecting to the quickening that we're talking about?

Denver: Yeah, it's talking about letting that emerge. It can emerge abruptly and suddenly. Joseph talked about how you can have come to your mind sudden bursts of insight and ideas such that, shortly thereafter, you will find the thing come to pass. So, that's the principle of revelation; that's the beginning of the path. Revelation begins with stirring up from deep within you the power of that light, that truth, that glory of God so that it intrudes into your consciousness; it intrudes into your body. You grasp things that you could not previously have attained to. That principle of revelation grows and grows brighter and brighter (as it says in the Scriptures) until the perfect day. In the perfect day, you're actually standing—although in the body—you're actually standing with the Heavens opened unto you. It... The light shines forth so that you comprehend and you find companionship with the folks in Heaven, the ministering angels, the Son. The purpose of angels is to fulfill and do the works of the covenants. Purpose of the covenants is to lead you along until you have an audience with Christ. The purpose and ministry of Christ is to bring you to the Father. And the purpose of all of that is to reunite **you** back to that family that you were part of before you ever got here and to become, you know, one with them again. But...

There's ice cream on the counter! We gotta close! Hey!

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Now go eat, drink, and be married.

2021.03.27 The Religion of the Fathers

Aravada Springs, NV

March 27, 2021

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

I have to say: As time goes on, you folks look more and more eccentric. (That's just from up here, looking out.)

I want to thank the organizers for putting it together, and I want to thank them for the invite to come talk. I also want to say before I begin that there's no reason to think that I am implying anything apart from what is explicitly stated in the talk.

The name "Jesus Christ" is Greek. An Anglicized Hebrew version of the name is "Joshua the Messiah" or, more phonetically correct, "Yeshua the Mashiach." God promised Adam there would be a Messiah or Christ sent to save his (Adam's) descendants. Angels preached the gospel of the promised Messiah to righteous men and women beginning with Father Adam. Abraham was taught **that** same gospel. Jesus the Messiah was born in Bethlehem, lived as a mortal, and fulfilled God's Messianic promises. He was **not** an innovator. Instead, He restored that gospel originally revealed to the Patriarchal Fathers.

This talk is about understanding the worship of our Messiah. An 1833 revelation promised further information to be given the faithful who obeyed God's commandments:

*I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know **how** to worship, and know **what** you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness, for if you keep my commandments, you shall **receive** of his fullness and be glorified in me as I am glorified in the Father. Therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace. (T&C 93:7, emphasis added)*

A prophecy of Malachi is recorded in **every** volume of Scripture: Old Covenants, New Covenants, Book of Mormon, and Teachings and Commandments. The prophecy promises that before the great and dreadful day of the Lord the hearts of the children will turn to the Fathers or (as stated in the JST Old Covenants): *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall **seal** the heart of the Fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their Fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Malachi 1:12 RE, emphasis added).*

Nephi quoted it to Joseph Smith a little differently: *And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall **turn** to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be **utterly wasted** at his coming (Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE, emphasis added).*

Two **versions** of Malachi's prophecy have the very same interesting wording. Both the Old Covenants and the Book of Mormon twice use the word "**heart**" in the singular, but "**fathers**" and "**children**" are plural. It's a small change but an important and revealing one. The Fathers are of **one heart**, and to the extent there are to be children sealed to them, the children will also be of one (and the same) heart.

In this talk, I hope to clarify and identify who the "fathers" are. It's not your immediate ancestors from the last 20 or so generations; all of them who died without the required knowledge and acceptance of fullness of the gospel are in spirit prison. Therefore, they are damned and cannot progress until preparations are made to improve their resurrection.

Our hearts must become one. United hearts seem to be in a distant latitude from where **we** are now. Even then, before any attempt at "sealing" begins, the first question is the identity of the "fathers" to whom our singular heart must be sealed to avoid being "cursed"—or as Christ warned, "utterly wasted at his coming."

There is a **true** religion; it was revealed first to Adam. Adam not only received and practiced that true religion, it is through **him** that **every subsequent** dispensation of the gospel has been revealed. Joseph Smith taught:

*Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the Ancient of Days, or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great grand progenitor, of whom it is said in another place, He is Michael, because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but he was the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ **has been** revealed from Heaven and will continue **to be** revealed from henceforth. **Adam** holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed.*

*...that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the **preceding** dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus.*

*Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set **Adam** to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. (T&C 140:3,5-6; emphasis added)*

God gave to Adam the right of "dominion" over the Earth and everything (correspondingly, **everyone**) on the Earth. That was part of the original true religion.

When the true religion was combined with the right to hold dominion or preside as a High Priest, it was called the "Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God." This was shortened to "Holy Order." It has also been called the Melchizedek Priesthood. Because of the too frequent use of the term "Melchizedek Priesthood" by the LDS Church and resulting confusion about the meaning of the term, I've redefined "priesthood" and avoid making use of that term without clarification. In this talk, the term "Holy Order" is used to mean the original priestly position conferred on Adam and thereafter passed on to the one eldest, worthy descendant in each subsequent generation, and the religion then taught by that holder was correct and held salvation.

The Patriarchal Fathers are Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem (or Melchizedek), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These 15 generational heads stood, **like Adam**, as God's Patriarchal Father and High Priest at the head of God's family on Earth. There were many others who believed in the religion taught by Adam and the Patriarchal Fathers, but the Holy Order given to Adam was always held in its fullness by the eldest worthy descendant in each subsequent generation until—skipping generations to—Abraham.

Abraham was the first precedent for "**sealing**" into the Order, tying a descendant separated by generations into the position of patriarchal successor to Shem (or Melchizedek). This precedent helps explain Joseph Smith's later practice of sealing others to him. Given the examples of Abraham and Joseph Smith, it becomes clear that the Holy Order does not have to be exclusively dynastic (passing in one family line) but can branch out to include any other worthy member of the line, however distant or separated by generations.

The Patriarchal head of the Holy Order is the shepherd for the faithful, husbandman for the Creation, and teacher responsible for dispensing Divine knowledge. It is more than competent gospel teaching; it is authoritatively dispensing a message from a position established and recognized by God, hence Joseph Smith's observation that *there are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers* (T&C 139:12). When the Holy Order is active, these obligations attach to the position in every generation.

The first or Patriarchal Fathers learned the true religion from Adam and practiced it under his direction. Adam taught the first eight patriarchs born after him. Their religion was Adam's religion, and their understanding reached back to the Garden of Eden.

The majority of Adam's family abandoned the truth. From the time of Adam, most people who have been given the opportunity to receive the gospel in their respective dispensations have dwindled in unbelief. The Book of Mormon repeatedly describes people **dwindling** in unbelief. An angel foretold to Nephi (the first prophet-writer in the first book of the Book of Mormon) that **all** his descendants **and** his brothers' descendants would dwindle in unbelief.

Dwinding happens whenever light and truth are neglected, forgotten, or rejected. The term "unbelief" applies not when people cease believing, but when they hold **false**

beliefs. Those false beliefs include incomplete, unfinished, or incorrect ideas. Unbelief comes as much from rejecting Scripture as from deleting or changing ordinances.

The truth has dwindled, and there are not accurate enough Scriptures available to know all that has been lost. Upheavals in history have produced a barrier keeping the first religion away from us. Margaret Barker has spent a lifetime studying ancient Israel, largely pursuing the First Temple religion of Israel. Her goal is modest. She's trying to reconstruct the Old Testament era from Solomon to Ezra. **We** are trying to reach back to Adam. Even with her more modest aim, she has concluded it is impossible for us to know what really took place. She calls the present state of all our understanding nothing more than "supposition":

The exile in Babylon is a formidable barrier to anyone wanting to reconstruct the religious beliefs and practices of ancient Jerusalem. If we are to discover any possible reason for the distinction between the sons of El/Elyon and the sons of Yahweh it is a barrier, which has to be acknowledged. Enormous developments took place in the wake of enormous destruction, and these two factors make certainty quite impossible. They make *all* certainty impossible, and this too must be acknowledged, for the customary descriptions of ancient Israel's religion are themselves no more than supposition. (Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*, p.12, citations omitted, italics in original)

Belief is only possible by receiving the truth. It is important to have the truth in order to acquire belief. The Lord commanded Joseph Smith to revise the Bible in order to permit "belief" (or "correct understanding"). One of the corrections Joseph made was to the exchange between Jesus and the lawyers. Luke was revised to now read: *Woe unto you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scriptures. You enter not in yourselves into the kingdom, and those who were entering in, you hindered* (Luke 8:17 RE). Without the "fullness of the scriptures," it is impossible to have belief. Truth is the key of knowledge.

Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible was designed to restore the Bible to read: *Even as they are in [God's] own bosom, to the salvation of [God's] elect* (T&C 18:6). From the command to commence the corrected Bible project until the command to publish it, Joseph's inspired revision was referred to in **14** revelations. The revised Bible was quoted exclusively in Lectures on Faith. The Bible revision was essential for people to have belief. Without it, the saints would dwindle in unbelief because they lacked the truths God intended to be known and accepted by His followers. Joseph Smith knew this and warned about how crucial it was for the revised Bible (which he called the "fullness of the scriptures") to be published for believers. In an October 1831 Conference, he taught the saints: "God had often sealed up the Heavens because of covetousness in the church. Said the Lord would cut his work short in righteousness and except the church receive the fullness of the scriptures they would yet fall" (*Joseph Smith Papers* [hereafter *JSP*], *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831-January 1833*, p.85).

The fullness of the Scriptures was never published in Joseph Smith's lifetime—**or ever by any church**. The RLDS Church published an incomplete and altered version that excluded revisions made by Joseph Smith and included revisions made by a committee. A significant part of the work accomplished by Joseph Smith has been neglected by the LDS or altered by the RLDS (now the Community of Christ), and **both** of those groups have dwindled in unbelief. Because they have incomplete Scriptures, having rejected part of what the Lord has as "scriptures in His own bosom" (see T&C 18:6), it **cannot** be otherwise. All of the break-off groups that have separated from the LDS or RLDS have similarly dwindled in unbelief.

The Restoration has not been able to advance until recently when a penitent group of believers repented and endeavored to recover and reclaim what was discarded. In the inspired "Prayer for Covenant," these past failures are acknowledged, and the Lord was asked to accept our repentance. Here are some excerpts from that prayer:

*We are mindful that in 1832 the gentile saints were condemned for vanity and unbelief because they treated lightly the things they had received, and they were warned by you that they would remain under condemnation **until** they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, not only to say, but to do. You commanded the gentiles that they bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom, and if they failed to do so, there remained a scourge and [a] judgment to be poured out upon those who claimed to be the children of Zion. They **failed** to bring forth the required fruit, and were judged and scourged, and then violently driven out of Jackson County, Missouri.*

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

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

...The other revelations given through Joseph Smith have also not been maintained and transmitted to us in their purity.

*...We ask to be corrected in anything we have gathered and ask to be instructed by you to discard what ought to be discarded, and inspired to keep only those things which should be kept. We were not responsible for neglecting your warnings, for treating lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments, nor for failing to do as you asked, but **have inherited** that legacy and acknowledge that we also suffer under your condemnation as our inheritance.*

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

...We ask that you accept these books as yours so that people of faith may then rely upon this work as your word to this generation, ...a standard for governing ourselves, as a law, and as a covenant, to establish a rule for our faith, and as the expression of our religion, so we may have correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth. If this body of writings are not acceptable, we ask that you guide us further so we may correct, remove, or add whatever you would require for the writings to become acceptable for a covenant and [a] law, a rule of faith, as a correct expression of the religion that honors you, so [that] we may be in possession of correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth. (T&C 156:2,7-8,10-11,15,17; emphasis added)

The prayer and the effort to recover the fullness of the Scriptures pleased the Lord. He answered by commending the recovery and **accepting** the Scriptures. His "Answer to Prayer for Covenant" states, in part:

(And I'm gonna add: We asked Him to tell us if something ought be deleted and to tell us if something ought be added, and He did both of those things. Things were deleted and things then were added in response to the prayer.)

But His answer included these:

The records in the form you have of the Old Covenants, given from Adam until Moses and from Moses to John, are of great worth and can serve my purposes, and are acceptable for this time.

The records of my apostles containing my New Covenants were to contain the fullness of my gospel, but during the formation of the great and abominable church, many parts were discarded and other parts were altered. False brethren who did not fear me intended to corrupt and to pervert the right way, to blind the eyes and harden the hearts of others, in order to obtain power and authority over them.

Conspiracies have corrupted the records, beginning among the Jews, and again following the time of my apostles, and yet again following the time of Joseph and Hyrum. As you have labored with the records you have witnessed the alterations and insertions, and your effort to recover them pleases me and is of great worth. (T&C 157:13-15)

Ours are the only Scriptures approved by God as *sufficient for the labor[s] now underway* (T&C 177:2). However, the Lord stopped short of endorsing them as without flaws.

The records you have gathered as scriptures yet lack many of my words, have errors throughout, and contain things that are not of me, because the records you used in your labors have not been maintained nor guarded against the cunning plans of false brethren who have been deceived by Satan. (T&C 157:12)

The Lord explained:

What you have gathered as scriptures are acceptable to me for this time and contain many plain and precious things. Nevertheless, whoso is enlightened by the spirit shall obtain the greater benefit, because you need not think they contain all my words nor that more will not be given, for there are [yet] many things...to be restored unto my people.

...There will yet be records restored from all the tribes, that will be gathered [together] again [in] one, and also as I have said, there is some truth in the Apocrypha, including the Pseudepigrapha and scrolls recovered at Nag Hammadi, and other New Testament texts uncovered since the time of Joseph Smith, and findings at Qumran, and there are other records yet to be recovered; [and] whoso is enlightened by the spirit shall obtain benefit by their careful study. (Ibid. vs. 44,47)

We have the best available, but they're to be understood through the power of the spirit. In another revelation, the Lord explained this about our scriptures:

These scriptures are sent forth to be my warning to the world, my comfort to the faithful, my counsel to the meek, my reproof to the proud, my rebuke to the contentious, and my condemnation of the wicked. They are my invitation to all mankind to flee from corruption, repent and be baptized in my name, and prepare for the coming judgment. (T&C 177:3)

Our Scriptures will do no good if they're not read or studied. We, like all other Restoration churches and groups, can **also** dwindle in unbelief.

Unlike the many existing and past Restoration believers, **we** must fight against falling into unbelief. Nephi warned **us** about the churches of the Restoration:

*Yea, they have **all** gone out of the way, they have become corrupted; because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride, they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing, and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart because in their pride [they're] puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads, yea, ...because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have **all** gone astray, save it be a few who are the humble followers of Christ. Nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because [they're] taught by the precepts of men. (2 Nephi 12:2 RE, emphasis added)*

We have no fine sanctuaries, and until commanded and instructed to do so, we do not anticipate building anything other than a single temple. We do not rob the poor, because our tithes are used only to aid the poor. We do not regard one above another, and we have no hierarchy in a position to lead anyone astray. Nevertheless, **we** can still be proud, rob the poor by our overindulgence, and participate in abominations and whoredoms. Some foolish people among us have done these things. They must repent, or they cannot be gathered.

We have little reason to be unguarded. We can fail to study the recovered Scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern our daily walk. We can fail to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant and to use the Scriptures to correct ourselves and guide our words, thoughts, and deeds. We can let the lusts of the flesh to control us. And when we do, we choose to dwindle in unbelief.

You have the new Scriptures. The leather-bound copies will be shortly distributed. Use them. Study them. Show appreciation to the Lord by refusing to dwindle in unbelief.

Joseph Smith was able to revise the Bible through God's inspiration. It is important to prize the corrected Bible and do better than the saints of Joseph's day.

Despite nearly universal apostasy and rebellion against God **while Adam lived**, the line of Patriarchal Fathers **preserved** the true religion. Noah had a father who knew and was taught by Adam. Noah's living grandfather, great-grandfather, and ancestors for seven generations knew and were taught by Adam. Learning about God from His messengers and priests was (and still is) necessary to avoid dwindling in unbelief and falling into apostasy. The "angels" who ministered **included mortals** who were given Divine knowledge to teach.

Noah preserved the original religion of God through the cataclysm of the flood. Three of the sons of Noah were taught it, and Noah's most faithful son inherited the right. The fullness of the Holy Order was conferred upon Shem (who received the title "Melchizedek"). A descendant of Ham falsely claimed he held the Holy Order, but he could only institute an imitation of the Order.

After Melchizedek, an apostasy lasted until Abraham. Although he was raised by an idolater and lamented that his fathers offered sacrifices to idols, Abraham searched for the true God of Heaven. Abraham **found** God, and the covenant of the first Fathers was renewed and conferred upon him by Melchizedek. Generations of apostates were excluded from the Holy Order, but Abraham was adopted into the line by Melchizedek, thereby restoring continuity **back** to Adam.

Abraham represents the key Patriarchal Father prophesied of in Malachi. Abraham not only renews the covenant of "the fathers" (**including** Noah and Enoch), but also through the Abrahamic covenant, God established Abraham as the new head of the family of God on Earth. God told Abraham: *As many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (Abraham 3:1 RE). For us, connecting to Abraham is akin to the original Patriarchs' connection to Adam. Turning the heart of the children to the Fathers is a required part of the gospel. And after God's covenant with him, salvation for all subsequent generations is dependent on being accounted Abraham's seed.

The covenant with Abraham was renewed with Isaac, who also became the Patriarchal head and husbandman-father of the faithful. Believers thereafter likewise are numbered as Isaac's "seed" through the renewal and extension of the covenant. God renewed it again with Jacob. The covenantal relationship of these three Patriarchs in three successive generations is the reason the Scriptures use "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob" as **one name** for **Deity**.

Accordingly, the more we can know of Abraham, the more we can know of the covenant with the Fathers spoken of by Malachi. Any book written by Abraham should be priceless to us.

The Book of Abraham translated by Joseph Smith has become a battleground **because it is so important** to our salvation. On one side are those who hope Joseph has made it possible to be sealed to the Fathers. Opposing them are those who cannot believe Joseph supplied a text of any value for salvation. The fight over the Book of Abraham is now aimed at the entire Restoration and Joseph's Divine calling. Because of that controversy, I need to address the authenticity of the Book of Abraham in order to discuss God's covenant with the Fathers.

There are several threads of thought to be drawn together. The first one involves understanding the different eras of written language used at the time of Abraham.

Most scholars believe Abraham lived around 2100 BC during the 9th Dynasty of Egypt. Moses lived around 1400 BC. (700 years later, Moses lived.) Egyptian texts date back to before 3400 BC. A written Hebrew language was not developed until 900 BC, a half-millennium **after** Moses. Accordingly, since Moses composed the first five books of the Old Covenants, he would have used Egyptian characters. Hence, the Scriptures written on the plates of brass recovered from Laban and used by the Nephites were written in Egyptian.

The Hebrew language developed as a spoken language first and a written language added sometime later. The Book of Mormon confirms that although the Nephites spoke Hebrew, they used Egyptian characters to write their records. As Moroni finished his record his father started, Moroni explained what they used for the small, neatly carved characters on the Nephite records:

*We have written this record according to our knowledge, in the **characters** which are **called** among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us according to **our** manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been **altered by us also**. (Mormon 4:11 RE, emphasis added)*

The Nephites used only Egyptian "characters" for their writing and, apparently, not Egyptian language (at least not in the same way as would an Egyptian). This is at best an ambiguous point. How are we to understand it? Egyptian characters are not alphabet equivalent. A single character can mean many words, and their written form compresses language. We do not have **anything** equivalent to this in our common experience to make a meaningful analogy. Perhaps Pitman Shorthand would give an idea of it.

One other idea that may help is to think of Romance languages. All Romance languages use a common set of written characters but employ them for entirely different languages; the "reformed Egyptian" used "characters" to write a different quasi-Hebrew language.

For a comparison: Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian are all different languages that descended from Latin. They all use the Latin alphabet. But the words they write and the meanings of those words are different from one another. Occasionally, the different languages use identical letters for different words. In English (a non-Romance language), "mesa" means "an isolated, flat-topped hill with steep slopes." But in Spanish, it means "table."

The English language descended from German. So did Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, and Scots. These languages also use the Latin alphabet shared with the Latin-descended Romance language. But try to imagine another language that employs pictographic and short-hand figures to convey both words and sentences. If you're moving information from such a language into any of the Latin alphabet languages, the result would be a far larger volume of translated text from the original text.

The Book of Mormon used Egyptian "characters" to write a non-Egyptian form of language to compress the material. How the Nephites achieved this over a millennium of "reforming" their written language was not clarified. However, if the actual plates of the Book of Mormon were to be examined by a modern Egyptian scholar, they would not be able to make any sense of it.

Hebrew is written and read from right to left. English is written from left to right. When I began learning Hebrew alphabet, to help me remember the sounds I would write my name using Hebrew characters in a left-to-right English format. "Dalet-Vav-Resh" was close enough, since vowels did not exist in Old Testament Hebrew. Since Hebrew would read these letters in reverse order, it would be read "Vav-Dalet" and pronounced something like "Ervid" and would mean "rod." And that's not my name.

Then when I began learning the Greek alphabet, to help me remember the sounds, I would also write my name using Greek characters. But I added the letter "v" because it was the only way I could think of to make it work: "Delta-Epsilon-Nu-V-Epsilon-Rho." Because "v" is English, it would not be used by a Greek speaker to figure the word out. Therefore, it would be pronounced something like "Dener" and would mean "steward." That's also not my name.

When you use only characters borrowed from another language's alphabet but write things for your own native language, the result is a hybrid that requires an explanation. Hence, Moroni's explanation that the Nephites only employed the Egyptian "characters" (and not the Egyptian language) in etching the record. This idea will figure in later in this talk.

Also significant is the assignment given to Joseph Smith to reform the Bible text. Joseph Smith began working on a revised Bible in June 1830. Joseph used the King James Version as his source text to accomplish the revision. There were few (if any) Greek or Hebrew materials used. Nothing was rendered from one language into another. The work was based on revelation, inspiration, and insight given to Joseph Smith by the Lord. The LDS Historian's Office has correctly called the work a "revision" of the Bible. **However technically inappropriate** we may think it is to use the word "translation" for Joseph's work, it is **always called** a "translation" by the Lord in numerous revelations to Joseph.

By November the material about Adam, Cain, Abel, and the first murderer had been finished. The work advanced to include the Enoch material in December, and on 7 December 1830, Sidney Rigdon was commanded to act as scribe to "write for him." The project included correcting the Bible, as well as numerous additions. It was undertaken so that the Bible would be rewritten and, according to the Lord, to become *even as they are in [God's] own bosom* (T&C 18:6). The work of restoring Genesis advanced quickly. By February 1832 [1831], Genesis 1:1 through 5:12 was finished. These are eight chapters of the Book of Moses (as published in the Pearl of Great Price by the LDS Church). In these early materials, there are notable additions made regarding:

- Moses,
- The Creation of this world,
- An explanation of Satan's pre-Earth existence and history,
- The fall of man,
- Adam and Eve, and
- Enoch (among many others).

So much material involving Enoch was added to chapter 4 of Genesis that it's become referred to as the "Book of Enoch."

When the Genesis account got to Melchizedek, a flood of new material was provided. In the new Melchizedek materials, we received clarifying information about the Holy Order:

*Now Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness. And when a child, he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained a high priest after the Order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, it being after the Order of the Son of God, which Order came not by man, nor the will of men, neither by father nor mother, neither by beginning of days nor end of years, **but of God**. And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.*

For God, having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself that everyone being ordained after this Order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course, to put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God, to do all things according to his will, according to his command subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world. (Genesis 7:18-19 RE, emphasis added)

From this addition, we learn that faith—not priesthood—is the power that stops the mouths of lions and quenches the violence of fire. Also, ordination to the Holy Order comes from the voice of God and is conferred according to God's will. That will of God is predicated on two things:

- Belief on the name of God in **this** world, **and**
- The will of the Son of God **before the foundation** of this world.

Despite the **many** additions and corrections to the Genesis text, **very little** was added in the Joseph Smith Bible revisions about **Abraham**. Given the importance of Abraham as a pivotal covenant Father, **not** adding an expanded account of his life to Genesis is a **significant** omission. The Lord told Abraham: *For as many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (Abraham 3:1 RE). Given Abraham's importance, we should

expect that any revision of Genesis would add as much about him as Genesis added about Adam and Enoch and Melchizedek. But the JST Bible does not do so.

If the Book of Abraham materials were added to the Genesis text, it would replace and expand the text from Genesis chapter 6, midway in verse 8, through chapter 7, midway through verse 4. The Book of Abraham supplies the missing important details we need to know that were omitted from the Genesis account of the Inspired Version of the Bible.

It appears that the foreknowledge of God made it unnecessary for a JST expansion of Genesis materials about Abraham. When Michael Chandler later sold four mummies, two papyrus scrolls, and some papyrus fragments (in July 1835) to buyers in Kirtland, events were set in motion that resulted in adding Abrahamic details to our Scriptures. Three parties (one of whom was Joseph Smith) paid the \$2,400 sale price. The Book of Abraham was then produced after Joseph Smith got access to the papyri. Instead of being part of the JST Bible, it is called a "translation" of a papyrus scroll.

The "translation" began in Kirtland from July to November 1835 and produced the text from Abraham 1:1 through first half of 4:2 in the Restoration Edition of Scriptures. (In the LDS scriptures it's Abraham 1:1 through 2:18.) There are three different copies of the translation made in Kirtland in existence. These have been identified as Book of Abraham Manuscript A, B, and C.

- Manuscript A is in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams.
- Manuscript B is in the handwriting of Warren Parrish.
- Manuscript C is in the handwriting of Warren Parrish and William W. Phelps.

None of the Kirtland era translations of the Book of Abraham include the introduction to the book. That introduction attributes the text to a papyrus written "by the hand of Abraham." That statement has been the focus of a great deal of controversy. It states: "A translation of some ancient records that have fallen into our hands, from the catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called 'The Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus.'" Those words are in the handwriting of Willard Richards, and there is no existing source to explain why he added them to the publication of the Book of Abraham in the *Times & Seasons* in March 1842 (see *JSP, Revelations and Translations, Volume 4: Book of Abraham and Related Manuscripts*, p. 245).

A small library of material has been written on the relationship (or lack of relationship) between the remaining Joseph Smith Egyptian papyri fragments and the Book of Abraham. It's an understatement to say that subject is controversial. But given the importance of Abraham's status as the "Father of the righteous," it is important to discuss the controversy.

If one is objective, the text of the Book of Abraham presents insurmountable problems if it must satisfy the current scholarly understanding of the Egyptian papyri purchased from Michael Chandler. If the authenticity of the Book of Abraham must be based on

that, it's very problematic. That is not to say that the scholar's approach to this controversy is without its weaknesses.

The Egyptian language had two earliest forms; the first to develop was hieroglyphic and dates from before 4000 BC. At about 390 BC... Oh, excuse me: At about 390 AD, Byzantine Emperor Theodosius I closed all religious temples that he regarded as pagan throughout his empire. Because of this, hieroglyphs were no longer used. Egypt was inside his empire. Therefore, the Egyptian temples closed, and the hieroglyphic language was neglected and ultimately abandoned altogether. For 1500 years, the language was lost. Egyptian monuments remained, but no one had a clue what the hieroglyphs meant.

After being lost for a millennium-and-a-half, hieroglyphic interpretation has been recovered only in a small part through work based on the Rosetta Stone. In July 1799, French soldiers were rebuilding a fort near the town of Rosetta and discovered a stone inscribed with three scripts: hieroglyphs in the top register, Greek at the bottom, and a script later identified as "Demotic" in the middle. Demotic was a still later form of Egyptian writing and was the common form spoken at the time the Rosetta Stone was originally carved.

Using the Greek from the Rosetta Stone as a guide to decipher the hieroglyphs, an attempt has been made to understand hieroglyphic Egyptian. The Rosetta stone contains a decree from Ptolemy V (dates from 196 BC). This is at the very end of a dying Egyptian culture, religion, language, and history. This era is known as the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Greeks controlled Egypt after Alexander the Great's conquest in 332 BC. When Alexander the Great died, his empire was divided between four generals. At that time, General Ptolemy assumed control over Egypt. The likelihood that the form of Egyptian hieroglyphic language dating from 196 BC is an accurate guide for understanding the way the language was understood **millennia** earlier is at best doubtful. If we accept the dating of 2100 BC for Abraham's life, there would have been **two millennia** of time separating the language of Abraham from the language of the Rosetta Stone.

The most basic linguistic problem is to understand how language changes with time.

Imagine you had a time machine. If you are like me, there would be many times and places that you would like to visit. In most of them, however, no one spoke English. If you could not afford the Six-Month-Immersion Trip to, say, ancient Egypt, you would have to limit yourself to a time and place where you could speak the language. Consider, perhaps, a trip to England. How far back in time could you go and still be understood? Say we go to London in the year 1400...

As you emerge from the time machine, a good first line to speak, something reassuring and recognizable, might be the opening line of the Lord's Prayer. The

first line in a conservative, old-fashioned version of the Modern Standard English would be, "*Our Father, who is in heaven, blessed be your name.*" In the English of 1400, as spoken by Chaucer, you would say, "*Oure fadir that art in heunes, halwid be thy name.*" Now turn the dial back another four hundred years to 1000 CE, and in Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, you would say, "*Faeader, ure thu the eart on heofonum, si thin nama gehalgod.*" A chat with Alfred the Great would be out of the question.

Most normal spoken languages over the course of a thousand years undergo enough change that speakers at either end of the millennium, attempting a conversation, would have difficulty understanding [one another]. (David W. Anthony, *The Horse, The Wheel and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World*, p.22, footnotes omitted, italics in original)

Consequently, it would be surprising—bordering on miraculous—if the way Egyptian hieroglyphs were understood at the time [of] the Rosetta Stone proves identical to the way that they were understood two-thousand years earlier in the lifetime of Abraham.

That having been said, Egyptologists believe they have fragments of the Joseph Smith papyri translated by him to compose the Book of Abraham. They rely on their ability to interpret these fragments using reconstructed Ptolemaic Egyptian. Using their skill-set, they are confident that the fragments do not contain a Book of Abraham but are, instead, an Egyptian Book of Breathing (a sen-sen papyri). They conclude Joseph Smith was unable to "translate" the source document.

There are multiple ways apologists have dealt with this problem:

- One approach, including Hugh Nibley's analysis, is that there was an Egyptian papyri source but dispute that the papyrus fragments we have are the actual text Joseph translated. This group of apologists assume what Joseph actually translated was destroyed in the Chicago fire. The approach accepts Willard Richards' *Times & Seasons* introduction explaining that it is a translation of records from the catacombs of Egypt, originating with Abraham.
- A second apologetic approach is to claim there never was a source papyrus for the Book of Abraham. This position ignores Willard Richards' *Times & Seasons* introduction. This approach claims the source for the Book of Abraham was entirely revelation from Heaven. The LDS Church now seems to accept this view.
- A third apologetic approach is that the Michael Chandler papyri were indeed the source for the Book of Abraham, and the text can actually be recovered using the Joseph Smith Papyri. These advocates make a full-throated defense of Willard Richards' *Times & Seasons* introduction. Until the scholarly understanding of Egyptology challenged Mormons, this was the overwhelming position of those who accepted the Book of Abraham as Scripture. In this arena of argument, there is a belief that the hieroglyphs contained hidden, esoteric meaning encoded in their form. As Dan Vogel describes it, "...other, more spiritual, mystical, and theologically

powerful messages were encoded in their pictographic etymologies" (*Book of Abraham Apologetics: A Review and Critique*, p.67). Vogel rejects that idea.

There are other approaches. All of them address the issue of what perspective should be used to explain Joseph's translation.

- Should we assume the illustrations were original to Abraham? If so, then to interpret them, maybe we should look to how Egyptians in Abraham's day, or Abraham himself, would have understood them.
- Or should we assume the illustrations were original to Abraham but modified over time for other uses by the ancient Egyptians?
- Or do we assume the illustrations were connected to the Book of Abraham when the Joseph Smith papyri were created in the Ptolemaic period?
- Do we need to consider what Egyptians of that time thought of these drawings to represent?
- Or should we assume the illustrations were connected to the Book of Abraham for the first time in the Ptolemaic period, but to interpret them we ought to look at what Egyptian priests integrating Jewish, Greek, and Mesopotamian religious practices into native Egyptian practices would have thought about them?
- Or should we instead look at how Jews of that area would have understood them?
- Or were the illustrations never part of an ancient Book of Abraham but instead adapted by Joseph Smith to depict the ancient text he revealed and translated?

Well, in the give-and-take following deciphering the Rosetta Stone and the research done to develop some understanding of the Egyptian languages, the apologists who think the Book of Abraham was directly translated from the Joseph Smith papyri appear to hold the weaker position. However, that's not the end of the matter.

In every case in which he has produced a translation, Joseph Smith has made it clear that his inspiration is by no means bound to any ancient text but is free to take wings at any time. To insist, as the critics do, that "translation" may be understood only in the sense in which they choose to understand it, while the Prophet **clearly** demonstrates that he intends it to be taken in a very **different** sense, is to make up the rules of the game one is playing as well as being the umpire. (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, p. 4, emphasis added)

Since Joseph Smith did not explain how the text was "translated," that issue is left to conjecture. The entire debate between Egyptian scholars and apologists centers on the translation process. However, Joseph Smith **did not** use the term "translation" as would a scholar. One example illustrates the difference:

While Oliver Cowdery was the scribe during the Book of Mormon translation, he and Joseph discussed whether the Apostle John died or continued on Earth. The question was answered by a revelation. The written account in our Scripture about the answer includes this explanation: *A revelation given to Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery in*

Harmony, Pennsylvania, April 1829, when they desired to know whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried on earth. **Translated from** [a] parchment, written and hid up by himself (Joseph Smith History 13:17, emphasis added). Joseph did not have the parchment. Therefore, there was no parchment source for the revelation. It came as Joseph Smith received it from God through *the Urim and Thummim* (Ibid.).

Sidney Rigdon arrived in Fayette (during December 1830) as the Bible revision was then underway. The project involved editing and correcting the Bible. That project was also **consistently referred** to as a "translation" of the Bible, even though it would be more correctly called an "inspired revision." On December 7th, 1830, the commandment was given to Sidney: *You shall write for him, and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in my own bosom, to the salvation of [mine] own elect...* (T&C 18:6). This helped explain what the term "translated" meant for the Bible revision project. It clearly refers to something different than how the term is generally used and understood.

When Enoch's City was taken to Heaven, it is described as being "translated" or a "translation." For Enoch, "translated" meant moving someone from Earth into Heaven and changing him or her so they could survive there. This meaning can also be understood and used for the "translation" of the parchment of John. It means taking something recorded and preserved in Heaven and moving it back to Earth where it had been lost.

I think that the word "translated" as it refers to the Book of Abraham should be understood in **this sense**: It was something recorded in Heaven and was moved back to the Earth where it had been lost. Regardless of whether or not conveying Abraham's testimony from Heaven back to Earth required a surviving papyrus scroll, that question is not as important as the accuracy and truthfulness of the Book of Abraham account that originated with Father Abraham. Only if the text is true, accurate, and legitimately Abraham's would it be worthy for canonizing as Scripture. **Joseph Smith clearly intended for the Book of Abraham to be Scripture.**

Apart from using the word "translation," the content of the material bears all the indicia of an ancient record from the time of Father Abraham. The account in the Book of Abraham can be compared with Abraham's history in Genesis. The comparison shows there are over a dozen details added through the Book of Abraham account that are **missing** from Genesis. For example:

- The famine in the homeland of Ur,
- Haran[']s] (Abraham's brother) death in the famine,
- Terah (Abraham's father) repenting of his idolatry,
- Terah's return to idolatry,
- Believers becoming the "seed of Abraham" and inherit the blessings through him,
- Abraham held the priesthood,
- Abraham earnestly sought God,
- An angel of the Lord was sent to rescue Abraham,
- Abraham was familiar with Egyptian gods,

- Abraham was 62 years old (not 75, as in Genesis) when he left Haran,
- Abraham made converts while in Haran,
- Abraham prayed for God to end the famine in Chaldea, and
- The Lord instructed Abraham [Abram] to say that Sarai was his sister.

All these differences (related to Abraham) can be found in ancient sources recorded in **non-biblical** texts. If ancient sources confirm events set out in the Book of Abraham **did happen** in Abraham's life, it's hard to simply dismiss the validity of the book as inauthentic. It only makes the most sense to consider... The most important thing to consider is the text itself when deciding the validity of the Book of Abraham.

One might dismiss a single element found in a nonbiblical tradition that parallels the Book of Abraham as mere coincidence. However, when a large number of such elements come together from diverse times and places, they overwhelmingly support the Book of Abraham as an ancient text. There are far too many references to Terah as an idolator, Abraham as a sacrificial victim, Abraham as an astronomer, and Abraham as a missionary to lightly dismiss their antiquity. In addition, many other distinctive elements found in these traditions, though not repeated frequently, add to the overall strength of the unique elements found in the Book of Abraham. (Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, p. xxxv)

Facsimile 3 includes the comment that the scene depicts *Abraham...reasoning upon the principles of astronomy in the king's court*. This echoes the account by Josephus that (to the Egyptians) Abraham, "...confuted the reasonings they made use of, every one for their own practices, demonstrating that such reasonings were vain and void of truth; whereupon he was admired by them in those conferences as a very wise man, and one of great sagacity, when he discoursed on any subject..." (*The Antiquity of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 2, ¶2). Josephus explained that Abraham, "...communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy..." (*Ibid.*).

The oldest written Egyptian material is the *Pyramid Texts* and date from the 5th and 6th Dynasties. At the time of those writings, the original Pharaonic imitative religion was already approximately a thousand years old. There is no way to know how well the religion was preserved between the first Pharaoh's initial imitation and a millennium later when the *Pyramid Texts* were written.

Egypt has a **complicated** theological development that morphed over time. The Horus stellar religion is very early. The Osirian religion (sometimes linked to lunar theology) does not arise until nearly a thousand years after the *Pyramid Texts* at Saqqara and, arguably, most reflects the religion of the New Kingdom. That theology differs from the beliefs of the Old Kingdom religion. It was the Old Kingdom theology that is closer to that of Adam. ~~It was the Old Kingdom...~~ (Oh, excuse me.) Finally, the Memphite religion of Ra apparently begins in the late Old Kingdom. However, Ra (as the sun god) is syncretized to Ahmon (the god of light). The figure of Ahmon is present in both the star

cult and the sun cult. As Egyptian religion changed at the time of the New Kingdom, nothing remained of the star cult.

The Book of Abraham's exposition on the sun, earth, planets, and stars fits neatly into the cosmological issues perplexing the rulers of the 9th Dynasty. (And by the way, the Joseph Smith rendering of the word "planets" is criticized by a number of scholars as being not a term that was understood at the time. But the word "planets" means "a star that wanders." So, you had fixed stars, and you had stars that wandered. "Planets" simply is referring to the stars that move in the sky overhead. And so, calling them "planets" is not at all problematic. It's just someone chafing to find an argument to throw at Joseph and at the Book of Abraham. And like so many of those things, as soon as you breathe on them, the house of cards falls over.)

There are many connections between the language of Egypt and the Restoration. The hieroglyphic form of Egyptian was used primarily to record religious texts and was the more formal or sacred form of the writing. A second, less formal form developed early in Egyptian language evolution, and it's called "hieratic." This second form was cursive and was the more likely form used on the Brass Plates. It's arrogant to assume that Ptolemaic era writing is a sound basis for ciphering backward over 2,000 years to decode Egyptian hieroglyphs. In the end, the question must be asked: Do **you** trust scholar's attempt to reconstruct antiquity using a partial record from 196 BC when it **conflicts with** the revelation given to Joseph Smith claiming to be a prophet, seer, and translator? Or do you believe God could inspire a prophet to recover a lost record from an ancient patriarch? It's one or the other.

It is significant that Joseph Smith claimed that the Old Testament written on the Brass Plates, as well as the record of the Nephites, were written in Egyptian. At the time and under the circumstances, Joseph Smith had little reason to make such a claim. With what we know now, it would be an error to claim otherwise. The choice is between Joseph being prescient or prophetic.

Joseph revealed that Adam and his immediate posterity wrote the first records of God dealing with mankind. It was called "a book of remembrance" (see Genesis 3:14 RE). That record was written in *a language which was pure and undefiled* (Ibid.). We know these records existed during Abraham's life (thousands of years later): *The records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, ...the Lord, my God, preserved in my own hands* (Abraham 2:4 RE).

By the time of **Moses**, however, the original records were lost. Moses had to restore the record of the Creation based on the revelation he received directly from the Lord. Moses was commanded:

You shall write the things which I shall speak. And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught, and take many of them from the book which you shall write, behold, I will raise up another like unto you, and they shall

be had again among the children of men, among even as many as shall believe.
(Genesis 1:7 RE)

Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses from birth. **She** named him and treated him as "her son" (see Exodus 1:5 RE). Accordingly, when Moses was commanded to write the record revealed to him by the Lord, he would have recorded it in the language he understood: the language his adopted mother taught him, which was Egyptian. This detail is exactly what the Book of Mormon explains about the Brass Plates. Moses replaced the lost records of the Fathers by revelation from God. That record is described in the Book of Mormon as *the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass* and were composed *in the language of the Egyptians* (Mosiah 1:1 RE). **Ask yourself** the likelihood of a New England farm boy in 1829 choosing to claim the Old Testament was recorded in the Egyptian language? It's a remarkable bulls-eye detail, unlikely to have occurred to a youthful swindler. (But of course, Joseph was an actual prophet, and therefore, God revealed to him the truths he recounted.)

Since Joseph translated over 500 pages of what was likely derived from Hieratic Egyptian for the Book of Mormon, he read and understood one version of that language better than any scholar, including all who have lived since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. Because I accept Joseph's claims of being a prophet, seer, and translator at face value, it's easy for me to resolve conflicts over Egyptian texts in favor of Joseph and against the scholarly critics.

Joseph Smith Papers, Volume 4 of the Revelations and Translations has copies of Egyptian Alphabet materials produced by Joseph's scribes: Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, and Warren Parrish. Teryl Givens has taken the position that these texts prove, "The Book of Abraham manuscripts, unlike their Book of Mormon counterpart, bear clear evidence of reworking, revising, and editing. This was no spontaneous channeling of a finished product by any stretch..." (*The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture*, p.201). He interprets these as proof that Joseph engaged in a very complex deciphering process to produce the Book of Abraham using the hieroglyphs in the Book of Breathing.

When I first saw the Egyptian Alphabet materials, it appeared to me to be an attempt to reverse engineer Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham by using the Book of Abraham [Breathing] papyrus. Recall that Oliver Cowdery had attempted to translate the Book of Mormon and failed in that attempt. When he failed, the Lord explained his failure to him, stating:

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But behold, I say unto you that you must study it out in your mind, then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right, [then] I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. (Joseph Smith History 13:26 RE)

Two of the three Egyptian Alphabet studies (A and B) were in whole (or in major part) the study of Oliver Cowdery. It appears that these were the result of Oliver's attempts to follow the Lord's guidance after his failure to successfully translate the Book of Mormon. When he failed in 1829, the Lord said there were *other records have I that I will give unto you power that you may assist to translate* (Ibid. vs. 24). It seems apparent that the Egyptian Alphabet study in late 1835 was Oliver's (and the other scribes') attempt to validate the translation process and act on the earlier promise to Oliver.

Teryl Givens' speculation that the Egyptian Alphabet is Joseph Smith's study of the papyrus is refuted by John S. Thompson in his article, "'We May Not Understand Our Words': The Book of Abraham and the Concept of Translation in The Pearl of Great [Greatest] Price." Thompson shows from contemporaneous sources that Joseph's translation was accomplished quickly and before the Egyptian Alphabet documents were created. It's clear from an examination of the historical record that the scribes did their deciphering work of the Egyptian characters **after** the translation of the Book of Abraham had been done. Accordingly, using the Egyptian Alphabet materials to try to understand the translation process is not likely to help us understand what Joseph did (but much more likely to help us understand his scribes' attempt to understand Joseph's translating work).

It is not possible to resolve this question. Those directly involved **were never asked**, and they failed to leave a clear account of **what** the Egyptian Alphabet documents were, **why** they were produced, and **how** they relate to the translation of the Book of Abraham. This has resulted in debate between scholar-critics and scholar-apologists.

The latest writer to weigh in on the subject, Dan Vogel, deals with the absence of hard answers by arguing the meaning and import of ambiguous details. As a lawyer, I appreciate his argumentation. However, since I care about the subject and would like to know the truth, the arguments from implication in the absence of proof cannot be fully convincing. The souls of men must not be trifled with (see T&C 138:18).

In arguing from the absence of hard historical evidence, Vogel urges his belief that:

...what is required in any treatment of the Book of Abraham is not fluency in [hieroglyphs] or a belief in Joseph Smith's prophetic calling, but a firm, clear-headed understanding of the methods of history and of the relevant nineteenth-century historical sources. Anything else is counterproductive. (*Book of Abraham Apologetics: A Review and Critique*, p. xviii)

He makes the argument that the Kirtland Egyptian Papers were not created after the translation but were used to create and translate the Book of Abraham. His arguments are somewhat persuasive.

However, his analysis is **advocacy**, and his writings betrays the **assumptions necessary** for his conclusions. The book necessarily reflects a scholar's caution in the absence of certainty. Although his work is interesting, well written, and attempts to make

reasonable points, the information we have available does not let us resolve **anything** about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. Everything is arguable. Vogel's arguments clearly belong in the debate, but in the end is only argument (like so much else involving the Book of Abraham). A few examples of how he supports his arguments are (these are quotes):

- "implies a process of translation" (p. 1)
- "This clearly implies" (p. 12)
- "implies that" (p. 14)
- "more careful analysis shows" (p. 17)
- "the simplest way to explain" (p. 17)
- "This suggests" (p. 18)
- "most reasonably explained as" (p. 18)
- "was likely due to" (p. 18)
- "may have dictated" (p. 19)
- "The details of Smith's participation in the creation of his own history are not...well known, but apparently" (p. 39)
- "were likely the result of" (p. 39)
- "Apparently, there was some hesitation" (p. 50)
- "is instructive, although piecing together what was intended is not always clear and necessitates some conjecture" (p. 54)
- "possibly from" (p. 55)
- "may have taken from" (p. 55)
- "is probably more than coincidence" (p. 56)
- "This is a problem from the theory" (p. 57)
- (and so on)

Whether I agree or disagree with his interpretation does not give me the actual historical certitude that would answer the most important questions about the Book of Abraham's creation (or "translation," as the term was used and understood by Joseph Smith). There are debaters on both sides. They all make arguments to support their desired conclusion. Familiarity with the Egyptian language (insofar as the Ptolemaic period Rosetta Stone material permits the language to be resurrected) causes the Egyptologists to be dogmatic. They speak in firm declaratives. **But** Joseph Smith saw God the Father, His Son, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Peter, James, and John, and a host of angels who declared their dispensations, keys, rights, and honors. Joseph also spoke in firm declaratives. They line up on opposite sides; **we** must choose between them.

The best evidence of translation authenticity is the text itself. As Hugh Nibley put it, "...it is the Book of Abraham that[']s on trial, not Joseph Smith as an Egyptologist, nor the claims and counterclaims to scholarly recognition by squabbling publicity seekers..." (*Abraham in Egypt*, p. 3). The text of the Book of Abraham is compelling and adds important theological information I believe to be vital to understanding the religion I accept and Abraham's role in God's plan for this Creation. More importantly, I accept the idea that it adds information **vital to** salvation.

I believe it is also important that Joseph Smith intended the Book of Abraham as Scripture. He wrote on March 1, 1842:

In future. I design to furnish much original matter, which will be found of enestimable advantage to the saints,— &...all who— desire a knowledge of the kingdom of God.— and as it is not practicable to bring forth the new translation. of...Scriptures. & varioes records of ancint date. & great worth to this gen[e]ration in...<the usual> form. by books. I shall prenit [print] specimens of the same in the Times & Seasons as fast. as time & space will admit. so that the honest in heart may be cheerd & comforted and go on their way rejoic[ing].— as their souls become exp[an]ded.— & their undestandig [understanding] enlightend, by a knowledg of what Gods work through the fathers. in former days, as well as what He is about to do in Latter Days— To fulfil the words of the fathers.—

In the penst [present] no. will be found the Commencmet of the Records discoverd in Egypt. some time since. as penend by the hand. of Father Abraham. which I shall contin[u]e to translate & publish as fast as possible till the whole is completed. (*JSP Documents, Volume 9, p. 206-7*)

That accompanied what got published. He wrote, and the first installment of the Book of Abraham in the *Times and Seasons* followed.

If Joseph Smith regarded the Book of Abraham as Scripture, I do not want to dismiss it because an Egyptologist cannot read it in the remaining papyrus fragments some claim as the source for the book.

It is not at all clear that Egyptology is **even relevant** to an analysis of the Book of Abraham. The narrative text begins in a location named **Ur** of the Chaldeans. The book states **32 times it does not cover events in Egypt**. There are 13 times the location is Ur. Another 16 times the events happen in Haran, Jershon, Sechem, Morah, or Canaan. Then before ending, it clarifies **3 times** the account is not about events **in Egypt**. Here is a brief review of the many times it clarifies it is **NOT** an account from Egypt:

- Facsimile No. 1 illustrates an event that took place in Ur, not in Egypt.
- Abraham's record begins: *In the land of the Chaldeans* (Abraham 1:1 RE).
- When Abraham was bound and put on the altar to be sacrificed—as illustrated in Facsimile 1—it was upon *the altar which was built in the land of the Chaldeans* (Ibid. vs. 3).
- It was constructed *after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans* (Ibid. vs. 4). The record is silent about whether Egyptians had any similar altar. Scholarly critics explain the Egyptian funerary practice associated with the Chaldean altar with the customary lion-headed funerary bier on which embalming—not human sacrifice—is typically depicted by any similar Egyptian hieroglyphic. Again, however, that is not particularly helpful to understanding what happened in Ur

of the Chaldeans. Nor does that criticism address Chaldean behavior, religious rites, or altar design.

- The Book of Abraham does not give us any Egyptian names but explains Chaldean (not Egyptian) terminology is used.

- The book explains that Facsimile No. 1 shows *the figures at the beginning, which manner of the figures is called by the Chaldeans Kahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics* (Ibid.). This word is what the Chaldeans would call the vignette, not what an Egyptian would. The explanation is provided because the Chaldean word is different from the Egyptian word. On this point, an Egyptologist's criticism is of little help to authenticate or refute the Book of Abraham.

To the eye of an Egyptologist, the four figures under the lion couch in Facsimile No. 1 are canopic jars. They are the four receptacles used in Egyptian embalming practice for the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines. The liver jar is, to the Egyptians, the human-headed Imseti. The lung jar is to them the baboon-headed Hapi. The stomach jar is the jackal-headed Duamutef. The intestine jar is the falcon-headed Qebehsnuef. **None** of the Egyptian names are used in the Book of Abraham by the Chaldeans.

But then again, the text is not about Egypt but about the local practice of those living in Ur of the Chaldeans. In **that** place, **nothing** Abraham understood about the four figures suggests they were jars. Instead, Abraham understood they were Chaldean idols before which human sacrifices were performed. The names of these idols in the land of the Chaldeans were Elkenah, Zibnah, Mahmackrah, and Koash. Abraham's account is not about the gods of Egypt. It's about the gods of the Chaldeans.

Egyptologists criticize the account that Abraham (as well as three virgins before him) was offered as a human sacrifice. Many scholars dispute Egyptians **offered** human sacrifices. To an Egyptologist, the mention of human sacrifice is evidence the Book of Abraham is **not** credible. But the book is not set in Egypt. Human sacrifice is **known** to have taken place in the land of the Chaldeans where the Abrahamic account is actually based. **Newsweek** reported the following:

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that at least 11 children and young people were killed as a result of ritualistic sacrifice between 3100 and 2800 B.C.E. Their research was published Wednesday in the journal *Antiquity*. ...Some remains show [the]...stab wounds, but researchers aren't sure how all of the individuals lost their lives. One male had violent injuries to his hip and head, similar to wounds reconstructed from other Mesopotamian ritual sacrifices. ..."It is unlikely that these children and young people were killed in a massacre or conflict," the London Natural History Museum's Brenna Hassett said in a statement. "The careful positioning of the bodies and the evidence of violent death suggest that these burials fit the same pattern of human sacrifice seen at other [locations] in the region." (Katherine Hignett, *Newsweek*, "Ancient Mesopotamia: Ritual Child Sacrifice Uncovered in Bronze Age Turkey")

This discovery puts Chaldean human sacrifice occurring at or near the conventional dating of Abraham's life.

The *New York Times* reported on human sacrifices at an ancient location named "Ur" located in Iraq:

A new examination of skulls from the royal cemetery at Ur, discovered in Iraq almost a century ago, appears to support a more grisly interpretation than before of human sacrifices associated with elite burials in ancient Mesopotamia, archaeologists say.

Palace attendants, as part of royal mortuary [practices], were not dosed with poison to meet a rather serene death. Instead, a sharp instrument, a pike perhaps, was driven into their heads. (John Noble Wilford, *New York Times*, "At Ur, Ritual Deaths That Were Anything but Serene")

(And he goes on from there. It'll be in the published version of this.)

According to the Book of Abraham, **none** of the names of Chaldean gods—or **any** of the religious practices Abraham witnessed and experienced—were Egyptian. They were cultic practices and may have been entirely conducted in a locality that imitated their own incorrect understanding of the religion of Egypt. Chaldea's Ur was populated by 'Egyptophiles' who were apparently imitating and practiced a local corruption of an ancient Egyptian religion. They clearly got some things about the Egyptian religion wrong (and may have gotten very many things wrong).

Robert Ritner's book includes a chapter written by Christopher Woods addressing the location of Ur. The chapter is titled, "The Practice of Egyptian Religion at 'Ur of the Chaldees'?" (Dude, you can tell from the title that this is laced with condescension and arrogance. Congratulations, Christopher Woods. You've proven your ego won't fit into a normal human form.) The chapter begins by acknowledging that, "The location of 'Ur of the Chaldees'...remains open for debate." He explains, "Cuneiform sources attest a number of settlements bearing the name of Ur (or a name phonetically similar) in northern Syria, southeastern Turkey, and northern Mesopotamia, mostly small villages, and so making for unlikely candidates for biblical Ur..." (see Ritner, Robert K., *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition*, pp. 73-74).

A discovery of an ancient library of **thousands** of cuneiform tablets in 1975 raised another possibility for Abraham's Ur, this new one being located in ancient **Haran** rather than a thousand miles away, as previously thought.

Since Ritner's book is a collection of scholarly criticism of the Book of Abraham, the author does not leave it open-ended. Instead, he speculates Ur may have been at a specific Babylonian location. Based on that **assumption**, he concludes, "If we are correct in identifying Abraham's Ur with Babylonian Ur, this poses **grave difficulties** for the account given in the Book of Abraham" (*Ibid.*). **Obviously**, if the author is not

correct, the **inverse** is also true: If we are incorrect in identifying Abraham's Ur with Babylonian Ur, then we don't know anything about the matter, and it poses no justifiable difficulty for the account in the Book of Abraham.

Hugh Nibley discusses Ur in *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* from pages 424 to 428. He writes on page 427:

What leaves the door wide open to discussion is the existence in western Asia of a number of different Urs. Ur in the south was a great trade center... and since Abraham was a merchant, one should expect to find him there. But on the other hand that same Ur had founded merchant colonies far to the north and west at an early date, and some of those settlements, as was the custom, bore the name of the mother city.

The angel of God rescued Abraham from being sacrificed on the altar. The angel killed the priest attempting to sacrifice Abraham. This resulted in *great mourning in Chaldea...* (Abraham 2:1 RE). Following this, *a famine prevailed throughout all the land of Chaldea* (Ibid. vs. 4). During the famine in Ur of Chaldea, the Lord commanded Abraham to leave, and the events in the Book of Abraham **finally** move **from** Ur: *Now the Lord had said unto me, [Abraham], get yourself out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you. Therefore, I left the land of Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of **Canaan*** (Ibid. vs. 5, emphasis added). The story moves but is still not in **Egypt**—nor is Abraham **heading** to Egypt in the account.

The next location must have been comparatively uninhabited when Abraham's family arrived. They name the location after Abraham's deceased brother, Haran. Abraham explains his family went *unto the land which **we** denominated Haran* (Ibid., emphasis added). It apparently had no name before their arrival, since they denominated (or named) the place. We have no way to identify the location but only know that it was away from the earlier (also unknown) location called Ur.

At Haran, there is no mention of famine. Abraham's father, Terah, had repented of his idolatry in Ur, but in Haran, he returned to it. When God later told Abraham, "Depart from Haran," Terah remained behind.

Abraham's journey then takes him through Jershon in the land of Canaan. There—**still not in Egypt**—Abraham built an altar. Moving on again, he arrives in Sechem, *situated in the plains of Moreh* at a place described as *[on] the borders of the land of the Canaanites* (Abraham 4:2 RE). He is **still** not in Egypt. In that location the Lord promised Abraham, *unto thy seed I will give **this** land* (Ibid.). Abraham was **not** given Egypt.

Famine is mentioned again in the land given to Abraham's seed, and as a consequence of that, Abraham reports: *I, Abraham, concluded to **go down into Egypt**, to sojourn there, for the famine became very grievous* (Ibid. vs. 3, emphasis added). Abraham's

conclusion to go down into Egypt confirms for us that he had not yet reached Egypt during **any part** of his account to that point.

Abraham received a great revelation about the stars, the heavens, events among the pre-existent spirits of mankind, the fall of Satan, and the creation of the world. This great revelation comprises the remainder of Abraham's account in his book. **However**, the account clearly states that God told Abraham: *I show these things unto you, **before** you go into Egypt* (Abraham 5:4 RE, emphasis added). Accordingly, **nothing** in the Book of Abraham took place in Egypt. When it is added to the Genesis account, what happened following the conclusion of the Book of Abraham text is: *And it came to pass that when [Abraham] had come into Egypt...* (in Genesis [7:4 RE]) and goes on from there to explain about Sarai being accosted.

Willard Richards' introduction that claims the book is "purporting to be the writings of Abraham **while he was in Egypt**" is **demonstrably** wrong from the text itself—32 times the Book of Abraham states otherwise. When **nothing** in the text reckons from Egypt, it is questionable how useful criticism of the Book of Abraham from an Egyptological vantage point is. We should expect there to be some deviations from Egyptian religion, language, or culture in the book. The account only covers events among an ancient people, in an uncertain location called "Ur," located somewhere in Chaldea. Those people were only imitative of Egypt. They were not Egyptians. And the events in the book did not happen "while [Abraham] was in Egypt."

One **hieroglyph** appears in all **three** Facsimiles:

- It is figure 10 in Facsimile 1,
- At the bottom and adjacent to the figure 2 in Facsimile 2, and
- Figure 3 in Facsimile 3.

The hieroglyph is used to represent "Abraham in Egypt." The figure is a libation table (or "traditional offering stand") on which drink and food were offered. Since Abraham concluded to travel to Egypt because of famine, a **symbol** of drink and food for Abraham in Egypt would be altogether apt. But the table figure shows a lotus flower atop it. The lotus was a symbol of **ascent** to the throne of God. **That** concept is most clearly referenced in the explanation of panel 2 in Facsimile 2. It is **at least thought-provoking** that Joseph identified the food and drink offering stand and a symbol of ascending to God to be representing Abraham's presence in Egypt.

To be clear, because nothing in the Book of Abraham happened in Egypt, it is questionable how useful anything authentically Egyptian (**if** we're able to determine **that**) is to understand or to question the text. The names and practices Abraham encountered imitated—but did not correctly replicate—the religion of 9th Dynasty Egypt. The text explains that the place where Abraham was offered as human sacrifice is an unknown village located somewhere under Chaldean influence named "Ur." However, Ur could have been in **any** Mesopotamian location across thousands of square miles

from Turkey, northern Syria, into Iraq, or Iran. There are **many** known villages contemporary with Abraham known to have been named "Ur." Of course, there may have been many others unknown to us with the same or similar name. The text ends before Abraham enters Egypt, and therefore, the continuation of an account involving Abraham picks up in Genesis. This begins halfway through Genesis 4 [7:4]. The account deals only briefly with the "princes" bringing Sarai to Pharaoh who was then plagued because of Sarai's presence. Pharaoh then returns Sarai to Abraham [Abram], at which point Abraham [Abram] and Sarai were sent away.

Because nothing in the Book of Abraham or Genesis gives **any** detail about Abraham's experiences in Egypt, we have no narrative account to help us give context to the facsimiles. We do not know if Facsimile No. 3—like Facsimile No. 1—is a scene that took place outside of Egypt. The footnotes explaining the scene end with this clarification: *Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of astronomy in the king's court.* It is unclear which "king's court" is being referenced. Clearly, the people of Ur involved in Abraham's experience imitated Egypt. They sought to imitate the Egyptian's "earnest imitation." Therefore, we cannot be certain if Facsimile No. 3 is reporting an event that took place among people who imitated Egyptian religious rites or if they instead happened in Egypt. If it's the former, it's consistent with the rest of the text where nothing else has happened in Egypt.

The Book of Abraham explains the Egyptian Pharaoh could only imitate the Holy Order but had no right to claim that priestly position. In context, this exposes the Chaldean's error in looking to Egypt for Divine guidance. These Urrian residents even anointed for themselves a "priest of Pharaoh" who practiced human sacrifice. Was this an innovation by Ur or imitative of an Egyptian rite? We do not know anything certain. But we know that it was distant from (and only imitating) an Egyptian imitation of the religion of the Fathers. We only have Abraham's understanding of what these people were up to.

It is clear from the text that "before" his journey "into Egypt," Abraham was shown a great revelation about the pre-existence, Creation, and organization of the stars. It raises the question of where Abraham tried to clear up people's understanding in Facsimile No. 3.

The Book of Abraham clarifies many "mysteries" that are not otherwise to be found in Scripture. But Scriptures tell us there are many important truths that are withheld from us. Even if they are unknown to us, there are "mysteries" that are still part of the true religion first revealed to Adam.

We learn of God's promise to the righteous in T&C 69:2:

Unto them will I reveal all my mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom. From days of old and for ages to come will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will, concerning all things to come. Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I shew them, even the things of many generations. Their wisdom shall be great and their understanding reach

to Heaven, and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught. For by my spirit will I enlighten them and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will, yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.

We're told in Alma 9:3 [RE] that those who give heed and are diligent are rewarded with understanding:

[It's] given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, [they're] laid under a strict command that they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give....therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. ...He that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full.

While Christ was among the Nephites, the greatest part of what He taught them is withheld from our record. We read in 3 Nephi 9:5 [RE]:

He went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father, and tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear, and do bear record, and their hearts were open, and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed.

There are many other references in Scripture to important things that are left out of our canon. The true religion contains many "mysteries" that are important, not yet known or taught, but which were to be restored to the faithful in the future.

The Book of Abraham helps us uncover some of the missing information about the religion of the first Fathers. The first verse of the Book of Abraham includes these remarkable words:

I sought for the blessings of the Fathers and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same. Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and...possess a greater knowledge, and to be a Father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. It was conferred upon me from the Fathers: it came down from the Fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning (or before the foundations of the earth) to the present time, even the right of the firstborn (or the first man — who is Adam — or [the] first Father) through the Fathers unto me. I sought for [mine] appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the Fathers concerning the seed. (Abraham 1:1 RE)

Abraham begins by explaining he "sought for the blessings of the Fathers," the very thing Malachi prophesies will return before the great and dreadful return of the Lord. Abraham **obtained** what will be available again. Those blessings of the Fathers **will be** administered again before the end.

At the beginning of his record, Abraham mentions some of the specific things that are part of "the blessings of the Fathers." This identifies Abraham, **not Joseph Smith**, as the writer of the book.

When the Holy Order is established in its fullness, there is one Patriarchal head appointed to stand as the husbandman-father, occupying the position of the first Father or Adam. When God set Adam at the head, "The tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature: caring for sacred space. In ancient thinking, caring for sacred space was a way of upholding creation. By preserving order, non-order was held at bay" (John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 106). This priestly responsibility was what Abraham sought. He explained that he wanted to *possess a greater knowledge, and to be a Father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers* (Abraham 1:1 RE). The Lord offered to return this lost fullness in Joseph Smith's day, but the required conditions were not met. Therefore, the fullness was not "restored again" and remains unrestored.

Abraham knew more about the Holy Order in **his** day than Joseph in 1842. After all, Abraham had the records of the Fathers. Much of what Joseph learned about the Holy Order (or as he termed it, the "fullness of the priesthood") appears to have come as a result of him translating the Book of Abraham.

Abraham knew Adam was the Father of many nations. Likewise, the first Patriarchs all expected to have numerous posterity and to be Fathers of many nations. The line of the Patriarchs named in Scriptures is a list of those through whom the Holy Order descended and **does not name** all of the righteous. The residue of the righteous was also blessed. The original Holy Order meeting at Adam-Ondi-Ahman is described in Scripture:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. (T&C 154:19)

Those names, listed in order from Adam, were the first to hold the presiding Patriarchal priesthood from the oldest to the youngest holding that right.

The Holy Order in its fullness is a right of government or right of dominion. Anciently, it was always held in a line of descent. Abraham marks the first time that non-direct lineal descendant was sealed in the Holy Order to hold it in its fullness. Once sealed,

Abraham became entitled to be a "Father of many nations, a rightful heir, holding the right belonging to the Fathers."

This right **is not worldly**. Abraham's record gives us a perfect vantage point to understand the difference between worldly government and the government of God. At the time of Abraham, **any** earthly king **did not have** the right to make that claim. The Pharaoh of Abraham's day feigned to hold it, **claiming** it descended to him through Noah. Abraham explained the conflict:

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. Now Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry. (Abraham 2:3 RE)

Pharaoh was "righteous" but still descended from a line that could not claim legitimate rule. He modeled his kingdom after the order established by the first Fathers, but it could only be an imitation. He claimed a lineal connection with Noah, which was true enough, but his ancestry gave him no heavenly acknowledgment for his rule. And because he descended from a line that usurped authority not given to them by God, all those who submitted to his earthly rule practiced idolatry.

Abraham, on the other hand, **was** given dominion, the right to rule over nations, Patriarchal status, and the rights belonging to the Fathers. But Abraham **made no attempt** to displace the Pharaoh. They were rivals, to be sure, but Abraham was content to hold the right, receive instructions, be a diligent follower of righteousness, be one who possessed great knowledge, be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge. He was content to teach his followers the path of righteousness. Unlike Pharaoh, he did **not** assert authority over others. Abraham was interested in eternity, not earthly recognition and control. Hugh Nibley described the circumstance:

The Book of Abraham brings out the main points of rivalry between the patriarch and the pharaoh in high relief: Each claims to possess the only true priesthood and with it the only true kingship. The earliest legends of Egypt and Mesopotamia introduce us to a scene repeated over and over again in apocalypses and testaments of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of a great and terrible monarch who feels his divinity threatened and his dominion challenged by an emissary of the true God. (*Abraham in Egypt*, p. 254)

Nibley has observed that "Pharaoh was always unsure of his authority over his own people" (*Ibid.* p. 233). There were many Pharaohs in later dynasties who investigated their claim to authority.

Of particular interest are those devout and sincere pharaohs who spent their days in the archives engaging in the constant search of Egyptian rulers for divine authority, such men as King Neferhotep in the Thirteenth Dynasty, [and] the great Amenophis I, "a wise and inspired man," according to Manetho, who yearned to see the gods but feared to risk any force or trickery to get his wish, or Ptolemy the son of Glaucias, "the recluse of the Serapeum," spending all his days in the library, as does the hero of the Khamuas story, searching in the House of Life for the book that bestows the knowledge of divine dominion and authority.

The trouble was that they lacked revelation. In Egypt, Henri Frankfort observed, "The actions of individuals lacked divine guidance altogether." (*Ibid.*)

Egypt's claims may seem arrogant after the Exodus of Israel. However, their civilization attempted to preserve something precious. As one writer put it, "Ancient Egyptians inherited their great wisdom from a much earlier Elder culture which was able to pass on the flame of knowledge before its own apparent demise" (*Gods of Eden*, p. 17).

God has declared His intent to assert control over His Creation and overthrow all governments. The Christmas 1832 revelation states:

And thus with the sword and by bloodshed, the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn. And with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed has made a full end of all nations, that the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of [the] Sabaoth from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies. (T&C 85:3)

All nations, other than the Holy Order family-government ordained by God, will be brought to a full end. Or in the various iterations of the prophecy of Malachi, God *will smite the earth with a curse* (Malachi 1:12 RE), or *the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming* (Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE)—doesn't mean universal death. It means universal disillusion into chaos, with no governance possible apart from the one that **He** intends to establish, that **will** provide revelation, guidance, order, and preserve His people. The **only** surviving rule or dominion at that time will be the one tied to the Fathers. It will be the people whose one heart is like the one heart of the Fathers. They will possess the promises made to the Fathers, or in other words, they will have been **sealed** to the Fathers. It is phrased differently in different versions of Malachi's prophecy, but they all mean the same thing. Occasionally, God describes the same thing in different words. The purpose is to help us grasp His meaning.

There are many obstacles to overcome before the Lord returns in glory. Recovering the religion of the Fathers, becoming of one heart **with** the Fathers, and fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi are directly connected to Abraham. In a very real sense, it will not happen without a connection to Abraham.

Holding the promises made to Abraham is not just a covenant. It also involves knowledge. Joseph Smith was required to recover the "fullness of the scriptures" (or translate the Bible as it was in the bosom of the Lord) into a volume for the faithful to study. Joseph warned the Latter-day Saints they would fail without the fullness. Until the publication of the Restoration Edition of the Scriptures, there was no version of the fullness of the Scriptures available. Of course, they do not accomplish anything if they're not read and studied.

Repenting and reclaiming the fullness of the Scriptures was a required first step of repentance for the Restoration to continue. When that step was taken, there was a covenant. If people are faithful to the covenant, the Restoration will continue.

Abraham was not content with knowledge. He wanted to obtain greater knowledge. The purpose of pursuing knowledge was to receive and obey commandments. Greater knowledge facilitates greater obedience. Knowledge is not the **goal**, it is the desirable **effect** that knowledge has on the heart and mind of a righteous soul.

Knowledge about the Holy Order can be misused. Even **understanding** its rights has inspired envy, jealousy, and anger. Cain murdered Abel because Cain understood the importance of standing at the head of the Holy Order. As he contemplated the possibility of it slipping away from him, Satan tempted him to usurp the right by murdering the more worthy heir. The account of that attempted overthrow is succinct:

*Satan [said] unto Cain, Swear unto me by your throat, and if you tell it, you shall die. And swear your brethren by their heads and by the living God that they tell it not, for if they tell it, they shall surely die — and this that your father may not know it. And this day I will deliver your brother Abel into your hands. And Satan swore unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret. And Cain says, Truly I am Mahon, the master of this great secret — that I may murder and get gain; wherefore, Cain was called Master Mahon. And he gloried in his wickedness. And Cain went into the field and Cain talked with Abel his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying, I am free; surely the **flocks** of my brother fall into my hands. (Genesis 3:9 RE, emphasis added)*

The "flocks of my brother" were not sheep; they were posterity. Abel was to become Adam's successor and stand as the Father of many nations. By displacing Abel, Cain hoped to be the next in the line of Patriarchal Fathers.

Ether chapter 4 shows how the envy of "kingship" results in generations of murderers obtaining power through bloodshed. The Holy Order is **not** a worldly thing. It **cannot** be severed from the Powers of Heaven or the Heavenly Council. The presiding Patriarch of the Holy Order is a representative of the Heavenly Council who lives as a mortal on Earth. This is why the Patriarchal head of the Holy Order is the shepherd for the faithful, husbandman for the Creation, and the teacher responsible for dispensing Divine knowledge. That was who **Adam was** and what **Abraham became**.

The Holy Order is approved for practice in a proper, functioning temple belonging to God. As Walton put it:

When we consider the Garden of Eden in its ancient context, we find that it is more sacred space than green space. It is the center of order, not perfection, and its significance has more to do with divine presence than human paradise.

...We did not lose paradise as much as we forfeited sacred space and the relationship it offered, thereby damaging our ability to be in relationship with God and marring his creation with our own under-developed ability to bring order on our own in our own wisdom. (*The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 116, 145)

What records that remain do not give a full picture of how much was anciently included in God's temple. For example, Margaret Barker's investigation has uncovered an ancient presence of the Divine Mother who was identified as "Wisdom." She explained that Josiah's reform changed the First Temple by **removing, rejecting, and deducting**:

Wisdom was eliminated, even though her presence was never forgotten, the heavenly ascent and the vision of God were abandoned, the hosts of heaven, the angels, were declared to be unfit for the chosen people, the ark (and the presence of Yahweh which it represented) was removed, and the role of the high priest was altered in that he was no longer anointed. All of these features of the older cult were to appear in Christianity. (*The Great Angel*, p. 15)

Later Christianity, like Josiah's reforms, also abandoned these parts of the religion. Joseph Smith never had the opportunity to finish restoring them. How oft would God have gathered people together under the arms of the Holy Order, but mankind has not been willing or even interested (see 3 Nephi 4:9 RE).

When the Powers of Heaven are offended and the spirit is grieved, the Powers withdraw and the Holy Order rites are either not restored or, if restored, come to an end. Cain's ambition could not be accomplished through any degree of unrighteousness. It was doomed from the time the plan was suggested by Satan. Yet Abel was murdered, and a conspiracy to seize power by blood and horror began while Adam was alive. Mankind is no less ambitious today. That impulse to exercise control, dominion, and compulsion persists **and can be seen everywhere**: in business, churches, governments, and schools.

The reason so little is understood about the Holy Order is because weak men aspire to honors. Once they learn about the Order, they want control over it. Therefore, it is withdrawn...

(I circled one of the footnotes. What I'm reading you is omitting 390 footnotes. But I've circled this one and I'm... Once they learn about the Holy Order they want control over it. "Too often when men learn some great truth and recognize it by the spirit, they then assume that confers upon them some authority or right to act. Nothing could be further from the truth. There[']s] a great gulf between learning and recognizing and authority to act" (footnote 207). People tend to do that. "Oh, my heart burned within me while I heard it, therefore God gave it to me." That didn't happen. It just means that God told you something and you recognized the truth. How you get it is based upon the order of heaven.)

Therefore, it is withdrawn from mortal men from time to time. When not active among men, it only remains present through John the Beloved. John was translated, acting thereafter only as an angelic minister. Because of this, he's not free to **openly** preside. The Lord explained to Peter concerning John: *I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel. He shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on...earth...* (Joseph Smith History 13:19 RE). John has ministered only "as a flaming fire and a ministering angel," which circumscribes **how** and to **whom** his ministry is extended. He ministers "for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth," or (as Moroni explained by quoting his father):

*The office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that **they** may bear testimony of him; and by so doing, the Lord...prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the holy ghost may have place in their hearts....* (Moroni 7:6 RE, emphasis added)

[Unknown comment from audience]

Okay, yeah, I get what you're saying, but according to my pocket watch...

Is anyone hungry? Yeah... Look, this is not the breaking spot. See that red sheet there? [Holding up his notebook] That's the breaking spot. So, we'll eat and come back and resume this later, and those that have heard enough, you can go do something else. And I don't know how long the movie's gonna be shown to the kids, but you might want to check that out.

Anyway, we haven't really gotten to the important stuff. (There—that'll get you back.)

So, we'll break for dinner, apparently, and resume again at some point.

We've cobbled together a light that reflects, I think, the same sort of motif as the "redneck Rameumptom" (as they've named it). And I can actually see this!

Look, just a couple comments while people are still settling in. In order to talk about the subject I want to talk about, it's necessary to rely upon content in the Book of Abraham. But the Book of Abraham has been under assault by critics for a **long** time. I was satisfied about the reliability, authenticity, and scriptural value of the Book of Abraham long ago, but after being satisfied I quit buying and reading the exchange that's gone on back and forth. So, as this subject was something that I intended to talk on, I really needed about eight years' worth of material to catch up on the give and take between the arguments that have gone back and forth. So, I had to buy a new "last eight years" library supplements to all of the Book of Abraham: bitching and moaning and defending and parading and... Went and picked up a copy of Ritner's book, that I've referred to...

MAN: Sorry [referring to the light on the podium].

DENVER: Well, that's fine. It's like a lighthouse—none of you in a boat are gonna hit shore with **that** up here as your beacon.

I didn't know anything except this guy had been interviewed on Mormon Stories... I think he was jointly interviewed by (what does Corbin call himself?)... Radiofree Mormon and John Dehlin did a joint interview with him. So, I had to go buy his book. I went and bought his book, and when I got home I... Used a credit card; I didn't realize how much the infernal thing was. It's a **really, really** expensive book!

Well, as I got to the end and I read everything (all the way through the back matter), I found out that it's a **very** limited printing, and I bought the last one that this local book dealer had of the thing. So, I guess I've got a... I marked it all up. I've hemorrhaged all over it. I've interlineated. And it would have been a collector item, and I would have auctioned it off tonight, except I've wrecked it by all my interlineations.

So... But what I've been doing is catching up on the arguments involving the Book of Abraham so that if someone reads this paper or listens to this talk at some point in the future and they see I'm referring to the Book of Abraham, they know that I've not done that without showing the courtesy to the polemics and the apologists for their give and take. I'm not just talking; I've read the stuff, and I've cited in the footnotes, and I'm not going off without having paid attention to the ongoing dialogue.

But as you've already heard, I think the overwhelming majority of the dialogue that has been invested in the give and take in the Book of Abraham is **completely** off-point and has **no value** in trying to determine the authenticity of the book. The **last** one to weigh in is a book that came out last Wednesday, so I had to spend last weekend reading Dan Vogel's book (that I read you a few of the quotes from) in order to let whoever got the last word to actually have **my** ear in expressing their last word. But if you're interested in

the library of material, the footnotes in this talk will reference it, which will be up on my website tomorrow evening. We'll get home and get it up.

Angels, including John, minister to chosen vessels. It's the responsibility of **mortal** ministers to preach the message. The message must be accepted and acted on for faith in Christ. The Holy Order must be held **again** by mortals and must be returned voluntarily back to Christ in a **second** Adam-oni-Ahman. That is the arrangement made before the foundation of the Earth. God gave dominion over the Earth to Adam, and Christ will receive back the right of dominion before His return in glory.

All knowledge can be misused. The more the Holy Order is understood, the more sobering it becomes. Greater knowledge is being employed today to abuse, control, and subjugate people. The Scriptures warn of *evils and designs which will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days* (T&C 89:2). Any advantage one individual holds over another can be improperly used to subjugate, oppress, and exploit. Therefore, the hidden mysteries that reach into the highest heaven and contemplate the darkest abyss will include knowledge capable of misuse. Mysteries are guarded, cloaked in sacred ritual, confined to a qualified group of trusted and proven initiates.

The Holy Order will return lost knowledge to the Earth. The specifics have been withheld from Scripture, but the scope of that knowledge has been referred to **often**. Abraham had the records of the first Patriarchs, and he described **some** of what was included in the sacred texts:

*But the records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord, my God, preserved in my own hands. **Therefore**, a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, [as] also of the planets and...the stars, as they were made known unto the Fathers, have I kept...unto this day....*
(Abraham 2:4 RE, emphasis added)

Knowledge to be revealed through the Holy Order will include information about the beginning of **this** Creation. At the beginning, "The order that God brought focused on people in his image to join with him in the continuing process of bringing order, but more importantly on the ordering of the cosmos as sacred space" (*The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, p. 150). We disturb this Creation because we are disorderly. We're the opposite of what God intended for us.

...human sin has blocked God's purposes for the whole creation; but God hasn't gone back on his creational purpose, which was and is to [bring] in his creation through human beings, his image-bearers. In his true image-bearer, Jesus the Messiah, he has rescued humans from their sin and death in order to reinscribe his original purposes, which include the extension of sacred space into all [of] creation, until the earth is indeed full of God's knowledge and [the] glory as the waters cover the sea. God will be present in and with his whole creation; the whole creation will be like a glorious extension of the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple in Jerusalem. (*Ibid.* pg. 176)

Restoring the Holy Order will add knowledge about the religious significance of the planets and stars. They were ordained as "signs" to establish "seasons." That does not mean times of the year but also means times of dispensations, ministries, and judgments.

The gospel of Christ and the mysteries of His kingdom are **vast**. The **doctrine** of Christ is succinct. The entire doctrine of Christ is set out in one paragraph of Third Nephi. Christ was **emphatic** that His brief statement of His doctrine is solely and exclusively **all** of it; there can be nothing added to it. He warns us:

Whoso[ever] shall declare more or less than this, and [establish] it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil and is not built upon my rock, but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell standeth open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Nephi 5:9 RE)

But the records of the first Patriarchs handed down to Abraham include the Creation, the discussion of planets and stars, and "greater knowledge." The reason so much more was reserved [revealed] and preserved in the records of the Fathers is because the gospel of Christ **includes all truth**.

From the Scriptures, it is clear many of those involved with the Holy Order—as well as dispensation heads and prophets—were taught truth far beyond the doctrine of Christ.

Enoch, for example, was given seership by the Lord and through it uncovered hidden things:

*And the Lord spoke unto Enoch, and said unto him, Anoint your eyes with clay and wash them, and you shall see. And he did so. And he beheld the spirits that God had created, and he beheld also things which were not visible. And from that point forward came the saying abroad in the land, A **seer** has the Lord raised up unto his people...*

Enoch was shown all eternity by the Lord:

The Lord spoke unto Enoch and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men. Wherefore, Enoch knew and looked upon their wickedness and their misery, and wept, and stretched forth his arms. And he beheld eternity, and his bowels yearned, and all eternity shook. (Genesis 4:3,18 RE, emphasis added)

The Lord showed Moses everything about this world:

*And it came to pass that Moses looked and beheld the world upon which **he** was created. And...Moses beheld the world, and the ends thereof, and all the children of men who are [or] who were created, of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. (Genesis 1:2 RE, emphasis added)*

The Brother of Jared saw everything through the ends of the earth:

He shewed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also...that would be. And the Lord withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth. For the Lord had said unto him in times before that if he would believe in him, that he could shew unto him all things, it should be shewn unto him. Therefore, the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could shew him all things. (Ether 1:15 RE)

From these few Scriptures, we learn that Enoch, Moses, the Brother of Jared, and Abraham learned and experienced:

- Knowledge about the spirits God created,
- Things not visible to the eye of mankind,
- All the doings of mankind,
- Beholding eternity,
- The creation of this world and the end thereof,
- All the inhabitants of the world past, present, and future, and
- All things.

Others had many "mysteries" revealed to them. Remember that *knowledge of the mysteries of godliness is obtained only through **obedience** to God* (T&C 159:31). That's why Abraham's desire to get additional knowledge was so he could receive instructions and keep God's commandments. **Obedience** earns more knowledge, and more knowledge requires greater obedience. They move together in one eternal round.

In one sense, the religion of the Fathers is based on a direct connection to God. Reduced to one thought, it is that as long as God is speaking directly to a body of people, giving them commandments, they have the most essential element of the religion of the Fathers. If they remain true to that connection, all things can be restored to them.

Commandments given to others belong to them, and only commandments God gives to us belong to **us**. Joseph Smith explained this matter, after referring to the New Testament:

[A]lthough we cannot claim these promises which were made to the ancients for they are not our property, merely because they were made to the ancient Saints, yet if we are the children of the Most High, and are called with the same calling with which **they** were called, and embrace the same covenant that they embraced, and are faithful to the testimony of our Lord as they were, **we** can approach the Father, in the name of Christ as they approached Him, and for ourselves obtain the same promises. These promises, when obtained, if ever by us, will not be because Peter, John, and the other Apostles...walked in the fear of God and had power and faith to prevail and obtain them; but it will be because

we, ourselves, have faith and approach God in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, even as they did; and when these promises are obtained, they will be promises **directly to us**, or they will do us no good. They will be communicated for **our** benefit, being our own property (through the gift of God), earned by our own diligence in keeping His commandments, and walking uprightly before Him. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 66, emphasis added)

This is affirmed in our Scriptures:

*I admit that by reading the scriptures, of truth, the saints in the days of Paul could learn, beyond the power of contradiction, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had the promise of eternal life confirmed to them by an oath of the Lord; but that promise or oath was no assurance to them of their salvation, but they could, by walking in the footsteps and continuing in the faith of their **fathers**, obtain for **themselves** an oath for confirmation that they were meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.*

*If the saints in the days of the apostles were privileged to take the ancients for examples, and lay hold of the **same** promises, and attain to the **same** exalted privilege of knowing that **their** names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that **they** were sealed there as a perpetual memorial before the face of the Most High, will not the same faithfulness, the same purity of heart and the same faith bring the same assurance of eternal life, and that in the same manner, to the children of men now in this age of the world?*

*I have no doubt but that the holy prophets and apostles and saints in ancient days were saved in the kingdom of God; neither do I doubt but that they held converse and communion with him while they were in the flesh, as Paul said to his Corinthian brethren that the Lord Jesus showed himself to above five hundred saints at one time after his resurrection. Job said that he knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should see him in the flesh in the latter days. I may believe that Enoch walked with God and by faith was translated. I may believe that Noah was a perfect man in his generation and also walked with God. I may believe that Abraham communed with God and conversed with angels. I may believe that Isaac obtained a renewal of the covenant made to Abraham by the direct voice of the Lord. I may believe that Jacob conversed with holy angels, and heard the voice of his Maker, that he wrestled with the angel until he prevailed and obtained the blessing. I may believe that Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire with fiery horses. I may believe that the saints saw the Lord and conversed with him face to face after his resurrection. I may believe that the Hebrew church came to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. I may believe that they looked into eternity and saw the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. But will all this purchase an assurance for **me**, and waft **me** to the regions of eternal day, and seat **me** down in the presence of the King of kings with my garments spotless, pure, and white?*

*Or must I not rather obtain for myself, by my own faith and diligence in keeping the commandments of the Lord, an assurance of salvation **for myself**? And have I not an equal privilege with the ancient saints? And will not the Lord hear **my** prayers and listen to **my** cries as soon as he ever did to theirs, if I come to him in the manner they did? (T&C 99:14-17, emphasis added)*

Whatever the status of other believers may be today, there **are** promises that have been given by God directly to us. There is now more revelation and more commandments than at any other time. Beginning with the "Answer to the Prayer for Covenant" and the accompanying Covenant, God has given new commandments. If they are followed, the promises made to this people will increase in light and truth until the perfect day. We are not reading the promises made by God to other people because we have God's commandments and promises given to us.

The commandments given directly by God include, but are not limited to, the following:

- God's will is to have us love one another, but we lack the ability to respectfully disagree among each other. The Lord compares us to Paul and Peter whose disagreements resulted in jarring and sharp contentions. We have been commanded to do better.
- Wisdom counsels us to align our words with our hearts, but we refuse to take counsel from Wisdom. There have been sharp disputes between us that should have been avoided.
- Satan is a title and means accuser, opponent, and adversary; hence, once he fell, Lucifer became or, in other words, was "called" Satan because he accuses others and opposes the Father. The Lord rebuked Peter and called **him** Satan because he was wrong in opposing the Father's will, and Peter understood and repented. We sometimes act as Satan: accusing one another, wounding hearts, and causing jarring, contention, and strife through accusations. Rather than loving one another, some have dealt unkindly—as if they **were** the opponents, accusers, and adversaries. In this, we've been wrong, and the Lord has rebuked us for our error.
- We have the duty to bind the spirit of the accuser (Satan) within us so that we give no heed to accuse others. It's not enough to say we love God; we must also love our fellow man. Nor is it enough to say we love our fellow man while we—as Satan—divide, contend, and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do God's will.
- We've been warned that even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of the Lord's people. All must **equally** walk in God's path, not only to profess but to **do** as professed.
- We've scarred one another by our unkind treatment of each other; we bear the scars on our countenances, from the soles of our feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Our visages have been so marred that our hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward our fellow man bear outward witness of our inner self; we cannot hide it. When the Lord appears to us, instead of confidence, we feel shame. We fear and withdraw from the Lord because we bear

the blood and sins of the treatment of our brothers and sisters. We're commanded to come to our Lord, and He will make sins as scarlet become white as snow and will make us stand boldly before Him, confident of His love.

- We're commanded to forgive one another, to be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need—for the Lord has redeemed us from being orphaned and taken us that we are no longer a widowed people. We're told to rejoice in the Lord and rejoice with our brethren and sisters and to be one.

- We've been commanded to measure our words before giving voice to them and to consider the hearts of others. Although a man **may** err in understanding concerning **many** things, if we regard one another with charity, then our brother's error in understanding will not divide us.

- We're commanded to study to learn how to respect our brothers and sisters and to come together by **precept, reason, and persuasion**, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. God warns us to take care how we invoke His name.

- God's cautioned us that a greater work remains yet to be done. His covenant requires that we abide in it (not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention, and backbiting caused anger, broke hearts, and hardened the souls of those claiming to be His saints during Joseph Smith's life), but we're commanded to receive it in spirit, in meekness, and in truth.

- We cannot be at peace with one another if we take offense when none is intended. We're commanded to not judge others except by the rule we want used to weigh ourselves.

- We're to let our pride and our envy and our fears depart from us.

- He's asked us to covenant with Him to cease to do evil and to seek to continually do good.

- God's covenant with us requires we receive the Scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern us in our daily walk in life, for us to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the Scriptures to correct ourselves and to guide our words, thoughts, and deeds.

- God has asked us, by covenant, to seek to become of one heart with those who seek the Lord to establish His righteousness.

- We're commanded to teach our children to honor the Lord and to seek to recover His lost sheep and to teach them of the Lord's ways, to walk in them.

- We've been instructed that tithes of this people are to be used for the poor.

- God instructed us to trust His words and proceed always in faith, believing that **with Him** all things **are** possible.

- We've been commanded to stop murmuring and complaining against all who labor, because the Lord is pleased with all those who are grateful and merciful who will have Him to be their God. (See T&C 157 and 158.)

Consider the question posed by the Lord to us: *What have you learned? What ought you to have learned?* (T&C 176:2,12). The Lord's question **is still pending**. It seems apparent to me that these questions are **designed to make us talk to one another**.

There's a gulf between knowledge and wisdom. We may have access to greater knowledge, but we often display very little wisdom. Knowledge can be arrogant. Wisdom is humble. Knowledge inflates our pride, but wisdom cautions us that we are still very far from being godly people.

Great spiritual development by individuals in isolation will never equip the individual to fit into a spiritually developed society. Alone, we seek connection to God. God represents the highest ideal in compassion, acceptance, and kindness. It's **easy** to make a place for God in our hearts. But other people are not always compassionate, easy to accept, or kind. God is pure, and mankind is not. When called "good" by the rich young man, Christ responded, *Why do you call me good? None is good save one, that is God* (Luke 10:9 RE). **If Christ would not allow Himself to be called "good,"** then there is little reason to call one another "good."

Individual spiritual development and group spiritual development are two **very different challenges**. Recent revelations **focus** on the development of a **group**. Everything points to God's desire to have His **people** turn to Him and live in **harmony with one another**. It is clear the Lord's objective is Zion and not merely to make **us** better individuals.

There's a Buddhist story about an enlightened monk who lived near a city having difficulties and conflicts. People from the town asked the monk to come into town to guide them so they could resolve their conflicts, but he refused. He preferred living alone and meditating. The town sent more representatives to ask again, and the monk refused again. Finally, a great crowd of people went to ask the monk for his help because, without it, they said they could never reach peace. At last, he relented. On the way back to town, in the joyful crowd, an old woman stumbled into the monk, pushing him to the ground. This made him **very angry**.

It's far easier for a hermit to live in quiet meditation than to live in harmony in a community. We are called into a dispensation with **more expected than individual salvation and enlightenment**. For the salvation of souls today, the **primary** focus of God's religion is to **gather a community**. God's purpose for the end times is focused on making people of one heart and one mind.

God's spirit is withdrawing from the world. In the Covenant of Christ Conference in September 3rd, 2017, we were told:

Those who have entered faithfully into [this] covenant this day are going to notice some things. The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly more angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. There is increasing anger and resentment of gentiles. In political terms, it's rejection of white privilege.

Language of [scripture] gives a description of the events now underway and calls it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process with the spirit withdrawing, will

end on this continent, as it did with two prior civilizations in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as that light becomes eclipsed, the coldness of men's [heart] is going to result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked.

The covenant, if it is kept, will prevent you from losing light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. The time will come when you will be **astonished** at the gulf between the light and truth **you** will comprehend and the darkness of mind of the world. ("Closing Remarks," Covenant of Christ Conference, September 3, 2017, p. 1, emphasis added)

We have seen **astonishing** increases since September 3rd, 2017 of darkness, lies, deceit, and conflict. Lies imprison people. The chain Enoch saw that Satan had over the world was constructed of lies. The "chains of darkness" that hold men in prison after death are **also lies**. Today those chains of darkness hold fast many people, and their numbers are growing. *Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter* (Isaiah 1:17 RE). Confusion over what is light and what is dark and the difference between sweet and bitter comes from widespread lies being accepted as truth.

As the light of Heaven withdraws, it is all the more important for us to keep it within us. But we also have many "thinking errors." Recent revelations from God make it clear we are **being challenged to be fit to live in peace with one another**. The Scriptures tell us we should see God **in** our fellow man.

*On His way to Jerusalem to be sacrificed, Jesus was asked by a rich young man, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is: Listen, and hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. **This** is the first commandment. And the **second** is like [it]: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.* (Mark 5:44 RE, emphasis added)

Why would love of your neighbor as yourself be compared to the commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, might, and mind? It is **because** God is **in** every person you will ever meet. All life is a gift from God. God loans us the **breath** of life:

God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted [unto you] that [you] should live in peace [with one] another — ...ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and art preserving you from day to day by lending you breath that ye may live, and move, and do according to your own will, ...even supporting you from one moment to another.... (Mosiah 1:8 RE)

God sustains us **all** from moment to moment. Through His power, we live and move. If God is sustaining every living person from one moment to another, then God **is** within all of us. If He loves them enough to support them, lend them breath, give them power to move and do according to their will, sustaining their life continuously, how can we hate them?

There are sincere people who pray and ask God questions, and they get answers. Often the answers given to one might be different than the answer given to another. Both believe they have intelligence from God and desire to stay true to the answer they've received. In these circumstances, are conflicts inevitable? Well, of course. But does that mean that harmony is impossible? Of course not.

This conflict is like another Buddhist story about a monk who accompanied a great teacher to learn how to help others. Throughout the day, the monk listened to the teacher as he gave answers to those who came for help. At the end of the day, the monk was disappointed and told the teacher his answers contradicted one another. The teacher had told one to do the opposite of what another was told. It made no sense to the monk. The teacher replied that there is only one road, but those who depart to the left must be guided back to the right. And those who departed to the right must be guided back to the left. The road does not change, but finding [it] after it has been lost depends on where the individual has wandered away.

What does it mean for us when there is a contradiction between God's answer to one prayerful soul and His answer to another prayerful soul? If discussion is warranted, it means that by talking through their disagreements, they may both be guided back to the one path to be followed. Sometimes that discussion will take time, experience, and careful, solemn thoughts. Even if the communicating takes a great while, why rush through a process that is designed to bring greater understanding? What if conversation does not produce an agreement? There's nothing wrong with tabling a discussion that has not reached everyone's approval and then resuming the discussion another day. Why the rush?

In legal disputes, there's a conflict resolution process called "mediation." Mediation involves a third-party mediator who helps the parties reach a settlement. The overwhelming majority of mediated cases reach settlement. However, I've seen many cases fail to reach a resolution, and the parties walk away from the mediation table still in conflict. But later, after the parties have taken time to reflect on the mediation, most of those unresolved cases will eventually settle as well.

I think the "Answer to the Prayer for Covenant" is the Lord **pleading with us** to take the time to **talk through our differences**. There is **nothing** in those words of counsel that require us to quickly resolve matters. Quite the opposite. The "Answer" is filled with instruction to us about the **process**, leaving the result to be obtained eventually—through a respectful process, no matter how much time may be needed. To the extent the Lord cares about time at all, He warns us against "haste."

The "recommended means" to reach harmony are *persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul; **without hypocrisy and without guile...*** (T&C 139:6, emphasis added).

During the Scriptures project, there were many conflicts and differences to resolve. These conflict's resolutions delayed the project **far** beyond what any of us thought it would take. When the two independent groups were first combined, both groups thought their respective project was complete (or nearly so). But it was quickly apparent that the projects differed, and there were issues to resolve. It took months, and when all believed the end was approaching again, new source materials and new research was uncovered that required more than half of the project to **begin again**.

More than a year after expected conclusion, the project continued. At one point, I sent an email expressing my view of how I hoped to conduct myself:

I would rather submit to the decision of the group than insist that my view be followed. For me, harmony between brethren is more important than getting what I think best to be followed. I believe harmony can lead to much greater things than can merely enforcement of even a correct view. I know how difficult it is to have a correct view, because of how often [I've] been corrected by the Lord. Sometimes [I'm] humiliated by my foolishness when the Lord reproves me. Humiliation can lead to humility, but my experience is that the humiliation is accompanied by shame, whereas humility can proceed with a clear conscience.

*My experience with others leads me to conclude that if we can have one **heart** first, eventually we can likewise come to have one mind. But if we insist on having one mind at the outset, we may never obtain one heart together.* (Teachings and Commandments—Epigraph, emphasis added)

A friend sent me a Facebook rant from a man who wants to teach others and very much demands attention and respect. His angry rant ended by telling those who were insufficiently respectful of his great writings that they were "hypocrites and pollutions, and unless you fall down before God in humility, you will suffer horrors you can't imagine. ...The greater the reasons you resist, the more you will be damned." The approach reminded me of the enlightened hermit monk who became angry once jostled. Zion cannot be established in solitary meditation. It requires a community. And community requires us to see God in one another. It requires we listen to and understand one another. That cannot happen if we do not talk with each other about even **difficult subjects** and **serious disagreements**. **The sharper the disagreement, the more we need to learn!** As the Lord explained, *There have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided. I speak these words to **reprove** you that you may **learn**, not to upbraid you so that you mourn. I want my people to have understanding* (T&C 157:3, emphasis added). Those may be some of the greatest words God has ever condescended to give to any people, at any time—and we treat

them as if they're a rebuke for someone else and not ourselves, as if we needn't heed them.

Also, we've been taught:

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me, I will tell you my part. (Ibid. vs. 54)

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Lord has, in His mercy, chosen to speak again. God has renewed His covenant and provided commandments. But His instructions and commandments are to guide a **community** into godly harmony. It is only possible to rise up and become **that** community by following the instructions of God.

I'm ashamed of every conflict I've caused. I regret any discourtesy I've shown to another. But I do not recall ever demanding someone submit to me. At every turn, I have intended only to persuade and invite, not demand and insist. I am **no one's** commander, president, or church authority. **You** cannot make me anything more than your equal, because I refuse to rise above anyone else. We are all fellow-servants (and often, unprofitable ones, at that).

It is important to God that the Book of Mormon has been accepted as a covenant. It's a bond between God and man. God has made for Himself a people and "**numbered** us among the House of Israel" (see T&C 156:15,48; 158:10, emphasis added). But remember that Israel has a long history of rebellion, disobedience, and rejection. Those who remain faithful and obedient to God are those who will vindicate His prophecies, covenants, and promises. Among other things, the people who keep His covenant will be called upon to build the tabernacle where He will take up His abode on Earth in the New Jerusalem. On July 14, 2017, He gave this revelation:

*Whenever I have people who are mine, I command them to build a house, a holy habitation, a sacred place where my presence can dwell or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister, because it is in such a place that it has been ordained to recover you, establish by my word and my oath your marriages, and endow my people with knowledge from on high that will unfold to you the mysteries of godliness, instruct you in my ways, that you may walk in my path. And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will end; Ephraim will not **envy** Judah and Judah will not **provoke** Ephraim. (T&C 157:41, emphasis added)*

Knowledge that will unfold the mysteries of godliness and instruct in God's path is designed to be embedded in the House of God. At this point, the prophecy waiting to be fulfilled states:

...when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law.... (Isaiah 1:5 RE)

The first Fathers had teachings and beliefs that included much more than what has been preserved from Joseph's day. We should expect greater information to be passed along to us. But knowledge without the tempering presence of wisdom will prove to be dangerous. Aspiring and ambitious men are unwise. They cannot be trusted.

There are those who think circumcision originated with Abraham through his covenant with God. That was a **restoration** of circumcision, **not the origination** of it. In the beginning, when a son of Adam and a daughter of Eve covenanted to marry, the son of Adam shed blood by circumcision in order to seal the marriage covenant. Once healed, the marriage was consummated, at which point the virgin daughter of Eve shed blood to complete the sealing of the marriage covenant. Inasmuch as Abraham and Sarah had been married for **many** years prior to the covenant, it was ordained that circumcision for all of Abraham's descendants would take place at the eighth day. Because of the restoration of the covenant—and God **adapting** it for Abraham and all the faithful who would follow him as their Father—circumcision was expected to be done at birth. This **remains an obligation** for all the righteous.

The much later Law of Moses perpetuated the Abrahamic practice of circumcision at eight days. Even non-Israelites who wanted to observe the Passover were **required** to be circumcised to participate in the Paschal meal. Although the Law of Moses is no longer in effect, restoring circumcision through Abraham **pre-dates** Moses by nearly seven centuries and is still in effect. Fulfilling and ending the Law of Moses did **nothing** to change the **earlier** covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

There were other practices known to the first Fathers that have been lost. We should expect to learn the earliest worship was not limited to a "Father in Heaven" but included a Divine Family. I've already addressed this subject in "Our Divine Parents." The first Patriarchs understood there to be a Father, Mother, and a Divine Son who were all recognized as Divine. There was also a Heavenly Council or Divine Counsel who were among a recognized "hosts of heaven" who also held positions of authority.

In addition to a Sabbath day of rest, the first Fathers were given three Divinely appointed religious festivals or holidays (more correctly, "Holy Days") that were to be observed yearly. These were tied to the Creation to remind mankind of God's wisdom and mercy in organizing this world for mankind.

Because of apostasy, **numerous** other festivals or religious observances have been added by men. For example, the Jews added Hanukkah, Purim, and Yom HaShoah. Christians added Lent, Ash Wednesday, and Christmas (among others). When the original religion returns, the original religious festivals—**always** centered in a sacred site or temple—will also return.

I mentioned ~~before that Abraham entered Egypt~~ before he entered Egypt, he received a great revelation about the stars, the heavens, events among the pre-existent spirits of mankind, the fall of Satan, and the Creation of this world. This list summarizes part of the knowledge associated with the Holy Order; God wanted the husbandman, shepherd, and High Priest to comprehend:

- **Why** this Creation was organized,
- Man's position in the **cosmos**,
- **Who** the "hosts of heaven" were,
- That there was a cosmic rebellion in the heavens,
- That a cosmic covenant was established that **framed** the Creation, **established** conditions for mankind to gain experience, and through which mankind could progress,
- That all things in nature—including the light of the sun, moon, planets, and stars—were **purposefully organized** and governed by a **covenant** with God.

Abraham, like Adam (at the beginning) and his descendant, Enoch, were caught up into Heaven and received a tutorial endowment from God. The purpose was simple enough: helping each of them to understand what **came before** and what **comes after** this life. This was to help rescue them from death and hell. In a very real sense, the curriculum of the Holy Order is designed to give both a **personal** and a **cosmic context to Christ**. The Holy One of Israel is the redeeming Messiah who has been our **constant Protector, Example, and Guide** from the foundation of Creation.

The Messiah was the central figure **in** the Creation. The Messiah was the foremost figure opposing the rebellion in the Heavens. The Messiah came to save the Creation by His self-sacrifice. Man's universal death is reversed by their universal resurrection, made possible by the Messiah. And it will be the Messiah who judges mankind and will assign them to various conditions following mortality. It is the Messiah who occupies the central position in **all** the mysteries of godliness. The members of the Holy Order understood this best and, therefore, were most trusted to preach, teach, testify, minister, and watch over the posterity of Adam (and later, the posterity of Abraham).

The most useful and obedient servants of the Lord have been those who have been exposed to the greatest understanding of **His eternal** role. The opening paragraph of Abraham's book is a direct statement of the relationship between knowledge and obedience.

From the first generation, the Patriarchs used **ritual** to convey a great body of information (a theatrical revelation) to initiates. The Book of Abraham **itself** appears to be a ritual text.

...the book of Abraham, far from being merely a diverting or edifying history, is a discourse on divine authority, which also is the theme of the three facsimiles. The [explanation] to the three plates make it perfectly clear that they are meant as diagrammatic or formulaic aids to an understanding of the subject of priesthood on earth. (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*, p. 178)

Enoch's account (now in Genesis of the Restoration Edition of Scriptures) **also** appears to be a ritual text. Hugh Nibley calls Enoch,

...the great initiate who becomes the great initiator...

He adds:

His is the independent intelligence always seeking further light and knowledge. He is the great observer and recorder of all things in heaven and earth, of which God grants him perfect knowledge. The great learner, he is also the great teacher: Enoch the Initiator into the higher mysteries of...faith and secrets of the universe; Enoch the Scribe, keeper of the records, instructor in the ordinances, aware of all times and places, studying and transmitting the record of the race with intimate concern for all generations to come. He offers the faithful their greatest treasure of knowledge. He is the seer who conveys to men the mind and will of the Lord. (*Enoch the Prophet*, p. 19, 21)

The religion of the Fathers cannot be adequately conveyed if it is separated from ritualized knowledge. By using symbol, movement, gesture, dress, architecture, sound, orientation, and setting, it is possible to embed light and truth in a way to engage the mind, spirit, and heart of mankind. The temple can **be** the house in which it is possible to stretch the mind of man both upward and downward by the things presented there. "The temple itself was but a copy of the heavenly temple, the liturgy on earth a shadow of the worship of the angels" (Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 118). It is through covenant-forming ordinances—including rituals—that the power of Godliness has been manifested to mankind. *The order of the House of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally roll into the Celestial Kingdom of God and enjoy it forever* (T&C 117:4).

When writing from a dungeon in Missouri, Joseph Smith's reflection on what is needed to save souls clarifies the function of a temple:

...because the things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost

Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of eternal expanse. You must commune with God. ...None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world, to hold the keys of the [mystery] of those things that have been kept hid from the foundation until now, of which some have tasted a little, and which many of them are to be poured [out] from Heaven upon the heads of babes, yea, the weak, obscure, and despicable ones of this earth. (T&C 138:18-19)

Accordingly, there is always going to be a temple when the Holy Order is present in its fullest manifestation. Abraham also is directly associated with temple ritual. As Nibley explained, "There is a wealth of tradition now being zealously studied to show that the temple ordinances really go back to the beginning, as Joseph Smith declared. The four names associated with the tradition are those of Adam, Enoch, Abraham, and Elijah" (*Temple and Cosmos*, p. 78).

To return a complete Restoration, a temple will be required. As the Lord revealed to Joseph, a temple is always required of God's people:

For your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments [in]...beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, and honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (T&C 141:12)

The required temple in Nauvoo was **not** built. The fullness was **not** restored during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Instead of blessings, the saints were cursed. Not only did the January 1841 revelation warn of cursings—including forcible expulsion from Nauvoo—but 22 months following that revelation (in an editorial on October 1, 1842), Joseph Smith **pled** for renewed focus on the temple. He wrote:

Perhaps [we've] said enough on this subject, but we feel the importance of it and therefore speak plainly. It is for you, brethren, to say whether the work shall stand or progress; one thing is certain, that unless that is done all our efforts to aggrandize or enrich ourselves will be vain and futile. We may build splendid houses but we shall not inhabit them; we may cultivate farms but we shall not enjoy them; we may plant orchards, or vineyards, but we shall not eat the fruit of them. The word of the Lord is build my house, and until that command is fulfilled we stand responsible to the great Jehovah for the fulfilment of it, and if [it is] not done in due time we may have to share the same fate that we have heretofore done in Missouri. (*JSP, Documents, Volume 11*, p. 127)

Joseph's warning **did not** inspire the saints. Their neglect and disobedience changed the warning into prophecy. They suffered the same fate as before in Missouri, even though the Lord wanted (and expected) better of them. There's no reason to repeat their failure, because the Lord does not reward the disobedient. He offers blessings, and it is up to His people to receive them through obedience. But if His offer is rejected, there are no secured promises.

In the "Answer to Prayer for Covenant," the Lord assures us that if we are faithful, we will be given His temple:

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need...say, Know ye the Lord, for you [shall all] know me, from the least to the greatest. I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven. (T&C 158:15-16)

The first and most complete religion belonged to Adam and Eve. They lived with God, and after being cast out, they retained a memory of living in God's presence. The first Fathers were taught they could talk with God, receive answers from Him, and return to His presence. The experience of Enoch—seven generations after Adam—records that direct contact between mankind and God was part of the true religion. After the fall of mankind, the process of the ascent of man into Heaven to commune with God has remained the **heart** of the religion. That process will reverse, and contact between mankind and God at the end will involve the **descent** of God from Heaven to visit His tabernacle:

*And Enoch beheld the Son of Man ascend up unto the Father, and he called unto the Lord, saying, Will you not come again upon the earth? For inasmuch as you are God, and I know you, and you have sworn unto me and commanded me that I should ask in the name of your Only Begotten, you have made me, and given unto me a right to your throne, and not of myself, but through your own grace. Wherefore, I ask you if you will not come again on the earth. And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so **will** I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest. But before that day, the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but **my people will I preserve**. And **righteousness** will I send down out of Heaven. **Truth** will I send forth out of the earth to bear testimony of [mine] Only Begotten, his resurrection from the dead, yea, and also the resurrection of all men. And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [mine] own elect from the four quarters of the earth unto a place which I shall prepare, a holy city, that my people may gird up their loins and be looking forth for the time of my coming. For there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shall you and...your city meet them there, and*

we will receive them into our bosom. And they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; and there shall be my abode. (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added)

So that there are no false assumptions, the Scriptures explain that God's covenant with Enoch includes an **actual** temple to be **built today**. And the Lord has reiterated in His Covenant: *I will come **to** my tabernacle and dwell **with** my people in Zion, and **none will overtake** it* (T&C 157:64, emphasis added).

The religion of the Fathers involved direct communion, contact, and connection between mankind and God. The Holy Order is an important part of the return of that direct association. The original religion of the Patriarchs enabled the faithful to hear directly from the Lord **His** promise of eternal life. God would seal them by covenant into His Heavenly Family. We can, if faithful, obtain all that the original Fathers received from God at the beginning:

What I, the Lord, have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself. And though the heaven[s] and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by my own voice or by the voice of my servants [it's] the same. For behold and lo, the Lord is God and the spirit bears record, and the record is true, and the truth abides for ever and ever. Amen. (T&C 54:7)

As a servant of God, I say with **His** authority that these promises are true, and He intends to fulfill them for His covenant people Israel. In the beginning, mankind was placed in a family. The first commandment to Father Adam and Mother Eve was to multiply and replenish the Earth. The first man and woman were married. Their union produced the family of mankind. **Every** soul born into this Creation came from parents and were all intended to be in a family.

The plan of salvation is covenantal and familial. The government of God is a family. If a family is established by covenant with God, it will be the only order that can survive death. In a very real sense, the salvation of mankind now comes only through the family of Abraham. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob covenanted with these three successive generations that they would stand at the head of all who would be saved after them. The God of Israel requires **some** part of mankind—however small—to be sealed into that line or be utterly wasted at His coming.

God has explained in Scripture how He intends to identify covenant Israel in the last days. After the death of King Solomon, Israel divided into two kingdoms:

- The first was the Northern Kingdom. After the division, they were sometimes called "Ephraim" or the "Ten Tribes" or "Israel" (in the Old Covenants).
- The second was the Southern Kingdom, called "Judah" and, later, "the Jews."

The Northern Kingdom was conquered, taken captive, and removed from their land by Assyria in 722 BC. When freed by Assyria years later, they crossed the Euphrates River

and disappeared from **our records** into a far land. They were only lost to **our** limited record of history.

The Southern Kingdom was conquered in 598 BC by Babylon, taken captive, and removed from **their** land. When Cyrus allowed their return in 538 BC, **only a remnant** returned.

Because of these two great exiles, the Ten Tribes were scattered and lost to our history, and the returning Jews were reduced to a small remnant of their original population. Today's Jews descended from that small remnant. The greater part of Israelite blood is in the Middle East. These descendants of the exiled Israelites remained, intermarried, and today are among the ancestors of Iranians, Iraqis, Syrians, Turks, Jordanians, and Arabians. Israelites were also scattered into northern Europe and Asia among Europeans, Russians, and Scandinavians. As God promised to Abraham: Over the centuries, intermarriage and migrations has sent his Israelite descendants **into "all nations."** Today, almost **all** Israelite blood runs through the veins of people regarded as Gentiles because, after being scattered, they assimilated and lost their original identity.

Today's Jews are only a tiny fraction of the original Israelites. Their history has been marked by continual persecution. Their perseverance has been heroic. They are a people of destiny and prophecy. However, many of the prophecies concerning Israel **do not involve the Jews**. In addition, Jews do not know the record of the Nephites. They have not been taught the prophecies of Joseph Smith. They are unaware of the covenant God renewed in 2017. Accordingly, many prophecies are unknown to and will not be fulfilled through the Jews.

It will only be through Israel that we can be sealed by a covenant with God to Heavenly Parents through the Fathers. Salvation is **still** through Israel. The question is: Where are we to **find** the prophesied latter-day Israel now?

The Book of Mormon relates how religious identities are changed by God. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, prophesied that *the gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel* (2 Nephi 7:4 RE). His brother prophesied: *As many of the gentiles as will repent **are** the covenant people of the Lord...* (2 Nephi 12:11 RE, emphasis added). Therefore, God promised to number Gentiles as people of Israel **by covenant**. That promise was realized in 2017 when He ordained a covenant for the Gentiles to re-establish them **as** His people.

The Jews are **still** a remnant of covenant people. However, they can **forfeit** their status if they reject the covenant offered by the Lord in 2017: *As many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off. For the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel* (Ibid.).

How we respond to God affects our covenant status. When the resurrected Messiah visited the branch of Israel in the Americas, He quoted His **Father** about future covenantal realignment of identities. Covenant-status is now based on how individuals

respond to the Holy One of Israel. *But if the gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the **Father**, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel* (3 Nephi 7:6 RE, emphasis added).

The Messiah explained the process for a Gentile change of their identity:

*The gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, **that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel** — and when these things [shall] come to pass, that thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto them that they may know...the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are...the house of Israel.* (3 Nephi 9:11 RE, emphasis added)

The Messiah quoted a prophecy from Isaiah to confirm it was always God's plan to change Gentiles into Israelites:

*And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; **for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife** [Children of the desolate are the Gentiles; the married wife was Israel] saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy **seed shall inherit the gentiles** and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* (3 Nephi 10:2, quoting from Isaiah 19:4, both RE, emphasis added)

As Moroni finished his father's abridged record, he added his own prophecy of the last-days' New Jerusalem to be built on the American continent. The occupants of that holy city are described in his prophecy: *And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who [shall] dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb; **and they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the seed of Joseph**, who were of the house of Israel* (Ether 6:3 RE, emphasis added). "Numbered among." Numbered among: Covenantal.

The New Jerusalem will be built by covenant Israel. The group whom the Lord regards as His Israel is covenant-dependent. But a covenant must be kept.

There are two identifiable remnants of previous covenant people. One group is Native Americans who descend biologically from the Israelite-Nephite covenant people. The other is the Jews. Both are biologically connected to Israel, but they will be "cast off" if they reject the covenant now offered by God. And Gentiles may or may not be biologically connected to Israel but are **numbered** with Israel if they accept the covenant.

The New Jerusalem is to be built by a remnant of Israel, or to be more precise, it will be built by a remnant the Lord regards **as** covenant Israel. The Lord's "Answer to the Prayer for Covenant" accepted a body of believing Gentiles as His people of Israel. God's promises and prophecies about Israel in the last days began to be fulfilled in 2017 when the covenant He offered was accepted. The Lord said to those people:

***I will number you** among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and **you** will inherit the promises of Israel. **You** shall be my people and **I** will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And [to] those who will receive [more will] be given, until they know the mysteries of God in full. ...I have redeemed you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. (T&C 157:50, emphasis added)*

The Gentiles who accepted the Lord's Covenant have been promised that they:

...are now numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel...

God's Answer goes on to assure covenant Israel:

And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you.

*I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need...say, Know ye the Lord, for you [shall **all**] know me, from the least to the greatest.*

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest.

*And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will **pass over you** as my peculiar treasure... (T&C 158:10,12-18, emphasis added)*

...a second **literal** Passover.

The Lord's "strange act" is approaching completion. The promises made to the Fathers are **being** vindicated. The Restoration has recommenced, and if we're faithful, it will not be paused or interrupted again. Although Israel's numbers are few, there have never been great numbers willing to sacrifice everything for God. One requirement for faith has always been the same: *A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation* (Lectures on Faith 6:7 RE). The Lord has said this about our day: *I tell you that [I] will come, and when [I do] come, [I] will avenge my saints speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall [I] find faith on the earth?* (Luke 10:6 RE).

There are two groups God has (or will) covenant to preserve against the coming harvest.

- The first are those who made and keep the covenant the Lord offered in 2017. It changed all those who accepted it into covenant Israel. **They** have the right to inherit this land and will be preserved. As stated in His "Answer to Prayer for Covenant": *And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure* (T&C 158:18).
- The second are those who will become part of the Holy Order and receive and practice the religion of the Fathers. God alone will decide **how many** and **who** will be invited into **that** order. We have no control over it. We have no right to decide who is worthy or unworthy to receive it. It is entirely the Lord's choice because we are **rarely** able to determine other people's hearts. The Lord told Joseph Smith **bluntly** that he was unable to tell the righteous from the wicked. We are in no better position than was Joseph. Therefore, we should leave it with the Lord to determine whether or not to invite men and women and, if so, **who** and **how many**. The Holy Order is as much—or more—a burden as a blessing.

As Hyrum Smith explained, God imposes restrictions:

For the mysteries of God are not given to all men; and [to] those to whom they are given they are placed under restrictions to impart only such as God will command them, and the residue is to be kept in a faithful breast, otherwise he will be brought under condemnation. By this God will prove his faithful servants, who will be called and numbered with the chosen. (T&C 152:2)

The Egyptian imitation of the Patriarchal religion kept hidden the most important parts of their religion away from public disclosure. Hugh Nibley explained:

Bleeker duly notes that "certain parts of temples were inaccessible to ordinary people" and that "the Egyptian temple was not meant to let the masses of the people participate in the religious services." (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, p. 86, citing CJ Bleeker)

This was because:

The rites, "revealed to men by Osiris, the first mortal to be resurrected," were nothing less than the "Great Secret" of how mortals may become gods, taught in the temple "the place of the great secret." (*Ibid.* p. 88, citing A Moret)

Margaret Barker explained the Christian tradition of restricting information available **even to the faithful**. She likened the early Christian practice of concealing some truths from believers by referring to Origen's *Homily 5 on Numbers*, explaining:

...the secrets of the temple which were guarded by the priests. Commenting on Numbers 4, the instructions for transporting the tabernacle through the desert, he emphasized that the family of Kohath were only permitted to carry the sacred objects but were not permitted to see what was in the holy place; then they had to cover the sacred objects with veils before handling them to others, who were only permitted to carry them. The mysteries of the Church were similar.... (*The Great High Priest*, pp.76-77)

Clement of Rome recorded that Peter quoted an unwritten teaching of Christ that admonished: "Keep the mysteries/secrets for me and the sons of my house" (*Clementine Homilies* 19:20). The resurrected Messiah taught His closest peers things that were **not** told to other believers.

Knowing God's plans does not always produce immediate joy. Solomon made this comment after a life of learning: *In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow* (Ecclesiastes 1:3 RE). We should not be surprised to learn that initiation into God's mysteries can be troubling, disquieting, and even a burden.

If asked to carry a burden by God, do it willingly. If not asked, do not envy. Remember Alma's statement: *Behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish, for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me* (Alma 15:12 RE). It is our common enemy who stirs us up to jealousy and envy rather than patience and meekness. Great works of God **fail because mankind will not wait on the Lord**.

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

The more God gives, the greater the peril. Weaknesses of appetites, ambitions, passions, and covetousness is akin to trying to navigate through a narrow pass,

guarded by a great beast, pitiless and cruel, that destroys **all** those whose zeal and impatience brings them into the reach of the beast (see T&C 163). God has provided to us guidance on how to reach Zion. It requires self-discipline and meekness to follow the Lord rather than racing ahead of Him to destruction.

Our first Fathers experienced visions, ascended into Heaven, obtained promises of exaltation, and were transformed by their experiences **from men into angels of God**. Joseph Smith attempted to bring this back as part of the Restoration. Margaret Barker has written about the use of the term "angel" anciently **to identify those who had encountered God's presence**. She also explains a Dead Sea Scroll text foretelling a return of that religion: "The Qumran Melchizedek text has a possible reading about people in the last days whose teachers have been kept hidden and secret; perhaps they have been preserving the older ways" (*The Great High Priest*, p. 79). The return of that religion will more likely be through a last-days' restoration rather than through a preservation. But she is correct to anticipate its return.

The Book of Mormon has account after account of prophets receiving an audience with God the Father and His Only Begotten Son. This **is** the older, heavenly ascent religion that began with Adam in the Garden.

Joseph was called to become a minister of salvation when he saw the heavens open. He taught the idea of direct association with Christ as the promised Second Comforter during a visit to Ramus, Illinois on April 2nd, 1843. After quoting Christ's promises to not leave His followers comfortless because He and His Father would come to them and **take up their abode with them**, Joseph explained, "Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself... When any man obtains this last Comforter he **will have** the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him or [to] appear unto him from time to time" (*TPJS*, pp. 150-151, emphasis added). *The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and...Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false* (LDS D&C 130:3; originally found in *JSP, Journals, Volume 2*, pp. 323-6, emphasis added). This appearing of the Father and the Son began with Adam and was intended to continue **in every generation**.

Although the teaching of Christ as the Second Comforter was taught by Joseph Smith and believed by LDS Mormons, it is now **one** of the teachings that has dwindled from LDS teaching. In a Boise LDS meeting, church apostle Dallin Oaks denounced the teaching of mortals needing to see the Lord as "a tactic of the adversary" ("Boise Rescue," June 13, 2015). Following that, the LDS Church removed a footnote from their King James Version John 14:16, which **previously** referred to Jesus Christ and **replaced** it with a reference to the "Holy Ghost." At the time I wrote the book, *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*, in 2006, **the text explained orthodox LDS belief**. Since then, however, **that** sect has abandoned the teaching. If that book were written today by a faithful member of **that** church, it would have to be revised to reflect the church's changed view. By leaving the text unchanged, it provides a current example of **continuing dwindling in unbelief**. Changing belief into

unbelief happens **very** quickly. *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil* was published in 2006, and the doctrine was denounced as a "tactic of the adversary" by an LDS apostle in an official church meeting in 2015—**only nine** years later.

Joseph Smith's mission was to recover and restore. He may have seemed every bit an innovator and revolutionary, but the truth is that he was the **greatest religious reactionary** since Jesus Christ. The recovery through Joseph ended with his and Hyrum's murder, after which dwindling began. Dwindling in unbelief continued until a group repented and the Lord removed His condemnation in 2017. Now **we** hope to continue faithful. Christ commanded in the Sermon on the Mount: *Wherefore, seek not the things of this world, but [first seek] to build up the kingdom of God and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matthew 3:39 RE).

There is a chapter in a Hugh Nibley book, *Temple and Cosmos*, entitled "One Eternal Round: The Hermetic Tradition." That chapter goes from page 379 through 433, and it is worth reading in its entirety. However, I am going to lift a few quotes from his explanation of history that should seem familiar:

In each dispensation the world went bad while the prophets united in futile protest, as in the days of Samuel, Hezekiah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. In the powerful phrase of Ether, "the prophets mourned and withdrew from among the people." ...When not preaching it was their custom to keep a low profile, or simply to depart from the scene in the time-honored manner of the Rechabites, a pattern we find repeated over and over again in the Book of Mormon and vividly depicted in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The holy outcasts would form with their followers a community of saints, a church, waiting and working for Zion. Zion itself is a model of such a retreat from the world: "And from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED." In their retreat the righteous refugees take particular pains to preserve the sacred records—we think of Moses, of John, of Ether, of Moroni, etc., preserving studying,...editing the sacred writings by special command.

...the esoteric community was limited to those who understood and could be trusted with the deeper meaning of...doctrine.

...Throughout the Book of Mormon the church itself regularly splits into a worldly society, notably the religion of the Nehors, and others consisting of "a few... humble followers of Christ" to whom special gifts and revelations were given.

...The gospel that the retreating wise men take with them into hiding is guarded as a secret, and that by express command. Why seek it? The jealousy and envy of others can be dangerous; they resent being shut out from something great and mysterious, like boys excluded from the club tree house. They usually take out their wrath and frustration by wrecking the place.

...[True worshipers] are naturally drawn to each other and excite ever-mounting distrust, suspicion, and envy of those excluded from the magic circle. "I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his (Satan's) kingdom," said Joseph Smith. ...We all know how the public received the prophet Joseph, who was placed in the greatest danger, not from angry outsiders, but from his jealous followers, like the Higbees and the Laws. The ancient Ephesians passed a law banishing [the] great achievers from the city—they were a standing rebuke to the rest: "If they must excel"... "let them go and excel over [someone] else." ... Anything they don't understand makes dogs and people uncomfortable, distrusting, and dangerous.

...We may consider the gospel as the most advanced knowledge on earth, known to but a few because it is accepted and believed by but a few and can be understood by no others.

...In ancient times, apostasy never came by renouncing the gospel but always by corrupting it. No one renounces it today, and so we have...strange paradox of people stoutly proclaiming beliefs and ideas that they have no intention of putting into practice.

...We seek knowledge as our greatest treasure, while the poverty of most of our manuals and handbooks defies description.

...The great apostasy [at] the time of the apostles was not a renouncing of the faith but its corruption and manipulation.

...Everywhere we find myths and legends about how the primal bond that existed between heaven and earth in the Golden Age was broken by the wickedness of men; the great common assemblies ceased and the gods departed. But, as Aristotle notes, some bits of the old knowledge always survived to the next age. ...the three things in the mysteries that Herodotus would never talk about were (1) the grand mystery of the true nature and character of God, which could be known only by revelation, (2) the ordinances by which the mysteries were taught and implemented, and (3) the doctrine or rationale of the whole, including that which explained the rites.

...Philosophy is the road, not the goal, which it never reaches. If you want answers to the questions which it proposes, you can get them in the end only by revelation.

...Joseph Smith points this out: "As Paul said, 'the world by wisdom know(s) not God,' so the world by speculation (is) destitute of revelation." Religion answers by private but nonnegotiable spiritual experiences.

...[Isaac] Newton also talked as Joseph Smith did, that "truth had been given by God [at] the beginning, but had been fragmented and corrupted in the course of

time; its traces survived in enigmatic form[s] in these different sorts of literature, but had to be recovered by a sort of dialectic between hard, disciplined inquiry and the ancient sources."

...Joseph explained to the brethren the ordinances and covenants "on to the highest Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds."

These few excerpts from Hugh Nibley illustrate the tension between sacred knowledge and dwindling in unbelief. Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham is an example of a hypocephalus. These **first appeared** in 400 BC, and most examples reckon from very late in the Ptolemaic era. These documents were developed **because the priests realized that sacred knowledge was slipping away and needed to be preserved**. One recent study of the hypocephalus concluded these circular funerary documents were "a synthesis of the widespread theological knowledge of the priests... (Tama Mekis, *The Hypocephalus: an Ancient Egyptian Funerary Amulet*, p. 75).

They were used in only few burials. "It is clear that the use of the hypocephalus never became widespread. Hypocephali remained exclusive pieces of funerary equipment reserved for the clergy and for the members of their [family] who occupied priestly positions in the palleade of the temples" (*Ibid.* p. 2).

The Facsimile No. 2 was produced **at the end of the dwindling Egyptian religion in its final stages**, still *seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even...the reign of Adam...* (Abraham 2:3 RE). **That facsimile** is both a **powerful symbol** of what the Restoration **promised and** how it has dwindled. The original hypocephalus was intended to preserve sacred, hidden knowledge for use by the faithful and initiated priestly inner-circle. But it was written at a moment when the priests realized their sacred knowledge was slipping away. They were only able to make a **gesture** to preserve it by sketching a montage of ancient hieroglyphs to **echo** their dwindling religion. That document **aptly** symbolizes Joseph's calling to restore the original, sacred, lost knowledge. But Joseph's efforts have also dwindled for nearly two centuries. The opportunity to recover and practice the original religion still exists if the conditions of God's covenant are met.

God overthrew the Egyptian gods by sending Moses. God overthrew the kingdom of the Jews by sending John as forerunner for His Son, the Messiah. God overthrew the Christian gods by sending Joseph Smith. Last of all, God renewed and restored life to His people in 2017 when He made a new covenant. **Every** time God acts, He overthrows all other **false** faiths to **reaffirm His own religion**. God's goal is always to revive it in its fullness, but that has been **rarely** achieved. He is actively seeking to restore it again today. This work is His, and it will continue until reaching its fullness. **I** am a witness of His hand moving, His voice speaking, His will being revealed, and His

guidance being provided continually as His work unfolds line upon line, precept upon precept. We will see it succeed if we have the faith and patience to allow it to do so.

"Each of the great dispensations of the gospel has come in a time of world upheaval, when the waywardness of the human race has been matched by...climactic restlessness of the elements" (Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, p. 164).

The overthrow of Egypt's gods by signs and wonders has inspired people (from ancient Israel to modern writers) with thoughtful reflection. When the signs and plagues are viewed from the Egyptian religious perspective (to the extent we have been able to reconstruct that view), the God of Israel directly challenged the gods of Egypt.

The competing servants [serpents] described in Exodus 4:11 was a direct conflict between the power of Israel's God and the Egyptian magicians. To Egypt, the serpent symbolized Apophis, the force of chaos. For Israelites, the brass serpent was to become a symbolic representation of their future Messiah. A serpent made of brass, raised up on a pole for suffering Israelites to look upon to be healed, foreshadowed the atoning sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah.

Moses' staff became a serpent that ate the Egyptian magicians' serpents. The incident demonstrated the Messiah's power to overthrow destruction and chaos. The event should have taught the Egyptian Pharaoh that Israel's God held all power.

The plagues that began with Egyptian water turning to blood was a direct defeat of the Nile god, Hapi. That first plague and the final destruction both involved authority over water. Gabriel poisoned the Nile at the beginning and completed the overthrow when the waters of the Red Sea returned to drown Pharaoh's horsemen and chariots.

Pharaoh witnessed the defeat of other Egyptian gods. Hathor was overthrown when the Egyptian cattle died, while the Israelite cattle were spared.

Geb was overthrown when dust under Uriel's stewardship was sent to afflict the Egyptian's skin with boils.

Fire was sent by Raphael with burning hail and loud thunder. Later, a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night unmistakably signified Raphael's protection for Israel.

Michael sent the east wind and locusts to destroy the crops of Egypt. Then Michael blocked the light of Ra, overthrowing the Egyptian deity believed to have power over all creation, including the underworld. Michael removed the breath of life from every firstborn in Egypt that finally led to Egypt's surrender. The power of Israel's God **and the combined acts of His archangels** proved too much to resist.

Egypt believed there were "four sons of Horus." This idea was left from the Patriarchal era and was their **apostate** belief that roughly corresponded to the four archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. Yet Egypt chose to fight against these four until

they were destroyed. Once Egypt was defeated, **for centuries** Israel's religion increased, and Egypt's waned. Eventually, this led to the ultimate death of Egypt's religion. So complete was the God of Israel's overthrow of Egypt that the Egyptian language **itself** was altogether lost until the Rosetta Stone made it possible to reconstruct (in part) the identities of some of Egypt's defeated gods and fragments of Egypt's ancient beliefs.

In another conflict, John the Baptist was ordained by God's angel when eight days old to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews. Joseph Smith explained John the Baptist "wrested the keys, the kingdoms, the power, the glory from the Jews, and by the holy anointing and decree of heaven" (*TPJS*, p. 276). He went before the Messiah, as foretold by Gabriel to his father, Zechariah. The Messiah's forerunner fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy and testified to the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. Once the Messiah had been lifted up, God destroyed the Jewish nation and demolished their temple.

After nearly two millennia, Joseph Smith ended the Christian God's silence by declaring the heavens had opened and the Father and Son had appeared to and spoken with him. In the following two decades, ancient Scripture from Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, and Moses were restored, the Bible corrected and expanded, new revelations and commandments provided, and lost authority to act in God's name was returned.

In 2014, God revoked the authority of the LDS hierarchy. In the ensuing few years, that institution has **continually** stumbled into darkness and disarray, with their temples closed and services altogether interrupted for a year. They have **voluntarily** altered and abandoned parts of their temple rites. They have voluntarily chosen to destroy the original Salt Lake Temple and replace it with a modern substitute lacking the original symbolism and meaning. They have continually surrendered to popular opinion and increasingly adopted the worldly agenda of accepting sexual confusion, political intolerance, and censorship of opinion. When viewed as trends, it becomes apparent the LDS Church's leadership is rapidly moving in a direction contrary to its original roots.

In contrast, a small group has been repenting and returning **to** the original roots established by God through Joseph Smith. By 2017, a more accurate version of the Book of Mormon was recovered, the JST Bible revisions were accurately published for the first time, the Lectures on Faith returned to the canon, additional Scriptures added, and a new covenant with God was established. **Overthrowing and returning are repeated cycles, and they are underway again today.** But the overthrow and the returning are not yet complete. The overthrow **will bring a full end to all nations and religions**, but the returning will be determined by covenant-keeping.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2021.06.26 Joseph, Joseph, Joseph
The 4th Annual Joseph Smith Restoration Conference
Meridian, ID
June 26, 2021
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Mahalo. Okay, I promise I'll end on time.

There are **very few** prophets who are given an assignment so important to God's covenants that the prophet is named and his mission foretold in prophecy many generations in advance. You can probably call to mind the name of a number of such persons—for example:

- The Messiah (or Emmanuel).
- A prophet—John—whose mission would include baptizing the Messiah.
- Moses was identified and his mission foretold, both by name and by prophecy beforehand.
- There was a prophet—John—who was destined to write a remainder of the vision that Nephi had received, whose name and whose mission was identified in advance.
- Cyrus—the governor who would allow the Jews to return and to rebuild the temple after the Babylonian captivity—one of the very few who's identified beforehand and his role clarified who was **not** a prophet but a king.

(What? He can't hear? That's his fault, not mine. I'm just... I'm just doing my job.)

But one of the individuals who's named beforehand was Joseph Smith.

The title that I gave (when pressed for a title) was "Joseph, Joseph, Joseph" (which at the time I gave the title, I said those were purportedly the dying words of Brigham Young—but this has nothing to do with Brigham Young's dying words). Joseph of Egypt gave a prophecy about a descendant of his who would be a choice seer, whose father would be named Joseph. And then the choice seer would be named Joseph like his father. And so, those three Joseph's were what I had reference to.

In the Book of Mormon, as he is giving his final blessing, Father Lehi gives a quote from the brass plates that is an excerpt of what Joseph of Egypt had foretold about his descendant who would be the choice seer. But interestingly, what Lehi does is both paraphrase and quote—and it's incomplete. If you want to get the complete prophecy that Joseph of Egypt gave about the descendant, you have to go to the Joseph Smith Translation of the book of Genesis, which you won't find in the LDS or RLDS version. You literally have to go to the Restoration Edition (that just recently got distributed in a leather-bound form). And you can find that in Genesis chapter 12, ~~verses—36~~ or paragraphs 36 to 43.

There's some interesting details that leak through that I never noticed about the history that occurred. Joseph of Egypt died when he was 110. But apparently, **all** of his older—as well as his younger brother, Benjamin—survived him. It becomes clear from the Joseph Smith Translation of the book of Genesis. But Father Joseph, as he's getting into his elderly years and is about to die, then gave some (like his father before him) blessings to his posterity. But because of the relationship that he had with his brothers, he also delivered to them—his brothers—some words of reassurance and comfort about **their** posterity, as well. And so, Joseph of Egypt becomes sort of the "patriarchal blesser" of his brethren and then the posterity of **all** the tribes of Israel, which tells you that the Holy Order that had originally been established at the time of Adam—that had gone through a period of apostasy and had to be restored by a connection made with Father Abraham—persisted to and included Joseph of Egypt as one who... I mean, we **think** Ephraim continued that. But we know **for certain**—particularly because of the passages that we've gotten in the Joseph Smith Translation—that the Holy Order that originated at the beginning was in full bloom in the person of Joseph of Egypt.

So, I'm gonna read from and comment on the events that took place there:

*And Joseph said unto **his brethren**...*

So, while he's telling this—his last blessing—his brethren are alive.

I die and go unto my fathers...

So, he knows he's about to die, and his brethren will survive him. They will be around after his departure.

...and I go down to my grave with joy. (Genesis 12:36, emphasis added)

It's an interesting observation. But a person who dies with a clean conscience before God—having the promises of God that things will be well with them, both in the hereafter and in eternity—can go down to the grave in joy, which Joseph of Egypt was able to do.

We do not have anything similar to this account for Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Benjamin, Gad, Asher... We don't have anything like this for the others, which also suggests that upon the death of Joseph—who possessed the Holy Order and the right—none of his brethren succeeded him into that position. (If anyone did, it would have been Ephraim to whom the birthright was given.)

*The God of my father Jacob be with you, to deliver you out of affliction **in the day of your bondage**...*

As long as Joseph was there, there was no threat of bondage. But after his departure, after some generations, a new Pharaoh would arise who knew not Joseph (as explained in the book of Exodus). And Joseph is talking about **that** time and saying, "your

bondage," not meaning the very people to whom he was speaking but all of the posterity that are represented in the person of the people to whom he's speaking: **You** are gonna go into bondage, meaning your posterity. So, he's telling them that there are some bad times coming and that bondage in Egypt was both expected and foretold by Joseph to the other tribes.

*...for [Joseph said] the Lord has **visited me**, and I have **obtained a promise of the Lord...***

That is covenantal language. That is exactly the kind of thing that one should expect from someone in possession of the Holy Order. So, he's obtained a visit from the Lord and a promise from the Lord—and he's about to explain what that is.

There are those who think that a prophet can only speak for God if they quote God directly with a "Thus saith the LORD." And Joseph will get there! But he begins by explaining what it is he understood as a consequence of what the Lord said and covenanted with him, a promise of the Lord:

*...that **out of the fruit of my loins the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch, out of my loins...***

Meaning that there will be a branch covenantally connected to and part of what is "righteousness" or the family of God.

Joseph of Egypt knows there will come a point at which, out of his posterity, will come some people connected as a branch—that's a genealogical, familial, and Holy Order kind of term—that's gonna come from him. And he's saying this, which is apparently dissimilar to his brethren.

Now he's about to die, so they don't have to kill him. But this is kind of the same sort of stuff that got him in trouble when he told them about the "sheaves bowing to his sheaf" and "the stars, the sun, and the moon bowing to him" that got him sold into slavery in Egypt. This can't be welcomed stuff, but he's about to die, so why not be candid? He's gonna "raise up a righteous branch, out of my loins..."

*...and unto you whom my father Jacob has named Israel, **a prophet — not the Messiah** who is called Shiloh. ...this prophet shall **deliver my people out of Egypt** in the days of your bondage. (Ibid., emphasis added)*

Meaning: "Despite that (what I'm telling you about **my** posterity), **you** are gonna have someone that comes out of the group that's named 'Israel' by Father Jacob—**you** are gonna have someone that's going to deliver **you** out of bondage. So, there's some good news for you, too."

A deliverer, but that deliverer prophet is not gonna be the Messiah. **That** guy is going to deliver the family of Egypt out of slavery in Egypt. This would be Moses.

And it shall come to pass...

This is what the Lord told Joseph in covenant, and all Joseph's doing is explaining **what** is going to happen. There is no "Thus saith the LORD," just, "This is how this stuff is going to take place," explaining as a matter of fact. It shall come to pass...

*...that they shall be scattered again [meaning all of this family of Israel is gonna be broken up and scattered] and **a branch shall be broken off and shall be carried into a far country.** (Ibid., 37, emphasis added)*

Well, "a branch in a far country" echoes from the blessing that Jacob gave to Joseph before Jacob's death about how the branches of his family would go over the wall over the well (see Genesis 12:29).

*Nevertheless, **they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord...***

Meaning, that branch—scattered as it may be, broken, off, separated—is still gonna be part of what the Lord keeps in His mind:

...when the Messiah comes; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days in the spirit of power, and shall bring them out of darkness unto light, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom. (Ibid., emphasis added)

Meaning that when the Messiah comes, the Messiah is going to visit with that broken branch that's gonna be scattered.

Then he says,

A seer...

A very important word because he's now talking about a very, very specific person: **A seer...**

*...shall the Lord God my God raise up, who shall be a **choice seer...***

There may be seers a-plenty in the coming generations of Israel, but a seer—distinguished from all others as "choice"— is going to be raised up. But he's gonna be raised up:

...unto the fruit of my loins [meaning he's going to come through the line of Joseph, not the rest of his brethren]. Thus said the Lord God of my fathers unto me...

Now we finally get to a "Thus saith the LORD." So, everything that you've heard up to this point is simply Joseph of Egypt explaining what God let him understand in his (Joseph of Egypt's) words. Now he's gonna quote God, and it's a long quote.

Lehi will primarily take the quote, but he also does some paraphrasing. It's interesting the difference between how Lehi uses this passage from the brass plates and how it appears in the Joseph Smith Translation—and it would be worth the trouble of looking and comparing the two 'cuz it tells you something about prophets quoting prophets.

So, now it's the Lord speaking, and Joseph of Egypt reporting.

...A choice seer...

Again, this is **God** speaking about him. Joseph first called him a "seer," but when God's words get used, the very first words are "a choice seer."

...will I raise up out of the fruit of your loins, and he should be esteemed highly among the fruit of your loins. (Ibid., 38, emphasis added)

Meaning that descendants of Joseph are going to hold this particular seer in very high regard; they're gonna respect him; they're gonna want to honor what it is that this choice seer represents.

So, now we've had him called:

- Seer
- Choice seer
- Choice seer

Anyone who feels that they can dismiss Joseph Smith as someone who may have "written inspired fiction" or may have been "a successful charlatan" ought to realize that they're treading on very thin ice. Because if God and Father Joseph of Egypt can't describe him without using the words "seer, choice seer, choice seer," it would perhaps serve us well to sit up, take note, and say, "Maybe I ought to search deeply to find out the basis upon which God holds him in such esteem."

And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of your loins, his brethren. (Ibid., emphasis added)

So, this choice seer is gonna get a commandment from God, and he's gonna do a work—but it's not for **his** benefit. It's for the benefit of the posterity of Israel, his brethren.

And he shall bring them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with your father. (Ibid.)

Your father, Joseph of Egypt, is **Israel**—Jacob of "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" fame. (You know that band; they had several top 40s.) "And he should bring them to knowledge of the covenants which I have made with your father."

*And he shall do whatever work I shall command him; and I will make him **great in my eyes**...*

God's saying, "I'm going to make this man great in my own—in God's own—eyes." **That's** the person that gets treated so roughly in anti-Mormon literature.

*...for he **shall do my work**.* (Ibid., emphasis added)

(I'm looking at the time, 'cuz there's a point I want to make and keep this stuff in mind.)

"He shall do my work." David Whitmer can complain that Joseph overstepped his commission, but God promised Joseph of Egypt that Joseph Smith would do God's work.

And he shall be great like unto him whom I have said I would raise up unto you to deliver my people, O house of Israel, out of the land of Egypt...

So, now God is saying, "This choice seer that is gonna be great in the eyes of God is going to be someone who is comparable to the promised Moses that was to come." Well, when Moses came, one of the things that he accomplished was to reset the covenant of God, establish a law that would be followed, and create an entirely new root of Scripture.

We have lost our Scriptures on a number of occasions. In the beginning, Adam kept the Book of Remembrance, which Enoch elaborated upon because Enoch was the great scribe. (His prototype in Egyptian hieroglyphs is Thoth, who is shown ibis-headed with the stylus and writing—that was Enoch.) And Abraham says that the records of the Fathers (that came down from the beginning) came into his hands, and therefore, he (Abraham) had a knowledge of the beginning of the Creation and of the stars and the planets and all the rest of that. And he proceeded to tell us something about the Creation in the book of Abraham, based (apparently) upon the content of the records from the beginning that fell into his hands—followed, in due course, with his full initiation into the Holy Order through the surviving Melchizedek, son of Shem, who was a pre-diluvian and had a covenant that he could have been translated and taken up to heaven ('cuz that process continued right up into the flood). Even though the city of Enoch had risen before, people were still going through that process right up into the flood, and Melchizedek could lay claim on that promise as an antediluvian, but he tarried until he could hand off (after generations of apostasy) to Abraham. So, Abraham inherits the covenant, and Abraham has possession of the records.

But generations of slavery later, there aren't any records left that Moses can make use of. And so, after a **second** period of multi-generational apostasy, the Scripture and the records and the description of the Creation had to be restored **again**. And so, Moses—in restoring the Scriptures—begins with the account of Genesis (the first book of Moses), which is an account of the Creation written by Moses, which (based upon the Joseph Smith Translation of the Scriptures) was Moses being tutored by God so that he understood the events of the Creation in a way that permitted him to create a new root of Scripture.

Well, the Mosaic volumes of Scripture would then later get lost. And so, a new root of Scripture had to be created at the time of Ezra when they returned to the temple. And Ezra essentially writes the Old Testament based upon things he may have found during the effort when they're laboring with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other to rebuild Jerusalem after Cyrus had permitted the return. But it was essentially a re-creation of the Scripture, at the time of Ezra.

So, you've got Moses that has a root of Scripture because of what had been lost. You've got Ezra who does something fairly similar.

But in **this** prophecy, what Joseph of Egypt is saying is this choice seer in the last days is gonna be just like Moses. Among other things, he would create a new root of Scripture. He would not only correct and edit and revise the Old and the New Testaments, but in addition to that, he would bring forth the Book of Mormon that is **another** companion that helps establish the validity and the veracity of what we have that we inherited from the Jews. **And** he would also receive other commandments that —by revelation—would be preserved. **All of that** is activity "great in the eyes of God" that God likens to what Moses would do.

So, when you think of the value of Moses to the Jewish people and the esteem with which he is held by the Jews, you should realize that Joseph Smith should be held in similar regard by anyone who accepts the Restoration as a fact that occurred through God working with him.

...for a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of your loins to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt, and he should be called Moses. (Ibid.)

This is explaining how Joseph Smith—the latter seer—will be great like this earlier one (who is Moses). And he's explaining: Moses is gonna deliver the people out of Egypt.

And by this name he shall [be] know[n] that he is of your house, for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter and shall be called her son. (Ibid.)

So, he's gonna be nursed by the Pharaoh's daughter—but he's gonna be called Moses, and because he's got that name, you'll realize he's not from the house of Pharaoh. He's from **your** house. He's one of your people. So, don't be confused (even though the

leaders were rather confused when he came, and they wanted very little to do with him).

And again, a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of your loins. And unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of your loins — and not to the bringing forth [of] my word only, says the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word which shall have already gone forth among them in the last days. (Ibid., 39, emphasis added)

So, what Joseph, the seer—the choice seer of the last days—is going to do is gonna be a work that will help to convince people that the earlier Scriptures/the earlier record/the earlier religion/the earlier testimony is in fact also true—God's word convincing the faithful being centered on Joseph Smith.

Wherefore, the fruit of your loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write...

This is God talking to Joseph of Egypt, saying, "Your descendants are gonna write, and the descendants of Judah are going to write." Now, the Bible is not merely the words of the tribe of Judah. In fact, Moses wasn't a member of Judah; he was a Levite. But the tribe of Judah was the one who preserved the record. So, when the loins of Judah shall write, they are writing the record that includes prophecies that were delivered by prophets from all of the tribes—but we get them through Judah because Judah was the one who preserved and perpetuated the record, wherever it originated, from whatever tribe.

...and that which shall be written by the fruit of your loins [that is, the descendants of Joseph] and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah [that is, the Bible] shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of your loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, says the Lord. (Ibid.)

The purpose of what the choice seer's going to accomplish in the last days is, ultimately, to bring an end to the religious contentions that people who believe in the Bible have with one another. Heavens, the conference that we've been conducting here (and this is peacemaking ground among people of the remnant) really demonstrates, among other things, that there remain contentions among people who believe in the Book of Mormon. We've divided up into various groups. And Tausha has been organizing this conference now (for, I think, the fourth year in a row) in part to try and lay down the contentions that exist religiously between and among one another. It's really odd that when it comes to the subject of the "truth" and "salvation" and "all eternity"... I mean, for goodness sake—all eternity! We want to squabble and bitch and moan against one another rather than to say, "What light can **you** shed that I do not yet possess? What insight has come to **you** that I've not noticed that comes from the God of Heaven?" "What truths are there to be discovered and learn from one another?" We don't do that. We bristle, and we

complain, and we squabble. But the purpose of the work of Joseph was to lay down contention and put an end to it.

"Knowledge of their fathers." "Knowledge of my covenants."

And then he says,

And out of weakness he shall be made strong in that day when my work shall go forth among all my people, which shall restore them who are of the house of Israel in the last days. (Ibid.)

"Out of weakness." I don't think that Joseph Smith was at all spiritually weak. I don't think that Joseph was physically weak. But Joseph Smith was absolutely, continuously, financially weak.

He had a pending petition for bankruptcy at the time of his death. They had just passed a national bankruptcy law, and everyone went flocking to file for bankruptcy because the ebb and flow of commerce and the banking system in that day was riotous. And if you were, as Joseph was, someone trying to found a city and establish a community, he took a lot of risks. He took risks that he could ill-afford to take. And then he conducted business for the benefit of the people that needed it, not for his own profit and gain. The Nauvoo store that he operated let people take things that they needed, whether they could pay for it or not, with the promise of an IOU—and then they defaulted. And Joseph was left, ultimately, holding the bag with a lot of uncollectible accounts. And he's the very embodiment of weakness financially. It would require the financial support and the charity of his contemporaries in order for him to accomplish any of the work that needed to be accomplished.

And when it came to the construction of the Nauvoo temple, one of the final tasks that the Lord permitted the saints to undertake (on condition that if they pursued it faithfully, they would be defended and protected and kept in their place; but if they didn't measure up, then they would, instead of blessings, bring about cursings upon them, and they would be driven out and suffer a whole series of maladies)—the warning being given in January of 1841, and the subsequent events proving very clearly that they didn't measure up, and they didn't do what was expected of them.

...that seer will I bless. (Ibid., 40)

His financial condition didn't matter. He didn't lay up treasures on Earth, but he certainly laid up treasures in Heaven—because the Lord said he intended to bless him.

And they that seek to destroy him should be confounded, for this promise I give unto you, for I will remember you from generation to generation. And his name should be called Joseph, and it should be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto you [meaning Joseph of Egypt; Joseph Smith is not only like Moses, Joseph Smith is like Joseph of Egypt, as well], for the thing

which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation. (Ibid.)

Okay. I've now gotten to the point that if you are keeping score, the Lord in this prophecy has mentioned Joseph Smith—either directly by name or by description or by a personal pronoun—Joseph Smith, 22 times. It's kind of a remarkable bit of scorekeeping, if you're looking at it.

There are prophecies about unnamed future prophets that are gonna accomplish some work, referred to as candlesticks or olive trees—no names given. And yet, they've got remarkable responsibilities that they're going to fulfill. And their mention is paltry by comparison. Joseph Smith's mission and description as a choice seer rather dwarfs statements that are made about others.

I think people ought to be circumspect about evaluating, judging, and criticizing Joseph Smith. As Joseph was in Liberty Jail, the Lord, comforting Joseph because, well, jail was a highly unsatisfactory place to reside for half a year, and his tenure there was now coming to an end; and Joseph's time of reflection and prayer and meditation drawing to an end, he wrote up an account. And in the account, it drifts from 'what he was thinking' to 'what he was praying' to 'what God was telling him' to 'quoting God' in the letter. It's an interesting amalgamation. But this is a quote from the Lord talking to Joseph:

The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision...

Well, that oughta make some folks be a little more circumspect.

...and hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. (T&C 139:7)

Why would the virtuous seek blessings and counsel from under the hand of a pedophile, polygamist, liar, deceiver who publicly preached against the practice of adulterous plural marriages and in secret went about practicing it? **It makes no sense** to me.

And if (in the review of the historical record) you can't figure out that there's an enormous gap between the available information about the virtue of Joseph Smith and the solidity of his marriage and commitment to his wife, Emma Smith, right up until June 27 of 1844, and then a flood of nonsense that creeps in from **polygamists** who—20/30/40 years after the fact—begin to **reconstruct** their recollection (and even quoting Joseph Smith to say exactly the contrary of what he said and taught publicly), then you're not particularly wise.

It makes no sense to do that. I mean, that statement about "Never bet against a Sicilian when life is on the line..." Well, never bet against a Mormon hierarchy when money and property is on the line. Because I'm telling you, as the affidavits were being gathered to

support the practice of plural marriage, **property** was on the line. And they went about **writing** the affidavits (because **they're** in the handwriting of Joseph F. Smith) and collecting signatures from women who were in a vulnerable position economically and who desperately did not want to forfeit their position within the structure that had been created in Utah, and so, they have fixed their signatures to the affidavits. And from that, we have folk like Brian Hales that say, "Oh, there's this flood of evidence to support the notion!" And I'm telling you, choose your historians carefully.

And your people, [your people] shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors. (Ibid.)

Okay. I want to put that statement into a **very specific** context because I have to assume that whatever extensions may flow from that statement to Joseph, at the moment this was being told to him in Liberty Jail, if you were to ask him the identity of the traitors, he would be able to give you—exactly—the names of the folks:

- Oliver Cowdery
- David Whitmer
- John Whitmer—the LDS Church... Well, the church historian. John Whitmer took all of the historical records with him when he was excommunicated in the preceding year. And Joseph Smith commenced re-writing the history in 1838 because the histories had been taken by John Whitmer. (Two of the Book of Mormon witnesses and the church's historian.)
- Hiram Page
- W.W. Phelps
- Sampson Avard
- Thomas Marsh (of the Quorum of the Twelve)

These people were not only traitors to him...

They did not have the ability to hold Joseph Smith on the charge of treason without a sufficient body of testimony against him to prove that he ought to be kept in jail to stand trial on the charge. You didn't have to **prove** the charge, you have to have a preliminary hearing in which **someone** said **something** that justified the **belief** that you might be able to convict this person for treason. And the people who testified (the Missourians) couldn't come up with enough facts to bind him over in Judge King's courtroom. It took Sampson Avard to come in and testify.

Now Sampson Avard was... He was in a command position with the Mormon protective group, and he... I think he may have coined the term "Danites." But whatever it was, they came to be known by the vernacular of Danites—and he was spoiling for a fight. (He was like Louis Naegle in his youth.) He was just looking for a face to punch. So, Joseph decommissioned Sampson Avard because of his hostile attitude, and he made him, essentially, the cook/the mess Sergeant/the guy in charge of keeping them fed. The demotion of Sampson Avard was intended by Joseph Smith to de-escalate the

tensions. He did not want Mormons provoking anything. And Sampson Avard wanted to go out on night raids, burning property that belonged to the Gentiles.

It was Sampson Avard who came into the courtroom and who swore that all of the depredations that he had committed—and he described them—were done under the direction/with the permission/with the presiding authority and consent of Joseph Smith. And therefore, "All that crap I did that was so evil? Well, he told me to do it!" So, you've got the guy who did it saying, "Joseph was the author of it," and that was a sufficient basis to hold him over, and he was languishing...

This occurred in the first town they were held in; they'd been transported to and held in Liberty after (I think it was) Richmond, where the preliminary hearing had been held. But now they were in the Liberty Jail, and they were simply awaiting trial. And this statement about the traitors, "Your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors"...

The second person on that list was one of the Three Witnesses named David Whitmer, who (in what—1886?—in his "Address to All Believers in Christ," now an old guy and somewhat reflective on things) wrote his "Address to All Believers in Christ" that is an oft-cited, early Mormon historical document for the concept/for the proposition that "Joseph Smith was a fallen Prophet and that Joseph Smith's original commission was to take care of the Book of Mormon but that after he finished with the Book of Mormon, that everything that he did thereafter to have himself as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator was overreaching and ego-maniacal and that Joseph fell into some sort of a personal ego trip that led to destruction and that Joseph was off the mark." And that concept gets picked up and echoed by a lot of people. But it is fundamentally based upon the testimony of a traitor identified in a revelation given to Joseph in Liberty Jail that promised Joseph that the pure in heart will **never** be turned aside by the testimony of traitors. So, if you give great countenance to the testimony of David Whitmer in "An Address to all Believers in Christ," you are literally falling into the very thing that was described by the Lord as something that the pure and the wise and the noble and the virtuous will not do. So, well, take heed.

And the Lord swore unto Joseph that he would preserve his seed for ever, saying...

So, that now is simply a summary, an interjection that is not a quote from the Lord, once again. It's covering something off-script. Now we're going back to a direct quote of the Lord again:

I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand; and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod. And he shall have judgment, and shall write the word of the Lord. And he shall not speak many words, for I will write unto him my law by the finger of [mine] own hand. And I will make a

spokesman for him, and his name should be called Aaron. And it shall be done unto you in the last days also, even as I have sworn. (Genesis 12:41)

So, the question that ought to occur to us when we get this kind of language is: Joseph Smith had to restore this stuff back into the text of the book of Genesis—it was once there; it got dropped out. Why would it get dropped out?

Well, yeah... People did not want to have... You can't just eliminate the reference to this latter-day Messiah ben Joseph that would still echo in the record of the Jews. Something this blatant, something this obvious, something this in your face has got to go! But there's this analogy that I use:

Probably any one of you here in the room, if you listen to a lot of popular music over the course of your lifetime, you probably have an inventory of lyrics in your head that numbers in the hundreds of thousands of songs. And when a song begins, even if you haven't heard it for many, many years, as soon as the song begins, you hear the first couple of words to the tune, and you probably start singing along with the lyrics. (And if you're alone in your car, you probably do that. But if there's anyone there with you, you're probably a little more inhibited about that kind of rock and roll.)

The other morning, I was thinking about a song that I had not heard in three decades or more. But I'll bet if I started singing it that a significant number of you could finish the tune. (Oh, you're shaking your head! You don't... I'm gonna sing it! Yeah.)

Oh, where, oh, where can my baby be?
The Lord took her away from me.
She's gone to heaven, so I've got to be good
So I can see my baby when I leave this world.

[They] were out on a date in [her] daddy's car. [Okay]
We hadn't driven very far.
[When] there in the road [lying] straight ahead
[The car was stalled,] the engine was dead.

I couldn't stop, so I swerved to the right...
("Last Kiss" by J. Frank Williams and The Cavaliers)

Wait a minute. Hold on. Dude! Her daddy's car. You couldn't stop. This is a chauvinist song. This is sexist crap. Dude shouldn't be driving **her** daddy's car; **she** should be driving. This is why we don't hear this song anymore. I gotta... Yeah.

You can eliminate part of a song. You can drop a verse a whole lot more easily than you can mangle a verse. And a lot of the Scriptures were perpetuated by repetition, by word of mouth, and literally, by being sung. That's why a great deal of the Scriptures in the original language is more poetry than—or prose—that's intended to have signals and

cues to recall the passages. It's **clearly** what the Lord was doing with the Beatitudes: making something that can be easily recalled and recited.

So, if you've got passages like the one we're dealing with here (and it's filled with an amalgamation that mixes in both the character of Moses with, overwhelmingly, a description of the last-days' Joseph) and you just don't want to keep that stuff up, you've got to drop the whole thing (which is one of the reasons why Zenos appears in the brass plates in the Book of Mormon, and he did not appear in the record of the Jews—because it was so directly Messianic; whereas the poetry of Isaiah with Messianic "passages" could be used by analogy to describe not just the "singular, individual Messiah" but could be likened to the "people of the Jews"—so that the Jews themselves became the suffering servant, so that the Jews themselves became the ones that were marred for the testimony of the truth and the religion of the fathers).

Therefore, Joseph said unto his brethren...

So, now he's talking to his brothers, as the prophecy is wrapping up.

God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore unto Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph confirmed many other things unto his brethren, and took an oath of the children of Israel, saying unto them, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.

So Joseph died when he was a hundred [and] ten years old. (Ibid., 42-43)

That passage (Joseph of Egypt speaking about Joseph who would in the last days help restore people to an understanding of the covenants with the Fathers—including Father Jacob with whom God established the people Israel by giving unto him a new name that the people would thereafter be known by) that prophecy is one of the things that we ought to take into account when we try to calibrate how we view Joseph Smith. Anyone that God testifies will be "great in my eyes" is not someone that we ought to be disregarding and dismissing, as if all of the nonsense that we see said about Joseph should enjoy credibility.

We live at a time when the world is enslaved: It's chained; it's bound by lies. In the vision of Enoch, when Lucifer had wrapped the Earth in a great chain and he looked up at Heaven and he laughed, the great chain with which he had wrapped the Earth was lies. People believed lies. If I believe the nonsense that people say about Joseph Smith, I would not respect such a person **at all**. If I believe the nonsense that people say about the "absence of evidence in support of the Book of Mormon" were true, I wouldn't believe the Book of Mormon. And yet, here today, in multiple talks that have been given, there is overwhelmingly convincing evidence to support the authenticity and ancient source for the Book of Mormon.

Why are those proofs not predominating on the Internet, in the discussion groups, on Facebook, in the Reddit ex-Mormon section? Why are they not heard there? Because people believe and love a lie—and they shall be thrust down to hell, because that's what they prefer.

I hope **you** don't. And I hope that you have regard for Joseph of Egypt's description and the Lord's prophecy and promise of Joseph, the son of Joseph, of whom I have the absolute highest regard.

Thank you.

2021.09.05 Equality
Living Waters Ranch Retreat
September 5, 2021
Challis, ID

DENVER: What if I talk so long that there are none of you left here by the time I finish?

I want to thank the organizers.

[Crosstalk]

(Closer? Really?)

I want to thank the organizers. These things are never easy to do. And the people who do this... (See now, okay, you can't see me.) The people that **do** are always called upon to make a number of sacrifices. And invariably, by the time one of these occurs, they've vowed never again to ever do another one of these things. And it's like childbirth: It takes awhile, and the memory diminishes. And they say, "Well, let's do another one," foolishly thinking that they won't get to this point again! But I want to thank all of those.

I was going to mention that we had people here... Kaai and McKenzie [Lincoln] that are traveled all the way from Hawaii. And what a remarkable thing it is to come that far. Until, of course, we have ~~Maksat~~ [Maksad] and Holida who came from Turkmenistan to be here. And so, they win the prize. (I'm not sure what that prize is.) But they traveled the longest distance, and maybe the prize is you get to rest now. And he gets called "Max" to Americanize and make it easy for us. But I was saying, "It's Max on, Max salt." The real name is that: ~~Maksat~~ [Maksad]. If you've seen Karate Kid... [Directed to Max and Holida:] I don't know, have you seen Karate Kid? She has, okay. Brother and sister with an interesting story to tell.

(I think if I move it closer, there's more of that, not less. But you're responsible. If you dislike the feedback, throw whatever leftover bread you have back there at that booth. And hopefully, it'll be stale enough to make an impact.)

There was a circumstance that came to many of our attention recently: a fellow named Randy Albalate who lost a friend of his, Delfin. And it occurred to me that I ought to mention the passing of his friend, as well as the passing of a number of other people: LueAnn Thayne, ~~Shane~~ [Shaylee] Achter, Lisa VanCampen, Tyson Hunt, Jody Bailey, Bob Bartel. Many of you probably don't know any of their names. Some of you probably may know one or another but probably don't know all. I can tell you that there isn't one who passes out of this world who's received a covenant from the Lord that isn't notable on the other side after their departure. No one is forgotten in the wisdom of the Lord.

Now, some practical stuff that **needs to be said**. Every one of you should do what you need to do to take care of your health. The average person who dies as a result of the COVID infection has 2.8 co-morbidities. That means that they have (on average) 2.8

other causes of their death. They don't die from one; they die from a multitude. I saw an Alta billboard at the Alta Hospital, as you drive by. They have this neon sign that changes lettering to tell you things. One of the things that they circulated through on their billboard was that 80% of all strokes are preventable with 30 minutes a day of exercise. There is an expression about "when it comes to activity, you either use it or you lose it"—meaning that the body's capacity is designed to be retained by activity, by the things that you do. If you don't **do**, the body atrophies, you lose the capacity. Diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, drugs, and just a general lifestyle—all of these things have an effect upon both your health and how long you will be here. That "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die" is more or less "eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we're **causing** our death."

So, during the years in which Bill Clinton was the President of the United States, he had an inner circle of folks advising the presidency and trying to move the agenda along, and they made this statement at one point: "Everything is political." And I thought—at the time that they said, "Everything is political"—what nonsense that was. That was a statement of an objective to be achieved.

When I was little, I remember the adults saying that it's not polite to ever discuss politics or religion. You can be friends with someone, you can be bosom buddies with someone, but don't talk with them about politics or religion. That statement by the elders was purposeful. It was designed to prevent conflict over things that people feel strongly about.

So, when the Clinton administration folks are advocating that everything is political, what they're really advocating is that we need more conflict; we need more people to become angry with one another; we need to stir people up so that their hearts are alienated from each other because they feel intensely over some political issue. And make **everything** political. Make whether or not BYU's football team wins or loses a game against the University of Arizona's football team, played in the capital of sin—Las Vegas—political, and then we can get people even more angry than they would be over BYU playing the University of Utah.

There was a statement that grew out of that same Clinton era that was widespread—you saw it everywhere—that certain kinds of speech are not politically correct. "Oh, oh, oh, you shouldn't say that. That's not politically correct." It seemed like nonsense when that was first emerging into the vocabulary. And yet, today I would bet you that among you folks (who are all here in agreement on certain principles of religion) that there would be **very sharp** disagreements between the group of you over some political issues. **That was an objective**—long pursued, artfully developed, carefully manipulated—in order to get us into the position where we are today: divided from one another and our hearts alienated from one another over things that largely don't matter.

People did not discuss politics or religion, because **they wanted to avoid being angry with one another**. There is a problem that is identified by the Lord in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant that says, *Mankind has been **controlled** by the adversary through*

*anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. That's the problem. And it's a **tool for control**. Then the next sentence presents the solution: Even strong disagreements should not provoke **anger**, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute (T&C 157:54, emphasis added).*

I find it interesting that the way that is put is "to invoke the [Lord's] name in vain"—one of the "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" commandments that we found in the ten commandments that are foundational **to** our society.

And so, the purpose is to get you stirred up to anger with one another and then to say—about a matter that's purely political—that **God** is involved because "I've prayed about it, and I feel righteous indignation in opposing your political view." And then, the inverse is true as well. **They** feel righteously indignant at whatever it is that **you're** advancing. And so, we see everything is political. They've succeeded, and we've lost, and now anger becomes the rule of the day.

Disagreeing rigidly... In the Joseph Smith History, part one, paragraph 11, describing the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists, this is what Joseph recorded about his youthful observations of how the adult religiousness or religionists were acquitting themselves:

*Notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it—let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some [of them] to one party...some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests **and** the converts were more pretended than real. For a scene of great confusion and **bad feeling** ensued, priests contending against priest and convert against convert, so that all their good feelings for one another (if they ever had any) were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions. (JSH 1:11 RE, emphasis added)*

That description of the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists should not become a description of **us**. It should **not** be how **we** conduct ourselves toward one another, **even if we have strong disagreements** over something. And it **certainly** shouldn't provoke us to invoke the name of God in order to make Him be on your side, as if He had part in your everyday petty disagreements with one another.

"Take a breath, Nora." (My wife's gonna be talking about that; that you own that [speaking to Stephanie]. I'm just... I'm giving you attribution.) We have a granddaughter named Harper. What is she now? Two and a half? Three? Two. Yeah, she's two going on 16. And her mom has taught her (and you're gonna hear my wife's podcast), when she's upset and angry and can't deal with it to take a breath. And they were driving about, and Nora was crying in the car. And her two-year-old sister was exasperated at

her, and she said, "Take a breath, Nora!!" And so, it's become kind of an internal family cliché: "Take a breath, Nora."

These folks that Joseph wrote about were no less zealous in their faith than we are in ours.

So, some of you feel an inordinate anxiety at the events we can all see taking place throughout the world. You've allowed the **politics** of **everything** to make you **desperate** to flee. Well, it doesn't matter if you flee; the circumstances aren't going to change. And if you bring with you the conviction that "everything is political," you're not going to escape the anxiety that you feel.

One of the reasons why political leaders find it **very** useful to make people frightened is because when they are frightened and they get to the "fight or flight" part of their mind, they cease to be rational—and they find themselves willing to adopt **irrational** choices to try and solve the problem that is making them afraid, even if the problem that they fear is of very little or even no consequence.

You're being played. You're being played, America. You're being played, the world. And you are allowing yourselves to be played as disciples of the Lord. You ought—of all people—to have an extraordinary amount of confidence that the Lord knows exactly what He's doing, and He's making provisions to accomplish the fulfillment of the covenants that He said He intends to vindicate. *As well might man [put] forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri River [from running] in its...course* (T&C 138:22) than man interrupt the purposes of God. It's just not gonna happen.

Patience is very hard to summon when you're stirred up to anxiety—"Oh, my God, my God, my God!!"—over something that your **God** has control over. He defeated an invading Assyrian army using **fleas**. He fed the Israelites who were tired of manna with quail that flew in to be feasted upon. The God of Nature is **not troubled** by what troubles you. And the God of Nature is probably nothing more than bemused at how you're acting in this moment of confusion and dread. Our Lord is unflappable and affable. And He's not dancing around, doing a pee-pee dance because He's afraid of what's happening today. He has absolute confidence in the ultimate outcome, and it's going to be exactly as **He said it would be**. So, fleeing—particularly at **this** moment—may not be at all what you think it will be.

Well, I also want to fix some perceptions about the coming *idyllic* community that you **hope** to occupy. So, let me tell you what you have to look forward to.

There's two statements that really represent the one view, and one of them is drawn from the Guide and Standard, and the other one is drawn from T&C 64 [61]. This one from the Guide and Standard: *We cannot allow ourselves to be drawn in to inequality when the result of this labor is to make us one body equal with one another. We cannot imitate the failures of the past by establishing a hierarchy, elevating one above another, and forgetting that we must be of one heart, one mind and with no poor among us* (T&C

175:39). And then, the second one: *Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld* (T&C 61:4).

These two statements give the impression that we will have identical property and identical possessions and be identically situated with one another, **and** they also form the basis for complaints when your theory of what that means is the one thing and the reality is something different—and you're not getting "yours." So, now we've got a scriptural basis with which to point and to accuse and to judge and to condemn and to divide and to say, "It's not fair—or Zion! 'Cuz it's not; look at these Scriptures I just read you."

So, let's ease into what it really means to be equal with one another with a Scripture that is taken from Alma. And this is just describing how the people behaved:

*And when their priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, [and] the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God, they all returned again diligently unto their labors, and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers; for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner. And thus **they were all equal**; and they did...**labor** every man according to his strength.* (Alma 1:5 RE, emphasis added)

They weren't all priests. (Well, that's not equal.) They weren't all teachers. (That's not equal either.) But they were all equal. "And they did **all** labor...." Oh, so they have one thing in common, and the one thing that they have in common is **work**, "...every man according to his strength." You have to give what you have. And one man's strength may not be another man's strength, but he needs to give according to the strength that he has. And one woman's strength may not be what another woman's strength is, but she must give according to the strength that she has.

If I could point to one of this morning's examples (or mid-day examples, I guess): Connie Waterman is physically frail. But she has the strength to compose and the strength to sing a song of worship that means something to us all. It certainly means something to me; it certainly had an effect upon me. Everyone has to labor.

Then there's the Lord just confronting Israel directly:

*Yet you say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? Are not **your** ways unequal? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity and dies in them, for his iniquity that he has done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turns...from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he [will] **save** his soul alive. Because he considers and turns away from all his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live — he shall not die.*

Yet says the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? (Ezekiel 8:7 RE, emphasis added)

Equal (as the Lord is explaining here) means "accountable, responsible." **Every one of us** is equal in the eyes of God, meaning you're going to pay a price or you're going to receive a reward, all of this talking about after they die. The righteous (after they die) shall live. The wicked (after they die) shall be dead. Everyone is equal. That's it from Ezekiel, and he poses the question again another eight chapters later:

*Yet the children of your people say, The way of the Lord is not equal. But as for them, **their way** is not equal. When the righteous [man] turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, **I will judge you, everyone after his ways.** (Ezekiel 16:6 RE, emphasis added)*

We are all equally accountable before God. And no one gets away with disobedience, period. No one does.

So, let's take this to another level and look at something that the apostle Paul wrote, talking about marriage—in two passages, written to the same audience in two different letters: one in First Corinthians; the other in Second Corinthians. The one in First Corinthians says:

If any brother has a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not divorce her. And the woman who has a husband that believes not, if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. (1 Corinthians 1:26 RE)

Keep that in mind while we read from Second Corinthians:

Be not [equally] yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? (2 Corinthians 1:21 RE)

I would suggest that the correct way to read the second one is in light of the first one—that the first one was the foundation; the second one is the next part. And I would say that being "unequally yoked" is not talking about the problems; it's talking about the commitment to marriage. If a man is committed to his marriage and the wife is committed to the marriage, **then it doesn't matter if there are religious differences between them.** They're equally yoked so long as they both are committed to their

marriage. And there's no reason why you can't be happy with the **spouse you chose** if that spouse is committed to the marriage, and you are as well.

The things that Christ talked about that were gifts from God were simple things: birds of the air, flowers in the field, the sunrise, the rain, the sunset, the cloud cover. These are simple things that can be enjoyed by everyone and appreciated by everyone as gifts that come from God—without getting into whether or not you ought to bless the sacrament and pass the bread **before** you bless the wine and pass the wine because "our fellowship does it different than that."

Really?

Really!

Okay, here's another way in which equality really is meant by the Lord in a context: *Women have claim on their husbands until they are taken. And if they are not found transgressors, they remain upon their inheritances. All children have claim upon their parents until they are of age...* (T&C 79:1), meaning, if you're the man in the house, your wife has claim on you for her support. That's an obligation that's imposed upon you. Among other things, one of the things that occurs naturally in the course of husband- and wife-dom is that the wife will, on occasion, conceive a child, bear the child, give birth to the child, and be indisposed. Even if she's doing light office work, the commitment to the furthering of the family is going to interrupt her ability. The husband has no such interruptions. Therefore, the wife has claim on the husband. And the two of them, together as parents, the children have claim on them. **That's your responsibility.** That's your parental responsibility. It's ordained by God. And we all share equally these duties before God for the support within our own family.

Then there is this: *But if any provide not for his own, and especially...those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is [worth] worse than an unbeliever* (1 Timothy 1:13 RE). Everyone—equally—is responsible to provide for their own. My family has claim on me for support. But your family has claim on **you** for support. Your family doesn't have claim on me for their support. And my family doesn't have claim on you for their support.

Alma mentions that there was no inequality among them. This was because of the preaching that was given: *Those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that these things ought not so to be* (Alma 11:8 RE). These are the things that are required to be removed from among us:

- Lying—that has to end.

- Deceiving, which can be a bit more subtle than outright lying. But deceiving can't be among us.
- Envyings—we should never be caught up in the envy of one another or of anyone else.
- Strifes
- Malice
- Revilings
- Stealing
- Robbing
- Plundering
- Murdering
- Committing adultery, and
- Lasciviousness

I find it interesting that murdering and committing adultery are right together in this list of improprieties. I had a client ~~who got~~ who pled guilty. I didn't think he should have; I recommended that he not. But he pled guilty to a white-collar crime because he didn't want to take the risk of the trial. And because the prosecutor had suggested that he would recommend 90 days of suspended jail time and that he could—if he did get jail time—he could serve it at home. So, the client took the deal against my advice and entered the plea on a white-collar crime that I didn't think he committed. I didn't think what they were charging with actually fit the statutory requirement. And I told him not to do it; he did it anyway. And the judge rejected the 90-day recommendation of the prosecutor and sent him away for 14 years to 24 months in the state penitentiary. Well, this fellow was never ill-disposed to begin with. He didn't belong in prison to begin with. The whole thing was just nonsense. And he went out, and it didn't take the state penitentiary long to figure out that he was a good guy. He helped bring a literacy program into the prison. He helped some guys get through their GED. And as luck would have it, murderers are a problem at the state penitentiary, so he was made the jailmate with murderers in order to calm them down and reduce the threat and make it easier for the guards.

While he was there, he became friends with three murderers in the Utah State Penitentiary. **All three murderers** had committed murder as a consequence of adultery. So, linking murder and adultery together in the list that Alma provides is not just happenstance. Preaching against adultery and guarding yourself against that may keep

you also distant from the kind of anger and violence that results in the shedding of blood and the misery of many souls, just like the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant mentions.

Then there is this statement—it's a rather lengthy passage, but it's really worth hearing:

Therefore, say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: I do not do this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen where you went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

*For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols [I will] cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to **walk in my statutes**, and you shall **keep my judgments** and **do them**.*

*And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people and I will be your God. I will also save you from...your uncleanness, and I will call for the grain and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall you remember your...evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall **loathe yourself in your own sight** for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I do this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.*

Thus says the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. ...they shall say, This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities have become fortified and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that which was desolate. I the Lord have spoken it, ...I will do it. (Ezekiel 18:8-10 RE, emphasis added)

So, **the land is going to produce**—you have to walk in His statutes, you have to keep His judgments. And if you do, eventually you will come to the point that you recognize, in your own eyes, the loathsomeness of the things that you have done that were ungodly, that were unclean, that were inappropriate, selfish, unkind, unholy. **You'll** do

that. Because as you become more clean, you look back with abhorrence upon your past failures.

Then, you get to go to harsh lands, bad places, desolate wastes, desolate, desolate. Okay, that's the list. That's what He's talking about. Here's what these people that He's going to gather are going to get to do: They get to go to desolate land; wastes shall be built; it's gonna lay desolate in the sight of all that pass by. And the people that pass by that looked at this place are going to say, "This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden!" Well, **how** did that happen? It's because, apparently, idiots went and tilled this crappy, desolate, waste place and invested their **labor**. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread (see Genesis 3:1 RE). What He's saying is, "Okay—finally, finally I've got people who are willing to invest the sweat of their brow. I told Adam that was the deal. You didn't like paradise. So here, go take this, and turn it back into paradise. I made you a husbandman to the ground. You didn't like that; you're malcontent. So here, go out, and work this stuff." This whole passage in ~~Isaiah~~ in Ezekiel is accounting for the **surprise**. "Oh, my word. Look at that!"—the surprise of the passersby who see tilling going on in pretty unfavorable conditions. Well, why would that be?

It's because the Lord agrees to prosper what you do. But it is the **doing** that is incumbent upon **you**. The Three Nephites aren't gonna come plow the field (folklore from early Mormon history notwithstanding). John the Beloved isn't gonna come out and say, "Hey, I've been saving these magic beans for, you know, generations. And if you plant 'em..." Actually, now that I think about it, if you plan 'em you might inherit a giant in the land. So, why don't you do without the magic beans?

There's work to be done. Our covenant with the Lord says,

Teach your children to honor me. Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto me and teach them of my ways, to walk in them. And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching. I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time... (T&C 158:11-13)

Notice that there's a sequence here within the covenant itself. He's saying He's gonna lead us and bring us to peace. But there's a troubling season that is **fast** approaching. That's gonna happen with some rapidity; it's gonna be upon you. "I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you **in due time**." That doesn't sound like we oughta be assembling ourselves in haste. That sounds like the troubling times fast approaching are going to **precede** the time in which He will gather us in due time.

*...and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me. The earth will **yield** its increase... (Ibid. 13-14, emphasis added)*

Yield requires effort. It requires something be pursued. It requires that there be effort.

- "We got our army together, and we got our battering ram, and we beat against the door of the castle, and a lot of us took arrows from above—but we just kept beating and beating, and the door to the castle yielded. And then we were able to take the stronghold."
- "I saw this gorgeous gal when I was a freshman and asked her out 30 times my freshman year and 60 times my sophomore year and 90 times my junior year. And my senior year, her returned missionary came back and abandoned her, and she went out with me! She finally yielded!"

Okay, think of that word "yield" in the context of the covenant. It doesn't mean, "There! I went out. I prayed. Jesus, I'd like wheat; oh, and barley; oh, oh, and oats—I like oatmeal. Oh, oh, oh, oh, grapes, too. Grapes. I want some grapes. And how 'bout some peach trees? Love peaches!" [Denver singing] "Millions of peaches; peaches for me" (lyrics of the song "Peaches").

"Why is this a barren wasteland, desolate, no better than it was before my prayer? I don't get it, Lord, wasn't this supposed to be fairy dust that makes it all easy?"

...The earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord [shall] be with you. I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you [shall all] know me, from the least to the greatest. (Ibid. 14-15)

That's at the end of the process that He's describing in the ~~Answer to the Prayer~~ or this is the Covenant itself that we're reading from. This is the process that He says is going to unfold. We expect a house of God with no labor, land that will yield without effort, a desolate wasteland to become the Garden of Eden when we do nothing more than to ask.

And then we have these statements: *But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion, for if they labor for money, they shall perish* (2 Nephi 11:17 RE). Okay, we now have a reference to Zion. And in the reference to Zion, there is **one singular, solitary role** identified: laborer, labor, labor. Oh, there's only one job; it's to **labor!** Hey, we all get to be equal.

This is **all** that He promises to us; once you start working, this is the **only** thing He promises to you:

*And they shall build houses and inhabit them, ...they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and **another** inhabit, they shall not plant and **another** eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, in*

*my elect shall **long enjoy the work of their hands**. They shall not **labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble**... (Isaiah 24:9 RE, emphasis added)*

That's what you're promised. Anything you want, if you'll work, He will help the ground to **yield** to your **labor**. And if you build yourself a house, someone is not going to come and take it away from you. If you plant yourself food, the yield that comes from that no one is gonna come and remove it from you by force. You get to enjoy that.

And again, that was a prophecy by Isaiah. There's another prophecy to the similar effect — fewer words—but in the Psalms: *Blessed is everyone that fears the Lord, that walks in his ways, for you shall eat the labor of your hands* (Psalms 128:1 RE). See, you get to be blessed. Why are you blessed? Because the stuff that you work for you get as the produce or the product of your labor.

And then there's this:

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband does safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil...

He doesn't have to go take from someone else. She's productive.

*She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and works willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships, she brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is yet night, and gives food to her household and a portion to her maidens. She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, her candle goes not out by night. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the rod. She stretches out her hand to the poor, yea, she reaches forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders... She makes fine linen and sells it, and delivers girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looks well to the ways of her household and **eats not the bread of idleness**...*

Okay, I'm gonna insert an editorial parenthetical at this point: **That's because there is no "bread of idleness."**

Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but you excel them all. Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, ...let her own works praise her in the gates. (Psalms 6:3 RE, emphasis added)

You see this is high praise. And it's a proverb that applies to a virtuous woman. It's a proverb that applies to the Mother in Heaven. And it is a proverb that applies to the **people** that are His. This is a description of **all** of them. And so, the people that are His **do these things**.

Now, Isaiah 18:2. This gives you, I think, a pretty good idea of what we're going to start with: *For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wildernesses like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord.* Okay, you see the juxtaposition: wilderness/Eden, desert/garden of the Lord. It's got to be "made into." And how does He make it "into"? He takes a group of people who are not quarrelsome, bickering, and accusing of one another—who can dwell in peace and unite in their effort with one another—to peaceably pursue the objective of the labor. *The desire of the slothful kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all the day long, but the righteous gives and spares not* (Proverbs 2:353 RE). Then there is T&C 43:

Behold, thus says the Lord unto my people: You have many things to do and to repent of, for behold, your sins have come up unto me and are not pardoned, because you seek to counsel in your own ways, and your hearts are not satisfied, and you obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.

Woe unto you rich men that will not give your substance to the poor, for your riches will canker your souls. And this shall be your lamentation in the day of visitation and of judgment and of indignation: The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved!

Woe unto you poor men whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men's goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, who will not labor with their own hands. (T&C 43:4-6)

God cannot produce Zion for—or with—people who refuse to labor, because His promise is **for the results of the labor** and nothing else. Then we have this from Alma:

*He also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands for their support. And there was one day in every week that was set apart that they should gather themselves together to [keep] teach the people, and to worship the Lord their God, and also as often as it was in their power to assemble themselves together. And the **priests were not** to depend upon the people for their support, but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God, that they might wax strong in the spirit, having the knowledge of God, that they might teach with power and authority from God.* (Mosiah 9:10 RE, emphasis added)

Churches today are broken, in disrepair, and have nothing to offer that will save people — because they refuse to follow this instruction. Preachers who preach for the

monetary reward that they seek cannot have the grace of God or wax strong in the spirit, having the knowledge of God, so that they can teach with power and authority from God. One of the worst offenders is probably the church out of which most of you came, in which they fare sumptuously and have bodyguards and fly first class.

Some of you feel such inordinate anxiety that you want to flee right now in haste. Okay, here's the good news. Assuming that you cannot control your anxiety—and assuming that nothing I have said or can say will calm you down enough to allow the words that the Lord spoke to us in the Covenant itself to inform how you allow things to proceed—and you need to charge off right now, then here's the good news: Joseph Smith said **all** of North America was Zion. So, go to Philadelphia or Houston or Green Bay or Cape Cod; go anywhere you want, and call it Zion. And let them know you've gone through a **flight** to this place because of your anxiety because, today, everything is political, and you're here looking for a place of peace. And I can tell you, if you don't get rid of your anxieties before you flee, they'll accompany you there. And you'll find yourself just as miserable in Green Bay or Cape Cod or Philadelphia or Houston—because the problem is **in you**; it's not wherever you are.

We **haven't** been told to gather. And we **haven't** got a command to build a temple. And I'm assuming part of the reason why we've not yet gotten a commandment is because the people—the **hearts** of the people—that He wants to build His temple are apparently not the hearts that we presently possess. Therefore, **we** have to do something to prepare **ourselves** in order to be worthy of getting the commandment to do something on His errand.

As far as I know, none of us... And certainly **I cannot** provide for everyone. But I can provide for my own family. And each of you should labor to do the same. There are fantastic opportunities to build net worth, based upon what's going on right now in the housing market if you proceed cautiously and carefully and prudently and to prepare for yourself and your family.

I've heard it said that there are people who think that the Lord expects them to spend their time studying the Scriptures. And that that's the labor to which they've been called. I think that's absolutely fantastic. And when you get through gnawing on your leather-bound Scriptures (which may have some limited nutritional value), then I hope that the ink on the cotton (which certainly has fiber) won't kill you when your Scripture study leads you to **eating** your Scriptures to fill your growling belly. Because it doesn't matter what God gives you, you're not gonna be able to feed yourself. And if the labor of your hand consists in turning a page... Well, I would suggest we build a glass booth and put the person in the booth and put a hat out front for the entertainment value. And we can all drop our spare change in as we go by, watching the man who turns the page produce the labor necessary for Zion.

Because Zion is **hard** work; it's taking what is **desolate** and making it become something that it's not. It may be that right now we need to see more economic upheaval in order for the place where God intends that we acquire to go on the market

—may not even be available for us at present. But I can tell you, if you run off in haste at this moment, you are doing something that the Lord has counseled against.

Now, one other point that **has** to be made as part of this talk.

Section 173 of the Teachings and Commandments says that:

*[Tithing] was never to establish a wealthy general fund nor to invite the wrongful accumulation of wealth that has resulted from the long **abuse** of this law. The law was to be a light thing, easily borne by the faithful. Tithing was always to be taken from **surplus** (meaning unnecessary excess property) and **increase** (meaning what remains after all costs of the household have been paid). It was to be drawn out of the **abundance** in the possession of the giver so that there may be enough and to spare ["enough" in the hands of the giver so that they can provide for themselves and their household, "and to spare," meaning 1/10 of what is leftover goes as tithe], **not** from property required for their necessities. The tithes of this people are to be used for the poor among this people, if they want to become Mine. (T&C 173:1, emphasis added)*

Tithing money should be used to help the poor. If you have enough and to spare, and you have given 10% to be used for the poor, and you **still feel** that you have surplus that is not needed, that's where money for a temple ought to come from. **That's** the money—not the tithing money. That's that surplus money—or the money that you have in excess of tithe, and you still want to give. **That's** to go to the temple.

Now, I'm saying that, and I've read a number of Scriptures. And I know that there are Scriptures that have been read today that can be used to justify one position in an argument or another position in an argument. *In your temporal things you shall be equal in all things, and this not grudgingly; otherwise, the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld* (T&C 62:4). That's a great Scripture to use to go attack someone because they're not giving the way you think they ought to give, and you think that they have more to give. So, now I've got a Scripture, and I can use it like a club to justify my criticism of someone else.

Okay. Let's find another Scripture we can use to do the other thing. How 'bout this one back here? *The desire of the slothful kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all the day long, but the righteous gives and spares not* (Proverbs 2:353 RE). "You see? You're just coveting. When you expect me to help you with anything, that's covetous. Covetousness is ugliness itself, condemned frequently in Scripture, and that ought not be."

These Scriptures can be read as a cacophony of contradictions if that's what you want to do to argue with one another. But that's **not** the purpose of the Scriptures. The purpose is to make you **wise**. If you "have," and you feel the impulse by the conviction of what these Scriptures say **to you** (that you can and you should give more), then

make sure that tithes are used for the benefit of the poor. And **then**, your excess can go to accomplish other things.

I know that there has been some criticism repeated to me that there is a general temple fund, and that that temple fund (which, by the way, has not been touched—not one cent)... They don't like that accumulating when there's need for the poor. When Christ was in the house of Simon the leper, who had been cured of his leprosy (which, as it turns out, was Judas' father—Judas Iscariot), a woman anointed Christ with a fragrant anointing oil that in today's money would be a \$20,000 gesture. Okay? And there was a complaint voiced that this was an extravagant waste. The anointing of our Lord, preliminary to His death and burial—and He said it was done for that purpose—in order to secure for mankind, generally, the Resurrection as He came forth out of the grave; an anointing oil that had been kept for that very purpose. It wouldn't have mattered if it had been sold. Because as Christ pointed out, the poor you have with you **always**. It's part of the condition that we find in this world. It's not gonna go away.

If we had to make sure that there were no poor still around before we were able to do anything to raise money for a temple, we would never fulfill the coming command that He has **told** us is going to be given. And He's given us a season in which to prepare. If we don't prepare—and if the command comes and we cannot fulfill it—we may as well go back to Nauvoo and divert the shipment of lumber that comes down from the Wisconsin Timber Mission and use it to build Brigham Young's house and Heber C. Kimball's house and neglect the construction of the Nauvoo temple, **just like they did before**. But if we want to be prepared because we've been forewarned that there **will** come a command—and the expectation is that when the command comes, we're to obey it—then we need to do what we're reading in Scripture.

The tithes of this people are to be used for the poor among this people, if they want to become Mine (T&C 173:1). If all of the tithes gathered cannot take care of all of the poor, we fulfilled our command. And we can ask for others to help, as well. But we have an obligation, also, to prepare when the command comes so that we're not caught—like the saints in Nauvoo—unable, incapable, and without the ability to afford to do what's been asked of us.

Now, there's a... This is given in another context. It's section 105 of the Teachings and Commandments where they're actually trying to live a kind of United Order. It was an incorporation that they had various people that owned a part of. And in connection with that, against that background, the Lord said:

*For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable as stewards over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. [For] I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens and built the earth as a very handy work, and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine, but it must needs be done in **my own way**. And behold, this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints: that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low, for*

*the earth is full and there is enough and to spare. ...I...prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. [So] therefore, if any man shall take of the **abundance** which I have made and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall with Dives lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment. (T&C 105:4-5, emphasis added)*

See, those words **mean** what those words say:

"The earth is full and there is enough..." That's **one** thing; that's when the labor of your hands has finally fed you. And then after you've made the ground sufficiently productive, there is not just enough, but there's also "and to spare." It is that "and to spare" that enough hard labor will eventually yield that can be used to help others. And not just the one who produces.

"If any man shall take of the **abundance** which I have made and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel..." Okay—of the **abundance**. That's not the "enough." That's the "to spare." You have to produce "enough"—and that in and of itself may be a **mighty challenge** in a **desolate wilderness**—before you get to the point that you are producing both "enough" **and** "to spare." And when you have enough **to spare**, that **abundance** needs to be imparted in order to allow others to come and labor alongside you.

So, that leads us then to this final thought. This was the definition of "mutual agreement" that was given that's in T&C section 174: *As between one another, you choose to not dispute* (T&C 174:1). When the definition was given, it was accompanied by the realization the Lord could have disputed every day of His life with someone. He deliberately chose to not contend. He was not an argumentative personality. He wouldn't have argued from a position of ignorance or from a position of being wrong. Had He chosen to argue, He would have been right in every argument. In other words, every day presented the Lord with an opportunity to go around correcting someone. "You're wrong. You need to do it this way. Oh, you're wrong, too! And you need to fix that and do it that... Oh, wait a minute. He's wrong. I got... Just fix that! Now you, man, you're **really** wrong." Can you imagine what our Scriptures would read like if our Lord **chose** to dispute? It would be **much like some of our fellowship meetings**.

Well, I understand there is a schedule, and I understand that I have just a little bit of time that is supposed to be left. But we have some folks here who came a long distance. I don't know if you both... They're brother and sister. I don't know if they want to both come up at the same time or come up... But Holidā—yeah?—and her brother, ~~Maksat~~ [Maksad], are going to talk to you for a few minutes and tell you an interesting story about how it is that folk from Turkmenistan happen to be here with us today.

Let me end by commending to you that however you approach these issues, be prayerful, be generous with one another, be kind in your judgment, be patient with one another. We're being asked to accomplish something that has only been accomplished

twice before in the history of mankind. And it was accomplished in those days, in the first instance, with 365 years of opportunity to work through their problems and, in the second instance, among a homogeneous group of people. We are **very** different from one another. Sometimes diversity is not a strength. But diversity should not matter if you can come together with precept and reason, with kindness, and with patience.

I'd suggest that you probably can't get someone more diverse than the two folks, brother and sister, that we're gonna hear from here in a few moments. And yet, we can be one heart with them. And we can welcome them and learn from their experience. They come from an entirely different world than the one we live in. And we have so much we ought to be grateful for that **they are genuinely** grateful for; just the ability to talk freely is a great gift to them. We get to talk freely, and we use that freedom to say ugly things to one another. And that ought not be so.

God is working; things are progressing. Not everything that the Lord is up to among **us** is necessary to be talked about publicly at this point. But God's hand is **not idle**, and things **are** moving, and sacrifices are being made, and work is being done to fulfill the words of the covenant.

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

The following transcript has been edited and expanded by Holida and Max to help make their comments more easily understood.

HOLIDA ANNAMURADOVA: Hello. Hi, everyone.

MAKSAD ANNAMURADOV: Can you guys hear us?

HOLIDA: Okay, so my name is Holida. It's like "holiday" without the "y." So, you know...

MAX: And my name is Maksad, but because Denver mentioned "Maksalt," and it sounds like a different version of it, I go for just Max so that it's easier for everyone. And, yeah.

HOLIDA: And we are from Turkmenistan. This is in Central Asia; it's by Afghanistan. And we came here... He came here three years ago, and I came here to U.S. two years ago. We came to Utah—it's Snow College in Ephraim—don't ask why did he [we] choose [it], because we don't know the reason. It's God's hand, probably. He had a great plan for us. And now we know why we chose Ephraim, Utah, like exactly that place.

So, it's ~~Muslim~~ [Islam] in my ~~religion~~ [country]. In my country, the religion is ~~Muslim~~ [Islam]. But we were not active Muslims (in my country) as a family. And we... We had a lot of hardship. We, as a child... I remember, we grow up in labor all the time—laboring ~~as~~ [with] our parents, together, to help them. So, we did not have easy... We did not

have [an] easy life. And suddenly, we had a hard time in our family with my brother—that he got [a] really bad sickness, Hepatitis C—and then my mother got that, too. So, my mom was, like, hopeless. We were all, as a family, [we] lost our hope. We didn't see any door to go out of that darkness.

And then they went to Iran [to get treatment]. And the Iranians, they taught them to start practicing the Muslim religion five times prayer. And then we started [practicing Islam religion]. It's like four or five months, and we seek for God, even [if] we didn't have anyone to teach us. At home, we prayed to God, even [though] we did not [know] how to pray; we tried our best. We did not know that we can talk to God, because they [the priests] did not teach us like that. No one around you talks to God. They don't know how to talk to God. So, we just did it [our best to find the true God].

Suddenly, on the TV, [the] Ukraine Channel opens up, and there one man [an apostle] is talking/teaching about Christ. 10,000s of people are sitting and giving testimonies of Christ, that they're getting healed—the same Hepatitis C that ~~my parents got~~ my brother and my mom got. And my mom is like, no way. This is my only hope. I will try this. Whoever says what I don't trust, but I will try believing in Christ, because they are not crazy—10,000's [of] people believing in Christ? Why would they believe if they don't see any benefit [result] by believing?

So, we started, we tried; we tried to believe. And as soon as we started praying and calling Jesus' name, the change started in our life. Miracles started happening. He [Max] started being healed, and my mom started being healed [from the sickness].

And suddenly [one day], we found the U.S. program that's going to help us, teach us, and prepare to U.S. college. Because five years ago, we did not even imagine or dream [of] coming to U.S. because it was totally impossible for us. We did not have any financial availability for that or any imagination. We did not have [it].

MAX: And I was looking for... First, I studied in that program, and I was looking for [a] college to choose. And then I noticed Snow College in the middle of Utah. And it's out in the middle of [the] desert. And people asked me, like, "Why are you going there?" And "I don't know, I guess it's, you know, God's call to go." So, I...

Before coming here, actually, when I told them (my people and my country) about "I'm going to Utah," and that they will, "Oh, don't go to Utah. They're all polygamists in there." And I was like, "Ummm...is that really true?" And I had to do my own research, you know. And it's so funny that outside of the U.S. (probably maybe inside the U.S., as well), Utah is stereotyped as being Mormons, and yeah...

So, I came to Snow College, and this was my second semester. And I met one of my friends. And her parents were... She and her parents were interested in Denver's readings [teachings], and they persuaded us. They... So, we were seeking to know the truth. The very first semester I was here, two missionaries came to my apartment. And they... And I had a talk with them. And I told them that I'm seeking for truth, and I'm not

feeling like joining the church right now. And that they gave me a Book of Mormon for the first time. I did not open the Book of Mormon beforehand. And I opened it, and I thought I'd start reading it. I read the Bible before—little bit. Then as soon as I started reading it, I said, like, "Man, this must be like a Scripture because it's boring," like Denver mentioned that. It's... But then I never opened that after that. Then after I met this people who were interested in the fellowship and the gospel of Jesus Christ, I started with a passion reading the Book of Mormon, and I...

My sister was also planning to come, and I... She was planning to go somewhere else. And I was like, "Oh, come to Snow College... "

HOLIDA: And I was like, "Oh, no, there are so many Turkmens ~~ether~~ students. I want to go somewhere else. It's too small-town for me. It's so boring over there." I was saying, "No." And he [Max] kept saying, "Yes." And I wasn't ready to come that year. And I was, like, praying. I had so many tests; it was so competitive to get the scholarship so we can cover our tuition. And I was like, "No." And something [a voice] in my heart said, "You can do this." And Christ... I saw Christ's hand in my life; He started opening the path. He started little by little helping [me with] the exams to pass. And I'm like, "Okay, even [if] I am not ready, He is ready.

So, He helped me to go through all those and to be chosen among the students. So, I got the scholarship and come that year [2019], and after two months, COVID started and [the] country was shut down. I wouldn't be here at that time if He wouldn't, like, give me motivate me. Yeah, so...

So I... We came here. And as I said, I was looking for, again, church. And then, it was Mormon[ism]. I never heard Mormonism, anything [about] Book of Mormon. Missionaries—they caught me. And they kept messaging me, and like, "Hey, you are wonderful. Do you want to get baptized? Do you want [us] to come? Do you want us to teach?" And something in my heart was pushing [rejecting]; it was saying, "No." And I prayed, "God, like, show me the true path. Show me the path that **you want** me to walk on."

And He said, "No, don't join; just wait." And I rejected them. And I didn't go to church. We were—just [the] two of us—different from everyone because all our other Turkmen friends are Muslims and [the] other[s]—all of them are Mormons. So, we didn't see anyone like us!

And we met his [Max's] friend; [she] invited us for the Thanksgiving, and we met with their parents, and they listened to us. And then, they noticed that we are looking for truth. Then they accepted/they saw us like their children. They loved us. I could feel so much love, so much care, so much passion in them that they kindly started persuading us, kindly shared this new Restoration, the Book of Mormon, about Joseph, all the history—[and] we were open. Why? Because we did not have any foundation about Christianity. No one taught us [before]; we did not go to church; we did not know anything [about Jesus Christ]. So, anything—everything—was like new, and I could feel

in deep [the depth] of my heart, it was something different. These words cannot be told by man. It should be something from God. Because the emptiness in my heart was filled when I learned the truth.

And then, it's like everything started changing. And I told my mom, "Hey, I found a good religion/good truth here." It's like, "I don't know what religion is this, but this is a good thing! They're talking about good stuff!" And I started telling about that, and my mom is like, "Oh, no, that sounds strange," because I was telling about Heavenly Mother, and it was like [a] new idea, right?

And she was like, "Okay, you can continue your way, but I'm going to watch this channel — Ukraine Channel—and listen to him [the apostle on tv]."

And then I said, "Mom, don't listen to me. Just ask Christ. Why don't you pray and ask which path is true, which path you should go?"

And then, she called us ~~tomorrow~~ [the next day]. And she's like, "The channel's disappeared: I can't find it." Just no, no channel. And she's like, "Okay, tell me more about that religion!" Then she got really, like, interested; she's eager to learn. From that time... It was last year—March—that we started moving on this movement/in this journey. And from that time, I teach my mom every day (almost) because she is really eager to learn. And it's so hard to translate [the] Book of Mormon because I barely understand the old language. I couldn't even, like... We read... We opened [the Book of Mormon], and we closed [it] because, "It came to pass..." and we are like, "What's that?" And we barely learned the English! Don't say, "Again learn English, the older version."

MAX: It was a total[ly] new English, actually. It's a different version.

HOLIDA: Yeah. But with Christ's power, I learned that everything is possible. We had passion to learn/gain truth. And then we started reading it. Even [though] it was hard, using a lot of dictionaries, asking people, asking for help. And those people [who accepted the Restoration] started teaching us; it was great help. Because I can't imagine where to get the information, how to learn what is true/what is not. But with Christ, all the time asking [in] my heart [from Him], it was really helpful.

And so, we started our beliefs [of Christ] six years ago, and after five [one] years ago, we came to this movement. And after that, I started... My mom started teaching our other relatives who are in a hard time. So, she was, like, just telling everyone—everyone on the, like, whoever she sees, and the people were, like, "You are on a wrong path; you will go to hell. You are not Muslim. You changed [converted]." We are like, "Oh, okay, whatever." You know? "Whatever! You will see." And after one year/two years, those people who's been told [about Christ], they are coming and like [asking], "Did you talk about Christ or something? Can you tell more about it?" So, they felt in their heart that they need it, because they saw the miracles in our life, [and one of them was] that our bodies get healed.

We came to the place that no one can imagine in [among] our relatives, we were the only two children, like among our, like, all relatives/ all the village. So, everyone looked at us and like, "They dream, ~~how they did~~ How did they get there?" they ask. And I say, "I don't know. It's God; it's Christ." I kept giving that testimony of Christ to everyone. And then they started getting interested.

So, there are like around 15 to 20 people who are really interested, like, they're like, "Send me more information [truth about Jesus Christ]." And I try [to] do my best to translate these things and share my understandings and teach them. And we have Sunday class where we teach people, our people, these things—the Restorations—and they don't go to any religion; they don't join any church, but they learn these things [restored gospel/truth].

So, as you can see, as God says, "I... My hand is everywhere." And He will bring [people from] all four sides of the Earth to the Zion. And I can feel that; I saw that in my life, that [from Christ we could come from] ~~through~~ other side of the world. So, don't ever doubt about God's power. Because if He could bring the people from [the] other side of the world, finding and bringing [them] to this path, then what He can't do? Nothing! He can do everything. Nothing is impossible for Him.

And we ask your prayers for our people so ~~they can~~ we can find a way to send more information [translated books/gospels] for them and help them. But my country is closed right now. So, my parents want to come here—really, like so much—because we are the only children. They want to come and join here in this movement and be here physically [with us].

And also, this is our first conference coming here, and it was so great. Thank you so much for welcoming us. Thank you for smiling at us. It means a lot to us. And great—everyone helped us, everyone is helping [in] some ways, and we are very thankful for each of you/ each of your support, and we are happy to be here. We are happy to walk towards Zion. I can see that everyone is talking about Christ—everyone. I don't have to say, "Know ye the Lord?" because everyone knows the Lord from the least to the greatest. Isn't this the beginning of Zion? We should keep laboring and doing [God's will] and having faith in Christ.

So, this is our impossible story which is possible to [for] Christ.

2021.10.17 Comments about Joseph Smith

At the Griffin Home in Manti, Utah

17 October 2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

taken me up to the Fathers and Sons dog-eared Doctrine and Covenants section 76, which was the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory.

Now, the Joseph Smith History had struck me with passages that seemed very authentic, but D&C section 76 struck me as something that was altogether from another world. It hailed from Heaven. It touched me. It reached me in a way in which, you know, Corinthians had not.

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is only one doctrine of Christ, and you're right to lay hold on that. But there is precepts and principles and commandments and teachings and mysteries that go **well beyond** the doctrine of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is how you get your feet on the road in order to progress. But having my feet on that road, I wanted to know as much as I could know.

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

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

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

I don't believe that D. Michael Quinn had an axe to grind. In many respects, he pulled punches that he didn't need to pull. His history of the church—it comes from a vantage point that I would differ with, but I see the justification for the conclusions that he reached and for the stuff that he published. And the biggest disagreement that I would have with him is that I don't think the narrative about the origin of plural marriage coming

through Joseph Smith is defensible. The best you can say is that there's not enough proof to decide that issue one way or the other. But you certainly can't say that you know for certain that it originated with Joseph Smith.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And so, I wound up being an apologist for the church and a Gospel Doctrine teacher for about nearly three decades teaching the four standard works as you go through. I taught Gospel Doctrine in a Pleasant Grove ward, in multiple Alpine wards, and in multiple Sandy, Utah wards for decades. And I—even though we went through the four standard works serially—I never taught the same lesson twice. I wasn't interested in plowing and boring myself with the same material. I tried to push it further. Got to the point that at the end... Going through the Book of Mormon, they give you eight chapters to cover in a 45-minute, and I would cover a verse or a phrase within a verse; and you know, the rest of the material you just... You've got to read that on your own. We're not gonna get there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and

meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul; without hypocrisy and without guile. (Ibid. v.6)

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

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

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

So, there it is.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

I'm going north. Thank you.

I don't know—how long have I talked?

AUDIENCE: Like, forty minutes.

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

STEPHANIE: No, no, no, no.

AUDIENCE: Yes.

AUDIENCE: Heck yes we do!

AUDIENCE: What about a couple of questions?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, questions.

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

Yeah?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yeah?

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

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

DENVER: [Chuckles]

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

DENVER: Sure.

AUDIENCE: She speaks.

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

Oh, never mind. You go ahead and answer.

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

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

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

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

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

AUDIENCE: Mark Curtis.

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

AUDIENCE: Or *Testaments*.

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

STEPHANIE: That's how I know him.

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

AUDIENCE: Really? That's weird.

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

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

AUDIENCE: Daybell.

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

AUDIENCE: Jeffs.

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

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

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

DENVER: Yeah.

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

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

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

DENVER: I think...

STEPHANIE: ...that thought process is.

DENVER: I think that...

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

STEPHANIE: I don't...

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

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

AUDIENCE: To do my Father's work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEPHANIE: Oh... oh. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: I've got a question for you.

AUDIENCE: I did.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So, we're getting to the point that we're gonna suggest to a conference of people that we adopt new Scriptures, and at the point that discussion begins (we're putting it out in paperback for everyone to read and everyone to comment on and everyone to pick apart and find any additions) there's a guy sitting in the audience who has made it his **life's work** to study the Joseph Smith Translation. And he—taking that JST—went back and found where the publication (in the form that it rolled out through the RLDS Church/Community of Christ/Herald Press) had changes made by the committee that published

it that Joseph never did. And in the Nauvoo era, Joseph Smith gave talks in which he said, "I'm gonna quote from this passage in Galatians—I could give you a plainer translation, which would be this..." He had gone to the trouble of finding 14 other changes Joseph had made to the biblical text by talks he gave in Nauvoo, and those were being added in. And so, the work we thought was done on the Bible had to go through the same crunching again. And so, it really took **years** after the project had been finished. And after the project had been finished, it started over again, and it took years to get the whole thing done.

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

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

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

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

Identities in the Book of Mormon shift; they go back and forth. You have Lamanites, and you have Nephites. And at some point, the Lamanites repent, and they are numbered among the Nephites, and at other points the Nephites are thrown out. And the identity of people being numbered among one or the other changes repeatedly in the text of the Book of Mormon. Your identity with "the remnant" is not determined based upon biology or genealogy. The remnant of the people of Nephi will include people that are called Gentiles (at the outset) who become **numbered among** the people of God when they repent and return to Him. And the part of the red tags includes language within the

covenant the Lord offered in 2017 in September to a group of Gentiles assembled in Boise that says: "I will number you among the remnant of the house of Israel."

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

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

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

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

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

DENVER: Yes. Yeah, it's a great chapter.

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

DENVER: Yes.

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

DENVER: Right.

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

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

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

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

QUESTION 6 (continued): Or in 1832.

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

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

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

QUESTION 6 (continued): D&C 124.

DENVER: ...in which...

QUESTION 6 (continued): 124

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

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

DENVER: Right.

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

DENVER: Yeah.

QUESTION 6 (continued): Therefore...

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

The Book of Mormon itself has required numerous fixes. There was the printer's manuscript (which was copied by Oliver Cowdery from the translation manuscript), and

the printer's manuscript we still have 100% of. The translation manuscript got put in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House. It rotted because moisture got in. There's only about 28% of that manuscript that's left. From what we've got of the original translation, Oliver Cowdery made one-and-a-half copy errors per page in transcribing the printer's manuscript from Joseph's translation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEPHANIE: No, hold on; over here first.

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

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

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

STEPHANIE: Okay, over here.

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

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

That 1833 version then became the basis that a committee used in 1835 to publish what would become known as the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph Smith, leading up to the 1835 conference, spent time working on a series of lectures that had been delivered in the School of the Prophets, which became known as Lectures on Faith. Joseph edited Lectures on Faith, and they are the **doctrine** of the Doctrine and Covenants. They were put in the front of the book. They are in larger type than was the rest of the book. The revelations that were given to Joseph were in... I'm not sure the font size, but I'm gonna estimate it's like a nine pitch, and the Lectures on Faith are in like a twelve pitch. So, they're in the front of the book, they're in larger print, and Joseph Smith (at the

conference) vouched for the accuracy of the **doctrine**. He turned the **revelations** over to a committee. The committee consisted of a group of people who also felt that they had the right to do some editing. So when the Doctrine and Covenants rolled out, the revelations to Joseph had undergone further modification. And in the minutes of the conference, what Joseph vouched for was Lectures on Faith; he didn't vouch for the **publication** that was made there.

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

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

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

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

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

I sought the Lord sincerely, earnestly, using everything that I believed would be appealing to the notice of Heaven, including the formalities of prayer that you learn

about in an LDS "true order of prayer" ceremony. I did every step that I thought would bring it about, and then nothing happened.

So, I went about doing what other Latter-day Saints who are faithful did: I magnified my calling; I was 100% home teacher for 15 years; I was a diligent Gospel Doctrine teacher; I was a student of the Scriptures. But I thought that I had gotten all I was going to get from the Lord. And then, on His timing, at His chosen moment, for reasons that are entirely His, He decided that He would make Himself known to me—not because I'm "someone," but because no one else was willing to do what needed to be done. I don't think I'm anything other than someone who's willing to do **His** agenda, not my own. I don't have an agenda. I don't want to be responsible for things. I am not pushing the Lord. If He wants something of me, He asks—I'll do it; I'll do it to the best of my ability. And I can tell you, much of what I've been asked to do I find more difficult than anything I ever imagined.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTION 10 (continued): Okay.

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

the correction that I have required has been well deserved, and many of it has been poignant and heart-piercing.

Yeah, you had a...

QUESTION 11: So back to... You lost me a little bit when you were talking about Joseph Smith and MMP [Multiple Mortal Probations]. Some of us don't jump to that. So, when I came... I'm relatively new. About seven years ago, we found ourselves praying about the pollution in the church and asking Heavenly Father who the Apostles were, and we were told they've made an oath of death. We prayed about who Nelson was, and we were told, "I will send one mighty and strong, holding a scepter of power." And we were then told that, "You'll know him by his fruits," and that, "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing."

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

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

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

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

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

When the three Nephites exceeded their natural life, they were no longer seen publicly. But they **ministered to** Mormon and Moroni who, in turn, then ministered to the public.

John ministers to people as a ministering angel, as is described in the Doctrine and Covenants.

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

And other mortals have to hear the word from people to whom the angels have ministered, in order for **them** to rise up and to receive what they need to receive in order for themselves also to qualify to be ministered to by angels. And then the process proceeds from there, who preach and teach to the chosen vessels so that they're prepared to receive the Son. And then the Son has a ministry with people in which He prepares and presents them to the Father. And it is an orderly process that's described in both Alma and in Moroni.

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

AUDIENCE: Wow.

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

QUESTION 11 (continued): Yeah, I agree.

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

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

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

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

AUDIENCE: Who is the author of that talk?

DENVER: It's my talk.

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

DENVER: Yeah.

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

DENVER: Hmm.

QUESTION 12 (continued): And I said... I mean, my... The reason that I'm here is because of the testimony of Nephi in the Book of Mormon. And so, people I've shared it with, some have outright rejected it; some have accepted it; some say, "It makes sense. Michael, you run with it; that's your revelation." What are your thoughts?

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

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

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

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

Thank you!

2021.11.24 Mormonism Live
Interview with Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
November 24, 2021

Radio Free Mormon (RFM): Good evening, Mr. Reel. Wow, wow, that's impressive. Thank you, everybody.

Bill Reel: That crowd feels like it gets bigger and bigger, doesn't it?

RFM: I know that the applause gets longer and longer every week. I don't understand why that would be.

Bill: Yeah, there are 145 people watching at the moment. There's already 14 comments up there. And before we jump into the show, you've got the topic tonight. We've been advertising it everywhere. So I hope people are excited. We're interested in having this conversation today. And I'll let you introduce our guest in just a moment. But...

RFM: I took out a full page ad in the New York Times.

Bill: Yeah, but I did want to introduce our helping hand here, our third teammate. And so, I'm gonna change the little thing here so that's not kind of irritating. Maven, are you there?

Maven: Yes. Can you hear me?

Bill: I can hear you. Maven is live on Mormonism Live. This is our... This is the third person, the third teammate here of the team Mormonism Live. Maven is in charge of the behind the scenes stuff going forward. And we are so excited to have her, and I just want to introduce her to all of our viewers. This is Maven. And folks, this will be who is helping us behind the scenes, and give us a few weeks to really get into the groove of it. But she's already saving us a lot of time, energy, and resources and making things easier for me. So big kudos to Maven, and...

Maven: Thanks, though.

RFM: Hey, Maven, in the interest of transparency, Maven is not her real name. And that is not her real picture.

Bill: No, that's...

Maven: Thank you, RFM.

Bill: She's not actually a cartoon.

RFM: Because for some reason, she wants to maintain a certain degree of anonymity, even while she's helping us out behind enemy lines.

Bill: I love it.

Maven: Yes, I'm still not out to my family. So, at this point, I'm going to try the RFM route. We'll see if I get doxxed later by anybody.

RFM: It's a good thing you don't have a distinctive voice.

Maven: Well, according to you, I do, so we'll see how it goes. But I'm excited to be here for sure. I did want to just give a quick shout out for my screen name to a commenter on last week's program. And so, it was Equinox Project. And they asked to give the behind the scenes tech-maven a nom-de-keyboard, maybe some significant Mormon woman from its history. So, I actually really liked Maven. So I picked up on that. But I have been using "Brody" as a last name, which is an obvious call-out to Fawn Brody. So...

Bill: Oooh, I like it.

Maven: So that is where Maven came from. Thank you very much. I really liked how that sounded. And I'm really excited to be part of the show. I am not a tech-maven, but I am someone that's interested in this, and I'm dedicated to figuring out and solving the problems. So I certainly hope I'm an add and not a subtraction from the show.

Bill: You are a huge net positive. And so, we'll let you go back behind the scenes. But thank you so much for all that you are doing and going to continue to do here for the show and all the help you're going to be.

RFM, I'm turning it over to you, my friend. Tonight's show is yours.

RFM: Thank you. I am so excited about tonight's show, because we have a very special guest on tonight's show—a guest that I have been working on for years now to try and get him on tonight's show. He finally caved. I think I used the missionary commitment pattern successfully to get him on the show. It's Denver Snuffer. Do you want to bring him on?

Hello!!

Denver Snuffer: Now, who is this?

RFM: It's Denver Snuffer, I think! I'm Radio Free Mormon, and that's Bill Reel.

Denver: I've got the name RFM written right on my screen.

RFM: Yes, thank you very much. I appreciate that—because we certainly know each other a little bit more familiarly when we're talking on the phone, et cetera. You know, we're... I'm very excited to have you here. I think a lot of people are gonna know who you are. If I could just give a brief introduction, and hopefully I won't get it too wrong.

You're an individual who has written a great deal about Mormonism. And you and many similarly-minded people... You found a lot of similarly-minded people who have read your books who, in large measure, I think, agree with your points of view and who have created a rather large number of people who have left the LDS Church in favor of your

teachings. I'm trying to avoid calling you a leader because I know that that is something that you eschew vehemently.

Denver: Yeah, I don't like that.

RFM: Right.

Denver: But I think one of the problems with religion is when you do have leaders and you have hierarchies, I think you stumble at that point.

RFM: Yes. And very brief: My understanding is that what you seek to do is to restore the church to its charismatic beginnings under Joseph Smith, which you feel got lost after Joseph Smith died and Brigham Young took over the reins, and it hasn't been recaptured since by the official LDS Church. Is that a good thumbnail sketch?

Denver: Yeah, that's pretty good. Back in the missionary discussions and in a big plaque on the wall in the Visitor's Center at Temple Square, there was that quote from Roger Williams about how the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit that was evident in that first primitive church that Christ established had been lost, and that the reason that it was lost is because the Christians had no more of the spirit than the heathens had, and that the only way to get that back would be for God to send new apostles because it wasn't gonna happen otherwise. That Roger Williams quote got used to paper over the charismatic issue for Mormonism because of the claim that we have, you know, an ongoing set of bonafide apostles, and we have an ongoing set of prophets, seers, and revelators. But as you examine the track record, the prophecy and the seership and the revelation phenomenon really was the whole reason why Joseph drew people to him. And then after his departure, the net results were quite different.

And so, now looking at it today and examining where the LDS Church is, that sort of presence of the Spirit seems to be wanting. And I'm not trying to lead anything, but I am trying to teach about what it was that Mormonism stood for. Religion ought to be inviting; it ought to be exciting. Assuming that religion (as Joseph defined Mormonism) includes all truths, wherever you find it—it includes and encompasses all truth—assuming that is the case, then the religion ought to be the most exciting, enticing, inviting, interesting thing there is. There isn't anything bigger than something attempting to gather all truth. And yet, Mormonism (as it has developed under the umbrella of the LDS Church) has turned into something that rather doesn't want any new "news" intruding in, and the confining nature of how Mormonism in the LDS version is developed has resulted in a lot of people feeling like there's got to be something more to this religion—because if it is accurately depicted in its correct form in the institution of the LDS Church, then it's just as hollow and just as spiritless as any Protestant denomination.

RFM: Yes, and perhaps more so. My experience in church during the last couple of decades of my activity was that going to church was as boring as watching paint dry. No, actually, it was worse than that. It was as boring as watching dry paint dry. So I think you're right. I mean, it advertises itself as the "only true and living church." I don't think it's really living anymore. It may not be completely dead, but it's definitely on life support.

Denver: Yeah, yeah...

RFM: So I wanted to tell everybody a little story about you and me on the phone the other day because I think it's significant for what you've just said. But this is when I called you up, maybe a month ago. We finally got you scheduled to come on the show. And I call you up, and I say, "Hey, Denver," and you say, "Hi, Radio Free Mormon." And I say, "How's my favorite prophet?"

Denver: [laughter]

RFM: And you did that: You laughed (you laughed MORE 'cause it was, you know, new to you then; you're hearing it for the second time now). But I thought (and I think I said, you know), "That is very, very appealing." Because a person who does not take themselves too seriously is something that I personally gravitate toward. I think it was one of the things that a lot of people found attractive about Joseph Smith, that—in some areas, of course, he took himself seriously—but as he presented himself to the public, usually, he was very down to Earth. When I joined the church in the late 70s, we used to hear the story all the time about how he loved to pull sticks...

Denver: Yeah.

RFM: ...with people, though I haven't heard that in decades now. I don't know if that went by the wayside as we moved on toward more serious-minded or presenting prophets than Joseph Smith. But I can understand why it is that you are very appealing in that way.

Denver: Well, it's a sincerely-held conviction. I don't think you get anywhere in the idea of "achieving oneness as people" if you start out from a proposition that there's a structure and a hierarchy and someone's bigger and better than someone else. I think if you go back to the New Testament and you look at what Christ did, He didn't assert that He had authority. And when they asked Him by what authority He was doing things, He deferred on the question by posing a corollary question about the authority of John and, you know, "Tell me what the authority was," and they could not say after they reasoned, and so their response was, "We can't tell you where John got his authority from." And Christ said, "Well, then neither will I tell you what my authority is." And the matter ended.

If the Lord... If the Lord elected not to say, "I have authority," and it comes from whatever source, what value is it to make a bunch of claims about authority? If the Lord didn't do it, why do we do it? I mean, I think that what the world needs right now is someone to help teach about the religion in a way that invites, entices, interests people, and inspires them to do better, because we really do need people doing better. There's so much going on that's depressing, and discouraging about our conversation, our society, our news, our media. Shouldn't religion be like an oasis in the middle of all that and to make us think more deeply, more clearly, more reflectively and to enjoy life more? And you don't get there by saying, "I'm bigger than you. My opinion matters more than does yours."

RFM: Can I break in just to tell you a story, which you may find amusing. It was going on ten years ago, I'd never heard of you before (it probably wasn't ten, but almost ten years ago, and I'm at church. This, by the way, is a very, very small ward in a small town in western Washington. And I have to go out to the car to get something (maybe it's an excuse just to get away for a few minutes, you know, take a smoke break outside), but the deal was that there was nobody in the parking lot, but of course, there's a bunch of cars, and I look over a couple cars down, and the bishop's wife is seated in the passenger seat of the car. And I go over to her, I say, "Hi, how are you doing?" And she's got this book that she is just bent over and riveted to. "What are you reading?" and she says, "This is a book by Denver Snuffer." (And I don't know which book it was.) But here we have the bishop's wife in the parking lot during church, reading your book. And in some ways, I wonder if that's emblematic of a lot of your followers. What do you think?

Denver: Probably so. I've told people that, in my view, you can remain an active Latter-day Saint, you can be a Catholic, you can be a Baptist, you can be any religion that you want to be if you find that fellowshiping helps you there. But there are some things that you ought to know, and I'm happy to teach them, and the teachings are largely based upon Scripture and not, you know, some new innovative thing—but primarily trying to point out that there's a great deal that we already have that is poorly understood, and so let me see if I can teach you and persuade you. And if so, then welcome it if you find it to be true. And I think there are a lot of people who have found, as you pointed out, Mormonism to be stale, flat, and...

RFM: Unprofitable?

Denver: Unprofitable.

RFM: ...to complete the Shakespearean phrase.

Denver: Yeah. And it has become so. You mentioned you came on board in the 70s. I remember in the 70s, the most interesting hour of the week was the priesthood session, with all the arguments that went on about doctrine and history and speculation about eternities. And the second most interesting hour of the week was Gospel Doctrine, where it was a free-for-all, and everyone was talking. The high priests and the elders (the priesthood group), they were a little more combative; the Gospel Doctrine—because the women were in there, it toned down a bit. But those two hours were just gripping. They were fun. It was interesting to go to church. And if you brought an investigator, they came away saying, "Wow, my church isn't anything like that." And I miss those days. Leadership has strained the life out of it.

RFM: Well, I do, too. And I've likened those days (my first days in the church in the late 70s), that there was a new and glorious sun that had burst upon my view as I learned about Mormonism, as I joined the church, as I began as a new member attending the different church meetings. But in retrospect, it wasn't a sun that was rising. It was a sun that was setting and on the verge of going down below the horizon.

Denver: Yeah, I... Remember—and this may shock people that didn't live through that era—but there was a moment in time when we actually had Leonard Arrington as the Church Historian, D. Michael Quinn as an assistant in the LDS Church Historian's Office, and Paul Toscano as an active member of the church (and a vocal member of the church). And that was a condition in which the church actually existed at a moment in time. And, you know, that's passed.

RFM: I'd like to talk with you about your excommunication, not to reopen old wounds. But that was September 2013, correct?

Denver: Yes.

RFM: That was more when I became aware of you through other means, as well. My son, Jonathan (who is in the United States Air Force) was very much involved with your teachings. He liked a lot of what you had to say. He married into a family that was even more involved with your teachings (and is still married into that family). But he gave me a book—and this was actually at the end of 2013—he gave me one of your books. Let me come back to that. Let's talk about September 2013 and your excommunication. Can you tell our audience in thumbnail form why it was that you were excommunicated? And who was behind it, if you know?

Denver: Yeah, I had a stake president that had defended me for some period of time. He had actually called me to be a member of the High Council. I was on the High Council, and he was getting, apparently, some feedback from downtown. But he defended me, and he vouched for me. And ultimately, there was enough pressure that he released me from the High Council. But he released four people at the same time. So it didn't draw any attention.

RFM: Denver, what is it you're doing that's causing this attention?

Denver: Oh, I had written the book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and that had been greeted with some consternation downtown.

RFM: What is the thesis of your book, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*?

Denver: It's taking a look at some of the events in church history and saying that perhaps there is a different narrative that would more accurately reflect the events rather than forcing the events to fit into a narrative that says, "All as well in Zion." Perhaps it would fit better into a narrative that says, "We're out of sync with the Lord." One of the major themes of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is that in that January 1841 revelation to Joseph Smith (which is Doctrine and Covenants section 124), the Lord tells the saints in Nauvoo that He's got some objectives in mind that He's going to assign to them and that He'll give them sufficient time in order for them to accomplish the objectives. But if they don't, then at the end of the allotted time, there's going to be a fork in the road. If they achieve it, they will not be moved out of their place. He will defend them, and they will establish the cornerstone of Zion in Nauvoo. But if they fail in the task, then they WILL be taken and removed, and instead of blessings, there'll be

cursings, and they will be dispossessed of their Nauvoo position, and they'll go through a whole sequence of disasters. It's in Doctrine and Covenants section 124.

RFM: Was that...?

Denver: I...

RFM: Oh, I'm sorry, I started to say was that the five-year prophecy on (or deadline on) building the Nauvoo Temple?

Denver: Well, the Nauvoo Temple did not... Section 124 does not set a date. It just says, "I'll give you sufficient time," without establishing what the timeline was. What I suggested in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is that there's an objective set of criteria that we can use to try and figure out if they passed muster and accomplished what was required OR if they failed and if they were driven out. And the answer is, obviously... I mean, they didn't finish the temple, they got driven out of Nauvoo, they suffered a series of cursings rather than blessings. The book details what happens to them after they were expelled, including, you know, the distresses that they suffered in Utah. Famines were not the end of it. They lost all their cattle up in Cache county because of the winter that came in. I mean, the stories about Lorenzo Snow going out and digging up the Se-go lily bulbs, and he was so hungry that instead of taking the bulb back to his family, he ate it on the spot because he was starving. The stories about eating shoe leather. I mean, these were objectively verifiable sequence of events that happened after the section 124 promise that you're gonna either have blessings, on the one hand, or you're gonna have cursings, on the other hand. And I suggest, "Well, why don't we at least allow for the possibility that they failed?" And that as a consequence of that they WERE rejected with their kindred dead, as 124 says.

RFM: So, if I understand you correctly, HISTORY demonstrates the fact that they did not build the temple within the sufficient time period allotted by the Lord because they obviously received scatterings and cursings, rather than blessings and staying in Nauvoo.

Denver: Right. And the book goes through/walks through all of that, and it walks through history and hiccups and problems. And the book—ultimately, at the end—suggests that, yeah, it's kind of a mess, and it's not all that it claims that it is. However, there's still some value to it. And there's nothing wrong with you—individually—YOU going back and saying, "Okay, the church as an institution may not have pleased the Lord with what THEY have done. But there's no reason why I can't go back and repeat the process, going all the way back, you know, as Joseph Smith did and approaching God as a penitent inheritor of a flawed, messed-up institution." I can still individually approach God and say, "Hey, I know it's a mess. But I would really like to get right with you—myself, individually."

And so, the book ends on the rather upbeat note of suggesting, "Hey, you can still reclaim it; it's not dead." The other day when we were talking, I mentioned to you that the book cover has a candle, and the candle is smoldering—there's a spark still on the

wick and there's smoke coming up (that are actually Hebrew letters that come up in the pattern of the smoke), but the spark is there. And we all know that if you've got a spark left in a candle, you can get it to reignite just by blowing on it. If you blow on the candle, you can stimulate it back to a living flame. And that symbolism on the cover was suggesting, you know, that the breath is a symbol of the Spirit; you can get the Spirit and breathe life, breathe the fire back into the promise of the Restoration—individually, if not institutionally. And institutionally, I think that that ship sailed.

RFM: Right, and I remember I said, "the Ruach Elohim."

Denver: Yeah.

RFM: The breath of God. And then I said, "I have just exhausted my knowledge of Hebrew with that phrase."

Okay, so that's the book. I want to come back to this in a second. But can we just pursue this line for a minute? Because I remember reading the book and recall that you had likened the current state of the LDS Church to the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness under a lesser law. They weren't cast off from God, but they'd been given a lesser law to try and help them along. And so, my question for you now is: Do you still maintain that view of the LDS Church as having a lesser law that they can rekindle by blowing upon the flame?

Denver: I think individuals can. I don't think the institution can. I think the institution has trapped itself in its own mousetrap and that there literally is no way out. I could take you and Bill and Paul Toscano and (if he were still around) Hugh Nibley, and I could put you guys in a First Presidency/Quorum of the Twelve, and I don't think the institution is capable of responding. First of all, you would be junior-most members so that you would be quite elderly before you ever get into the big seat that really matters—the one chair that matters. And by that time, you would have been habituated to a program. There is, in fact, a program.

Bill: We'd have to go to the crappy places in South America.

Denver: Yeah. And you have to sit and wait for other people ahead of you in line to tell you what to do.

RFM: By the way, apologies to all of our listeners in South America, BILL!

Bill: I didn't say which ones. All I know is that when you're the "junior-six," you get told what to do and where to go. And the other guys get the easy tasks.

Denver: Yeah. And you enter, and you leave the room according to seniority.

RFM: Yes, but it's not a legalistic religion.

Denver: No. Well, I'm not sure it is still a religion.

RFM: So, let me take you back to 2013, if I can...

Denver: Yeah.

RFM: ...because you mentioned this book; you've gone over the thesis statement. Apparently, the people downtown—and by that, I take it you mean downtown Salt Lake City in the church office building? Is that correct?

Denver: Right.

RFM: That they were having heartburn over this. Can you tell us what happened (and this is just a thumbnail version, because we actually have a whole bunch of other stuff to get to), and how it was that you found out who was behind the hit?

Denver: Well, the Stake President that defended me was replaced by a new Stake President. And...

RFM: Had your first Stake President served his entire ten years?

Denver: It was nine years. So, I don't know how long you would normally sit, but I think nine years is close enough that you might not...

RFM: Yeah.

Denver: ...you might not think it was an early release.

RFM: Okay.

Denver: So, after nine years, he was replaced. The fellow who came down to replace the Stake President with a new one was Russell Nelson. I think he, at the time, he was either President of the Quorum of the Twelve... Actually, it may have been... It may have been Boyd Packer. But Russell Nelson was right up there in seniority. He came down, he released the old Stake President, he called the new Stake President, and on the date that he called the new Stake President, he handed my membership records to the new Stake President and said that the committee had decided that this member needed to be dealt with. And so, that was the introduction...

RFM: Denver, this is very important information (I think) to me and to the audience because it was right around this time—maybe a little bit later—that the church sent out a spokesperson named Ally Isom (I-S-O-M, if memory serves) when other excommunications were going on (that you may be aware of) to assure the public-at-large that these were local decisions and that the leadership of the church was in no way involved in any kind of disciplinary proceedings on the members.

Denver: Yeah...that didn't happen with me...

RFM: So, I'm going for your basis of knowledge on this one. Can you tell us how it is that you know that Russell Nelson was behind this and that he told your Stake President that the committee had made the decision to... What was it you said?

Denver: That this member needed to be dealt with, that there needed to be discipline done for this specific member. And the membership records—my membership records—were handed to the newly-installed Stake President. The reason I know that is because there was...

It actually took numerous interviews and about a year-and-a-half before the new Stake President decided to pull the plug and actually hold a court and kick me out. During that year-and-a-half, we had a lot of interviews, meetings, discussions, email exchanges, and at one point, he thought everything was going to be copacetic. It was just going to work out. And he told me that the reason this was happening was because of the day he got called, and Russell Nelson handing him the membership records, and all of this other stuff ensuing.

RFM: So, it was your Stake President who told you...

Denver: Yes.

RFM: ...that Russell Nelson was the one who told your Stake President, gave him your membership records, and said the committee has decided that you need to be dealt with.

Denver: Right. And in the series of meetings, he was persuaded that I was not the threat that the committee thought that I was.

Look, I was very low-key and very quiet in my ward/in my stake. I wrote things, but you had to BUY them, you had to go FIND them. I didn't advertise it. There were a lot of people who were neighbors and members of my ward who never knew I'd written a single book! And so, the idea that I'm out proselytizing to try and get people to, "Hey, wake up! This church is a mess!" That's a false notion. I did my home teaching. I paid my tithing. I had a temple recommend, which is another interesting thing—I was never asked for my temple recommend back throughout the whole ordeal, right up until, well, even after I was excommunicated. They never did ask for my temple recommend back. But I was not a threat.

At one point, the Stake President wanted the entire Stake Presidency to hear me out. So, we got together one Sunday evening. We were talking... Actually, it's in my journal; it may not have been a Sunday, but it was an evening, and it was early enough. I was answering questions. And I said, "Look, look, guys—we're not getting anywhere. You don't even have the right questions to ask. Let me just walk you through what it is that I think you need to understand in order to grasp where I'm coming from." And we were in the High Council office; there's a whiteboard there. I got, you know, a magic marker. And I walked them through on the board for about an hour/hour-and-a-half explaining things to them.

And when it was done, I mean, one of the members of the Stake Presidency had tears he was so moved. The other one was saying, "We have to keep you in this church." And my understanding is that after that interview, they sent a letter downtown—all three of them—suggesting that it would be a mistake to give me the boot. And I thought (and I think they thought) that everything would be copacetic at that point.

However, within a month, the Stake President called me back, and he said that he had been given more training—and he actually had a copy of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* with highlights on it—he'd been given more training and that "these sections required" that he had to do something. And I asked him if I could, you know, look at the pages. And he said, "I can show them to you, but you can't have them." So, I looked at them, and I said, "It doesn't fit. I'm not doing that. That is not what happened here."

One of the accusations was that I was "disparaging a president of the church." In *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, I quote from Heber J. Grant's diary. Heber J. Grant's diary included entries where his mother told him that he cared too much about money and not enough about things of the Spirit. And then in his diary, he goes on to talk about how he's never had an inspired dreaming; he's never had any kind of spiritual experience. This is the president of the church in his own diary, either quoting his mother or making his own reflection. So the point I made was, "I'm not disparaging Heber J. Grant. I'm quoting him, and he's quoting his mother. If you got a problem with the language, then you ought to go discipline Heber J. Grant's deceased mother, or you ought to go do something with Heber J. Grant, but I'm not doing anything more than quoting them." And...

RFM: I take it all of your arguments were in vain.

Denver: Yeah, yeah. Ultimately, a church court was convened. I cleared it with the Stake President that I could bring my family with me to the church court. The reason I wanted my family there was because all of this had to do with the book, and it did not have anything to do with moral lapses (because excommunication almost invariably has a stigma associated with it—that it's because you are doing some immoral act). So, I wanted my family to be there so that they understood EXACTLY what the basis was.

When we got there that evening, instead of allowing my family in, we learned that they were not going to be welcomed into the High Council room. One of the excuses they gave was that "there aren't enough chairs," and my kids who were present said they'd be happy to sit on the floor. And they said, "No, that won't work." And I reiterated, at one point... We went back and forth for about 45 minutes in the hallway of the Stake offices trying to allow me and my family in so that I could deal with the court issues. And they wouldn't. And at one point, I said, "Look, the reason I want them there is because I want them to fully understand exactly what the accusations are and that they do not involve anything of moral turpitude and that all of this is about a book." And the Stake President... I had my family—one of my daughters was on the love seat in the hallway, sitting right next to where the Stake President was standing. He said, "I want to assure you that this has nothing to do with any immorality. This has to do with a book." And my daughter (I won't name her), bless her heart, my daughter, who was sitting right next to

him, looked up to him, and she said (really indignantly), "A book! A book!!" And you could almost see the Stake President shrink from what he had just said and what this teenage daughter's reaction was.

Ultimately, they wouldn't allow me in the room. They went...

RFM: They allowed you in the room, though, right?

Denver: They would have allowed only me in the room.

RFM: Okay.

Denver: And because my wife and I had struck an arrangement before we got there, we'd agreed that if they can't all come in, then I wouldn't go in. And so, they tried me in absentia, and it took a little while, but they finally reached unanimity. And that date, it was September the 10th of 2013. It's...

RFM: A significant day for you, wasn't it?

Denver: Exactly... Exactly 40 years (to the day) from the day I was baptized on September 10th in 1973. So there was a symmetry to it all and...

RFM: By the way, Denver, I'll give you a little observation that may not have occurred to your Stake President: I have never seen an LDS Stake Center that has had a shortage of chairs.

Denver: Yeah... yeah. Well, they only have a shortage when they need to have a shortage.

RFM: Yeah, I'm getting that impression.

Denver: And I guess they had one.

Bill: Just a quick... Just a quick note. Yeah, no, you're good. Just a quick note. Having been excommunicated myself, I can also acknowledge, as a second witness, that the Stake... My Stake President also informed me that people higher than him said that he had to have the disciplinary court; it wasn't up to him. So, when these guys say that that's all local level decisions...not true.

Denver: Yeah, it's not.

RFM: Why do you think they do that, Denver?

Denver: Um, I think they're... If you look at how the church (the institution of the church) has developed itself and painted itself into a corner, the one thing that they just cannot allow to happen is for people to question keys, continuity of authority, existence of status to rule and govern and preside. And if you diminish the way in which the institution has poorly preserved the original endowment that was given at the time of

Joseph Smith, what they have left with today is: We have authority. We are prophets, seers, and revelators in the same sense that...in the same sense that the pope is the Vicar of Christ. The pope's infallibility does not reckon from the fact that he speaks the WORDS OF God. It reckons from the status that he holds as the regent of God, therefore empowered to bind God in a legal sense. And I listened to a Rasband... It was a Rasband recording, somewhere on the internet...

RFM: Oh, Elder Rasband!

Denver: Yeah, Elder Rasband.

RFM: I thought this was some kind of reggae musical group.

Yeah, no, it's Elder Rasband in a recent recording. And essentially he attributed the status of Russell Nelson to being "prophet, seer, and revelator" to office and position. These are honorific titles. They are honorific titles in the same way that the pope is an honorific. They don't mean that he's a prophet indeed. They mean that he holds an office titled "prophet"; he holds an office titled "seer." It's not that there is the presence of charismatic prophecy. It's not that there is the presence of seership, in the sense of "seeing beyond the veil." It is an honorific.

And they use that as a word of art. And all I'm suggesting is wouldn't it be nice if, despite all the institutional claims, if you could set the institution aside just for a moment as "it's a nice place to go and worship and fellowship, and have your kids raised, and participate in meetings, and have your children learn some public-speaking things, and read some Scriptures, and sing some songs"? It's a nice place to do all that. But your religion, your connection to God, the spark of the divine that exists within you, connecting to the originator of that spark of the divine? Hey, that's up to you. Why don't you go do that? And there's no impediment to you doing that. You're just as authorized as was Joseph Smith, and you're probably more authorized than was Brigham Young. So, go do it. Go do it yourself. Worship where you want to. If Joel Osteen turns your gears, hey, go join a mega-church. Listen to Joel. I mean, his gospel of success... I don't like his delivery, but you know, at times he stumbles on an acorn, but...

RFM: [laughter]

Denver: Yeah.

RFM: Denver, you said twice that the church has painted itself into a corner. Can you explain what that corner is you feel the church has painted itself into?

Denver: Everything is circulating around the fullness of the keys that are possessed in one individual, exclusively, in its fullness. Bruce R. McConkie had some little phrase that he used: "All authority that God has vouched safe to man is possessed in the fullness by the head of the church." And so, now that that's the deal, what happens when, as was the case (I'm not making this up; it was the case), what happens when people learn the true order of prayer in the temple, and they organize their prayer groups, and they

gather together in the homes, and they dress in the robes, and they engage in the true order of prayer, and they get revelation? What happens when that happens? And they have a revelation, and the revelation from God to them trumps something that a leader is trying to get people to do—what happens? I mean, the conflict almost instantly suggests that the way you resolve the conflict is, "Obey God." I mean, obey God because He spoke to you. You don't obey someone through whom God is filtered if you can go to the source and God can speak to you directly. So, you obey God—now you've got a conflict.

Well, how does the institution deal with that? A letter goes out from Spencer W. Kimball; I put it up on my website, at one point...

RFM: Can you tell our listeners the name of your website so they can find it?

Denver: Oh, it's just denversnuffer.com, just d-e-n-v-e-r-s-n-u-f-f-e-r.com. And you can go there.

RFM: I apologize for interrupting.

Denver: Yeah, you'd have to search to find it. It's a PDF, but it's the letter. It was sent out from... over the signature "Spencer W. Kimball as President of the Church" to all of the stakes and all of the bishops, and it announced, "We are discontinuing prayer circles outside of the temple."

RFM: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Okay. Now, I know that you were a member of the church for five years before I was, but you're blowing my mind, man. Because I would have thought that NEVER would prayer circles outside the temple be countenanced by the leaders. I'm wrong about that?

Denver: They had prayer circles in wards! They had prayer circles in Stakes!

I don't know how much of this you're aware of, but there's actually an Elder's Quorum room in the Salt Lake Temple, just like there's a First Presidency room, and there's a Quorum of the Twelve room—there's an Elder's Quorum room. And the Elder's Quorums would sign up, and they would rotate the... In the valley, they would rotate their opportunity to go into the Elder's Quorum room in the temple. And one of the regularly conducted things in the room was to hold prayer circles. So, they would bring their wives and the, you know, the teachers and what have you, and they'd rotate in for their Elder's Quorum presidency meeting and include a prayer circle.

They used to hold them in stake centers; they used to hold them in ward buildings. In fact, one of the things that was talked about is, "Who's in your prayer circle?" "She's in our prayer circle." "He's a member of our prayer circle," because they would get together, and they would pray, and the way in which you deal with this—when the conflict arises, and it's hard to govern—is you terminate prayer circles.

So, a letter went out... I forget the year; I think it was '74.

RFM: I'll bet it was before 1978.

Denver: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was before '78. And it terminated prayer circles. And I remember Bruce R. McConkie came to a stake conference meeting when I was down in Texas (your neck of the woods, RFM). He was down in Texas; we had a stake conference. It was in Odessa. (To give you an idea of how big a stake in Texas was, the stake boundaries were actually larger, geographically, than the state of Utah.) So if you're going to stake conference (we were over in Abilene), we had to drive hours to get over to Odessa for the stake conference. And on a Saturday evening, there's a priesthood meeting held at the stake center. Well, in Texas at that time, with those boundaries and that travel, the get-together for the priesthood meeting that evening was the main chapel of the stake center with the missionaries (the full-time missionaries) and me and one or two others. It was like, you know, 14 or 15 people in a hall that could seat a thousand.

And so, Bruce R. McConkie came down from the podium. He had a whiteboard brought in. My memory is he actually took his coat off, which tells you, you know, he's going to be approachable. And he opened it up for questions. And there were lots of questions, and the prayer circle issue was something that someone asked about. And one of the comments that he made was that the church determined that it was difficult to govern with the prayer circles going on. And so, the termination of the prayer circle practice was done so as to make it easier to govern the church.

Well, it's an illustration of how you drain the Spirit out of the institution. Because the institution literally is built to protect a singular office. There is one and only one Mormon legally, because the Corporation of the President (which is a corporation sole) owns every chapel, every stake center, every temple, every welfare farm, every ancillary business, every mall... Everything that's out there is the property of one and only one person. And that's the "whoever happens to be the individual" that occupies the Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Well, when that's the structure, you... I mean, you've now invented the perfect mousetrap, and you've caught everyone in it.

Bill: Just a quick note, Denver. I shared a link in all of the places where our stream goes out. It is a website, ldspioneerarchitecture.blogspot.com. They have an article on prayer circle rooms in LDS chapels, and they share pictures of multiple ward buildings that had that. So, just another...essentially to back up what you're saying and to express that a lot of the LDS wards early on (and some of them still today) have prayer circle rooms.

RFM: And this is one of the fascinating things about Mormonism to me is that as much as I've studied over many, many years, there's still new things I'm learning, like this tonight.

Denver: Oh, hey, let me tell you something. Yeah, I have that experience all the time. You know, I thought... I read it; in fact, Oliver Cowdery said it. Oliver Cowdery (after he'd been excommunicated in that 1838 timeframe) had lamented that he had always hoped that Joseph Smith would make some effort to reproach him and to bring him back and

to invite him back. And Joseph wound up killed before that had ever been done. And so, in reading Oliver's end of things, I had always assumed that Joseph never made any outreach to Oliver, when (to my surprise, and I just learned this in the *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 12*) in June of 1843, Joseph Smith directed that a letter be sent to Oliver Cowdery asking Oliver if he'd spent enough time eating the corn husks and if he didn't want to be welcomed back home (it being, you know, a reference to the prodigal...

RFM: The prodigal son.

Denver: ...son). Yeah, and so Joseph did make the effort for the outreach. Now, he directed that the letter be sent and out over his name. But the *Documents* doesn't include a letter. So I don't know if the letter ever got written or sent. I'm still waiting to see. Maybe it'll show up in *Documents, Volume 13* when they release that, which I'm waiting for. But Oliver, I think, would have been really gratified and touched had he known that in June of 1843, Joseph had actually wanted to reach out to him, you know—and I just learned that. The study of the Mormon landscape is ongoing, and you're always going to find something new.

RFM: I will tell you that even in 2021, which we are in now, there's no guarantee that if you write a letter and put it in the mail with sufficient postage affixed, that it's actually going to get where you're sending it.

Denver: Yeah, I just had a... This is a pleading with the court. I just had an exhibit show up in my mail for a motion that got filed—and I didn't get the motion; I just got AN exhibit (it was like exhibit G or something). So, everything that had gone before that in exhibits, as well as the motion itself... Even the court system is at times unreliable.

RFM: Denver, this is fascinating. We are already almost, well, an hour into this. There's one thing I want to talk with you about, and we're gonna let a lot of it go to the cutting room floor. This has been fascinating talking to you. And I suppose if anybody wants to ask a question about your visions of Jesus or seeing Jesus (however you frame that), I'll let them call in and ask that, but I wanted to go right now—for the final part of this part—with the June (I think was June) 2015 "Boise Rescue."

Denver: Oh, yeah.

RFM: Where now President Oaks (a heartbeat away from the presidency) President Oaks took off to Boise, Idaho, which I understand he perceived of as being a hotbed of Snufferite-ism. And he went there with Richard Turley (Assistant Church Historian) in tow to give a three-stake fireside in which he vehemently denounced false prophets. I'm sure you're aware of that happening. We actually have a clip here from the news at the time talking about it with a few audio clips from Elder Oaks and Richard Turley (who I cannot help but continue to think sounds just like Barney Fife—Richard Turley does; when you hear it, you'll see if you agree with me). But I want to get your comments on this after we play it. It's just about a minute or two long. Do we have that?

And I cannot hear the audio.

(It might be one of the better ways to listen to Elder Oaks.) But we really need to hear the audio for this clip to work. It does have subtitles, at least.

Bill: Yeah, no biggie. I think it's just a little glitch when you add the screen that the audio has to be added to so no biggie, she'll have it back up here in a second.

RFM: Ok. And this ran on the news a few days after it happened. And there's even a clip of you because they talked to you for comment at the end. Okay, let's give this another go.

Bill: Oh, still not.

RFM: Still not. So, we'll continue to work on that.

Bill: And Maven, maybe if you can send me the link on Facebook, I can try to put it up on my screen and see if that makes any difference.

RFM: By the way, everybody, I hope you'll be patient with us. We are trying to take care of a few kinks in the technology. One of the main reasons that we were doing this was so that hopefully listeners can actually hear me when they call in (that was one of the big things that we've been dealing with for about a year now). And hopefully we've got that ironed out. But as I'm finding out with technology, when you iron out one wrinkle, it can raise a few more in other places. And sometimes there's no telling why—unless you're really smart.

Bill: And I actually might have it here. Let me see if I can get it.

RFM: Alright, and that is Elder Oaks, and I'm not sure if that's really video of him from Boise. It looks kind of like the stake center, but maybe they have a really nice... Excuse me, from the General Conference Center. Maybe they have a really nice stake center there in Boise with a nice wood and the plants and everything in the background.

Bill: Sorry, I apologize.

RFM: Yeah. Because my understanding is is that this is not something that was supposed to be ready for primetime. It was a multi-stake fireside. People were actually not supposed to record because they give that warning at the beginning, right? "Don't record, don't record us." And somebody, some disobedient soul, actually went ahead and recorded it, and I think they're playing the recording over some stock footage of Elder Oaks. And let's see if we've got it now.

Bill: All right, I think this should be it. Let me know if you guys have sound.

— — —BEGIN VIDEO CLIP— — —

Dallin Oaks: When you follow false prophets, when you start toward apostasy, you are on the wrong side.

Newscaster: LDS Apostle Dallin H. Oaks with a plea to members of three stakes in Boise.

Dallin Oaks: Stand fast with the leadership of the church.

Newscaster: Oaks, alongside Church Historian Richard Turley, picked Boise as the place to spend time responding to critics.

Richard Turley: One claim that we sometimes hear is that the church is no longer the church that was restored to the earth by the Prophet Joseph...

Newscaster: ...a claim made by this man, Denver Snuffer, an attorney from Sandy.

Denver Snuffer: It was not the same church in 2013 as the one I was baptized in in 1973.

Newscaster: Snuffer was excommunicated two years ago for spreading his ideas, including the thought that Mormons should be able to be rebaptized. He lectured about that in Boise.

Denver Snuffer: I know there are a lot of people that have been rebaptized. I know that there are people that are blogging in the Boise area and talking about meetings that are taking place.

Newscaster: But the church denies this meeting came in response to any of that, telling 2News Elder Oaks was not scheduled for an assignment that weekend so decided to use his free time to visit an area with a concentration of members, knowing that some members have questions from time to time that trouble them. Snuffer doesn't know what role, if any, he played.

Denver Snuffer: I don't know that I have a following. I know that there is a group of people that is discontent.

— — — END VIDEO CLIP — — —

RFM: And there's the end of the video clip. Oh, and the very interesting...

[crosstalk]

All right. So, I wanted to say about that, however, that I thought, number one, you were very gracious in how you responded to... Let me back up. It was obvious to anybody with two brain cells to rub together that you're the reason that Elder Oaks took Elder Turley out to Boise, Idaho—because everything he said was designed to contradict all

of your main talking points, even though he never mentioned your name. And it was so obvious that the reporter asks the church if you were the cause (which it obviously was), and Elder Oaks then has the church spokesperson (Elder Oaks doesn't respond to it because, you know, he's very busy), and he has a church spokesperson deny it and say, "Oh, he just had some free time in his schedule, so he decided to go out there, you know; it was just one of those things." I thought that was an obvious, let's say, well, something that was less than the truth on his part in saying that. But I thought you were gracious in not holding his feet to the fire about that. What were your thoughts about the Boise Rescue, as it's come to be known?

Denver: Well, the concern that I have is that anytime I try to assert my own relevance and importance, we're missing the point. The point is not me. The point is: If Mormonism has value, and I can talk about the value that it has, and there are a whole host of people that resonate with that value and say, "Yeah, that's something that I've thought or I've believed or I've understood, or I now understand, and I believe that to be more correct than what I'm hearing elsewhere..." It's the content that has some value, not me. But to say, "Hey, hey, look at me," it seems to me that that is contrary to achieving anything to benefit other people.

People are best benefited when the religion lives in them, when the fire gets ignited in their own hearts, when they can look around in this world and they can see the fingerprints of God everywhere and the wonder of this creation and to feel like they have a spark of the divine in themselves as well. To say, "There's a lot that God has done with ME," distracts more than it contributes. If instead you can say, "There's a spark of the divine that's within YOU that is actually connected to God," and if you can find the peace within you to allow that still small voice to actually be heard, you will find an amazing thing about the value of not only yourself but every individual that's walking on the planet, and that we are all interconnected with one another through that divine spark. The problem is, we tend...

The whole idea of a prophet status, a seer status, a big guru, a divine cumbah that has somehow the authority to rule and reign from the rivers to the ends of the earth and none dare make afraid, it... That is nonsense. That is contra accomplishing what the Savior did. I mean, the Savior was more or equally concerned with the leper, with the blind, with the maimed, with the halt, with the poor, and He called from the ranks of the blue-class laborer the intimate circle that He had. He was not interested in the recognition from the hierarchy. And the hierarchy certainly had very little use for him. They felt threatened by Him. That's the problem. The truth and religion itself—when it properly connects a person with God—makes them so resilient that they don't fear a hierarchy anymore.

RFM: Can I ask you a question? First off, with my observation, and this will probably be the last thing—I'm sorry—before we take callers. There's so much we could talk about, and I know that you've written a great deal. How many books have you written, by the way?

Denver: I think I've got 22 in print. There's a new one that we're trying to get into print here shortly. I don't think we're gonna get it out in time for Christmas, but it's primarily addressed to Christians...

RFM: Twenty-two books. You're like the Stephen King of Mormonism.

Denver: That...yeah. Hey, this one [holding up *A Man Without Doubt*].

RFM: Yes?

Denver: This one was written to give Joseph Smith the opportunity to actually defend himself. And it takes the three longest compositions by Joseph Smith—but gives an introduction that sets them within a historical setting so that you can understand what was going on, why he wrote what he wrote. But it's the three longest compositions, and this is for a Christian audience. I'm trying to get people that distrust Mormons and Mormonism to take a look at it.

And then this is the latest book, *Religion of the Fathers*. It's actually based on a talk that I gave at a conference down in Aravada Springs. And it's dealing with the whole Book of Abraham controversy.

Those were the two most recent ones, but a new one is coming out. It's primarily for a Christian audience. And I'm going out to Kentucky to at a conference there in the spring and hopefully have an opportunity to see some more Christian folks. It's really hard because the impression that people have been given by the Mormon missionaries is that the LDS Church defines what Mormonism is. And if that's the definition, Christians really ought to walk away. But if the definition can be expanded to include something more and embrace any truth that they already have, then maybe taking a second look would be a good thing. Yeah. Twenty-two books in print right now.

RFM: I apologize. I wasn't laughing at you. I... Every now and then I make the mistake of reading the comments that Bill's putting or that Maven's putting up. And I saw a comment after my Stephen King reference, saying, "Which apostle is the clown in the sewer?" And that started making me giggle. I apologize. We're not going to try and answer that question tonight.

But I did want to continue with my observation that Stephen King scares a lot of people, but what you write, I think, scares the leadership in Salt Lake City more than anything else—because here's what I see. First off, I see that all of the members of the church, to some degree, I think have a little bit (maybe a lot a bit) of cognitive dissonance. And it's built into the system because we are baptized into the church that Joseph Smith founded; we learned about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, all the visions, all the charismatic gifts, but then we get baptized into this nearly-dead husk of a church that I think has been resting on the laurels of Joseph Smith for about 180 years now. And they see there's no "there" there. And we have leaders of the church now finding that many of their best and brightest—seriously—are leaving the church to follow the path that you're charting. And, dang, if you're not doing all the things that Joseph Smith did that

the leaders of the church are not doing. And by that, I mean, claiming to see Jesus (Joseph Smith did that). They're still trying to hang on to that sort of fiction in the top echelons of the LDS Church, but I think that people are starting to get wise to that, that they haven't really seen it. The old joke is that when the Quorum of the 15 get together in a room, each of them sits around wondering if they're the only one who hasn't seen Jesus. So... But they certainly haven't produced new Scripture; you have, and I'm thinking there of the Testimony of John (and probably other things as well). So you have visionary experiences, you're producing new Scripture, you have charismatic gifts, there's the whole second comforter and the visitation of Jesus that you have re-instituted into the world because the LDS Church has lost it, thus the title, *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. I think that you are a real burr in their bonnet. (It's a bee in their bonnet and a burr under the blanket.) But I think you're both of those things to the LDS Church leaders. What do you think?

Denver: I think that if you were to reduce it down to one concept, the idea of democratizing revelation so that everyone can stand on equal footing is fearsome to people who entertain a lot of insecurities about that very topic. If you have the self-confidence to say, "I have connected with our Lord, and therefore, welcome, brother, if you have likewise connected." That's one approach. The other approach is, "I haven't. I don't expect I ever will. In fact, it is not within my ambit of experience or expectation, and therefore, what you say about connecting up with God, that's threatening to me. We have office. We have order. We have position. We have rank. We have keys," whatever the hell those things are.

RFM: Keys mean, "You can't do bupkis without our permission."

Denver: Yeah, keys are one of the most often-used and poorly-defined ideas that the institutional church rails upon.

RFM: Did I define it pretty well, though, in an LDS context?

Denver: Yeah, "I'm the boss." That's...

RFM: Yeah, "You can't do anything without my permission," whether it's baptizing people, you rogue you, baptizing people without authority of the duly-constituted Bishop —or anything else that you do. And this is another thing that gets them very upset with you, such that they go and have a special Boise Rescue, not only because they're concerned about you, but they're concerned about the influence that you're having among members of the church. I think that goes without saying, but I just said it anyway.

Denver: At one point I... In one talk I gave, I said they claim that they hold all the keys and that there's one guy who's the key holder, above all, and every one of you are nothing more than keyholes.

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

RFM: Ooh. Yeah. He's the... President Nelson is the Key Master.

Denver: Yes. And you're a keyhole.

RFM: I'm the gatekeeper.

Bill: So, let me jump in here. Let me jump in here for just a second. So first, let us set up the... I want at least get the phone call stuff set up so that Maven can start screening some calls. And then I want to ask a question, while she's doing that, maybe two.

So first off, I'll put the banner up. This is now our brand new "Victory for Satan" segment of the show where you get to not only put in the word "Mormon" (which we'll get to), but you also get to put in the Mark of the Beast, 666. So, our telephone number, our new telephone number for our live call-in section here is 1-662-MORMON or 662-667-6667. And when you call in, Maven will screen your calls. We want to make sure that those calls are on topic and have to do with Denver Snuffer and the things that he's saying tonight, and she'll double check that.

So, here's my question while she's doing that; two things, really. Jonathan Streeter asked a great question because, Denver, I'm a skeptic at heart. And, you know, I don't want to debate my end-position on whether what some of these things you've said, in terms of your experiences, are real or not. But here's what I do think. I think you're much softer and kinder and more... You're easier to work with and to sit with and to have a conversation and try to talk about hard things.

So, two things. One is that when Joseph Smith died, there were multiple voices that came forward trying to lead the church.

Denver: Right.

Bill: And one of my fears is that, you know, when your day on this earth comes to an end, that there's going to be voices within your followers who do the same thing who say, "Hey, I'm now the guy who should be leading." And I'm curious what your contingency plans are to make sure that whatever it is "your vision of what should happen" actually does happen rather than three or four James Strang's coming forward.

Denver: Yeah. I'm trying to elevate people and to bring them along and teach them enough so they can stand on their own feet. Hopefully, by the time I finish, there will be people who are of deep enough understanding and vast enough experience that there won't be a controversy. One of the things that I've tried to get across is that having an organization is going to doom anything because organizations can be taken over. But if you fragment it, if you leave it at the bottom level without an organization, then you have to corrupt every single person. You can't get to a hierarchy or an individual or an inner clique, you can't get to that and corrupt the whole. If everyone stands on an equal footing, then you have to corrupt every single one of them.

One of the things that I've taught or suggested is that people get together in fellowships and they gather their own tithing among their group. And then after they gather their tithing, they use that money to help anyone with a need among them. I'm trying to take

all of the money/all of the profit out of the practice of the religion, and there IS money in religion in the form of tithes and offerings. But if that money gets used to benefit people in need, and it never gets aggregated into some fortune with a hierarchy and control of it, if you have to sacrifice for the religion because you can't earn a living by being a minister, then a lot of the people who want to practice a religion in order to benefit themselves look at this and say, "Well, it's a dry well—there's nothing there for me to benefit or profit from because I can't get paid for what I do."

I've spent a small fortune on doing what I do in order to advance the religion. But I haven't profited. I don't make money. And tithing groups that gather money use that money among themselves to pay for food and shelter and transportation, medical care, and education, and take care among themselves of needs that they have. I'm hoping that, by the end, there is a group of people who are sufficiently united in how they view the practice of religion ought to be conducted that we don't need a leader, we don't need a, "Hey, hey, listen to me." But if someone's got a good sermon to deliver, a good message, a good concept, let them speak up, and let everyone listen and determine for themselves if it be true or not.

RFM: And I understand, also, Denver, that your definition of tithing is different from the LDS definition in current usage—that your definition of tithing is a tenth of an individual's SURPLUS.

Denver: Only their surplus. Yeah, you have to take care of your own family. All of the costs associated with your own family, whatever's left over after that, one-tenth of that is the tithe. You don't deprive your own family. In fact, if you can't meet your needs, not only should you not PAY tithing, but you ought to be the recipient of help from other people who ARE paying tithing. It ought to be a light thing. It ought to be easy to be born.

Bill: Perfect. And we've got a caller in the queue; we'll go to her in just a moment.

My last question is: When you have somebody who's following along and they want to be included in your group, but they're saying things or doing things that aren't meshing, what is the way in which your system—and again, I don't mean, you have a system; I know you don't have a system—but the way in which your group of followers kind of do... Because on some level, you do have to regulate a little bit, right? You do have to... If somebody's imposing themselves in unhealthy ways or maybe they have mental instability or maybe there's some other reason that they're putting themselves at the forefront, and it's not helpful. What's the way in which your organization (for a lack of a better word) handles that?

Denver: Issues like that are dealt with by the women. Men don't do that. The women are entrusted with that kind of disciplinary stuff EXCLUSIVELY. They may ask a man to come testify, but the women are the decision-makers on that. We've empowered women to do that sort of thing, including investigating and even suspending people. That's up to the women.

RFM: Hmm, where did that come from Denver? Was that a result of revelation?

Denver: Yeah, actually, I... We hadn't gotten to the tenth talk, but one of the things that I had advocated for and prayed about was just giving women priesthood. And the response that I got was not that. But instead of women having priesthood, women have authority OVER the priesthood to govern, to discipline, to curtail—and so, the balance was struck. Instead of men holding the exclusive authority to do everything, men can perform ordinance work, but women have the ability to deal with the discipline, including terminating the ability of a guy to exercise priesthood because he's out of line. In many respects, one of the most common problems that men have when they become abusive is something FIRST learned or experienced or witnessed by the women. And so, the women—who have long been powerless—really have been entrusted with that end of things, and it's kind of a balance.

Bill: Perfect. So, we're gonna go to our first caller. We're gonna hope, we're gonna cross our fingers, RFM, that the caller gets to hear you, as well. And so, she has called into the show before, but it is Nicola. Nicola, I'm adding you to the show now. Nicola, how are you?

Caller 1, Nicola: I'm fine. I just wanted to ask... And I was very... This is a very good episode. I really like it. And I very... I'm quite interested, but I wanted to know what his take on the sacrament was? Does he just do it the same way? Because like, if you're going to do it from home, how the heck, I mean, basically, I've just been... I've been taking the sacrament, and I've just been praying that Heavenly Father does it because, obviously, I haven't got priesthood.

Bill: Yeah.

Nicola: I'm not going to church anymore because I can't... I'm... I suppose I'm concerned it's just not right, but I feel very strongly about the sacrament. So, I want to know how you feel about, like, how you do things because obviously...?

Denver: Okay. I've actually tried to help out with this, particularly during the period of time in which meetings were suspended and people were not gathering together for fear of some, you know, exposure to something that's going to kill them. So, I actually recorded the sacrament prayers, and they are on my website: denversuffer.com. And I've said if you want to use my recorded version of the sacrament prayer at home when you're in isolation... And it was intended primarily for women to use. There are a lot of single mothers, there are a lot of widows, and they don't have any access to someone that can bless the sacrament for them. I recorded the sacrament prayers, and you can play them off of my website and do the sacrament at home.

And the prayer, by the way, is the one that you find in the Book of Mormon, not the one that you find in the Doctrine and Covenants. They changed the prayer in the Doctrine and Covenants. I've remained faithful to the version that appears in the Book of Mormon. (I believe that the section 20 language was written by Oliver Cowdery.) But the

Book of Mormon version—slight wording difference—Book of Mormon version is the one that I would use...

RFM: The Book of Mormon says...

[crosstalk]

I'm sorry. In the Book of Mormon it says, "wine." So do you use wine instead of water?

Denver: Yeah, I believe wine ought to be used in the sacrament.

Bill: And I'll just say, I've been to a remnant meeting, and we were there for the sacrament (being done here in southern Utah and St. George—it was at one of the conference rooms in one of the hotels). And the sacrament, as administered by your group, Denver, matched up much more closely with my study of LDS Scripture than the LDS sacrament.

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Bill: Unfortunately.

Denver: Again, it just... Yeah, the longer it goes on, the more distant they become from where it was, notwithstanding what Turley said in the recording you played earlier.

Bill: Yeah.

RFM: And what was that he said?

Denver: Well, he said that there are claims that it isn't the same church as the one that Joseph did. Hell, it's not even the same church I joined in 1973, or you joined in '78!

Bill: It's not even the same church it was 10 years ago.

RFM: Can I tell you one of my favorite quotes for me?

Denver: Yeah.

RFM: One of my favorite quotes for me is the dilemma that the church leaders find themselves on, which is, number one, if Joseph Smith was not a prophet, then they're not prophets. That much is obvious enough, right?

Denver: Yes.

RFM: The other prong is if Joseph Smith WAS a prophet, then they sure as hell aren't prophets.

Denver: That ship's sailed.

RFM: Yeah.

Bill: Nicola, does that answer your question?

Denver: Emma Smith said...

Nicola: Yes, and thank you so much. That was very, very interesting. That's very good.

Bill: Thank you.

Nicola: Will the show notes cut to these things?

Bill: Say that again.

Nicola: So, is this... Is his website attached to this... Have you got the website attached that you get the sacrament prayer?

Bill: Denver, where's the website she can see that?

Denver: It's the denversnuffer.com website. And there's a link right on the front page that you can go to the sacrament prayer. Are you going to link it in this, in the notes of this?

Bill: Yeah, I'll put it in the show notes.

Denver: Okay. By the way...

Nicola: Thank you so much.

Bill: Thank you, Nicola. Good, have a great night. Bye-bye.

Nicola: Thank you. Bye-bye.

Denver: Just to finish the thought that RFM provoked. Emma Smith said, "Without Joseph, there is no church." And I think Emma was right on that score.

Bill: Yeah, yeah. Cool.

Next caller is going to be Christian, and Christian wants to ask you a question about gender within how you understand the theology works. So, Christian, you're on the air, Mormonism Live with Radio Free Mormon and Bill Reel and Denver Snuffer. What's on your mind tonight, my friend?

Caller 2, Christian: Hey, good evening, everybody.

Bill: Good evening.

Christian: So, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" has been a pretty big battleground, in terms of in the church and without the church. I was curious as to hear Denver's thoughts on how much... You know, if that's good doctrine, if it's mixed doctrine. Essentially, I've heard him speak on the divine roles of men and women. And I

was curious to hear more about that. And then, of course, more like, what are some social and cultural stigmas that we've made up in terms of men and women. What should we be seeking, in terms of divine, you know, prototypes of the man and woman?

Denver: I gave a talk that's actually—I think it's 47 pages in the form that it's on my website—called "Our Divine Parents," where I get into the whole issue of the Creation, the creation of the man, the creation of the woman, the relationship between the two of them, what it was that was required in order to make Christ the Redeemer for a posterity and, therefore, the essential fatherhood of Christ to the man Adam but, on the other hand, the essential connection of the woman to the Divine Mother. And that there's so much about the story of the Creation and the origination of the two and how those two go together.

And then I took off on the statement that Joseph made about Jesus Christ being the prototype of the saved man and that if you're going to be saved, you have to be precisely what Christ is and nothing different or else not be saved. And I used that analogy to then talk about the role of the woman and the prototype of the saved woman and tied that into the role of Mary as the mother of Christ and Her stewardship over the whole thing—from the time of the Annunciation, the birth, the divine origin of Christ in mortality, Her role shepherding Him right through to the end. She was there at the Last Supper; She was there in the Garden; She was there at the cross. She shepherded Him through the entire thing and discharged the Divine Mother role and is the prototype of the saved woman. And I suggest in that talk that the Catholics got Mary right a bit more than did the Mormons get Mary right.

And that there is a process by which the male fulfills, ultimately, the role of achieving, duplicating what the prototype of the saved man (or Christ) is and attaining to the resurrection. You're going to be resurrected, but when you get resurrected, you're dependent upon Christ for that. You have to "attain to the resurrection," as Joseph explained it in the King Follette Discourse. "Our Divine Parents" goes into that and tries to explain how that relates.

And then the prototype of the saved woman is explained in "Our Divine Parents" in a way that I think makes a lot more sense than what we've done with Mary in Mormonism. I mean, Bruce R. McConkie made her breeding stock for both the Divine Father and Joseph, and that, yeah, it's all... It's all a mess.

That talk—I'd refer you to that. And I've only briefly skimmed the surface of that; it's a big subject. Read the talk—it's 47 pages—or listen to the talk. It's recorded; it's on the website somewhere.

RFM: Can I throw a follow-up in here, Bill?

Bill: Yeah, sure.

RFM: I apologize. Denver, is there a place for gay/homosexual/lesbian people to be accepted in full fellowship in your faith?

Denver: I don't see any reason why they would not be accepted. They need to understand that there is a divine role behind sexual identity, and we get to imitate that divine role in being a father and a mother in this life. And...

Look, people bring with them a whole lot of baggage. I would imagine that almost every person who's ever been excommunicated from the LDS Church has suffered some kind of trauma. There are all kinds of reasons why we have the quirks we have, we have the hang-ups we have, we have the errors, deficiencies, mistakes that we have. The fact that someone has something that is quirky about them...

And the objective is to love one another, and then go from there. You'll never get anywhere if you can't sort through the idea that there is a divine spark in anyone, no matter who they are and no matter what's wrong with them. There are a lot of angry people who, if you were in their shoes, you would be angry. I mean, I don't understand a lot of things about what people get hung up on. There are some bizarre, aberrant things that are fetishes that are out there. I don't claim to understand them. But I don't care if you've got them. Just don't practice them on me, please. And we'll get along just fine.

RFM: Okay, Denver... And I apologize. This is not at all a gotcha. I just want to put a fine point on this question. If I am a gay man—openly gay man in an openly gay (even) marriage—and I'm a member of your faith, are there any things that I, as a gay man, cannot do in your faith or any ordinances that I cannot perform?

Denver: Not that I'm aware of at present. I wouldn't think so. We don't have a temple, and we don't have marriage sealings. And so, that's an issue that we don't even address at this point. I think, at some point, we may have a temple.

Your question reminds me of... There was a homosexual couple... I grew up in small town in Idaho, and there was a homosexual couple in the hometown. They lived together. They owned a business together; they had a restaurant. I actually worked for these guys when I was in high school doing labor in the kitchen and washing dishes. And euphemistically...

They were accepted in the community; no one, you know, talked down about them. But everyone knew that they were homosexual. And they were euphemistically referred to by the good Christian folks in my hometown as "bachelors." They were a couple of bachelors. And so, for some time when I was a kid, I didn't know if "bachelor" was codeword for homosexuality or an unmarried male, but bachelor had that connotation in our little neighborhood in my hometown. And by the way, we trick-or-treated at the house. They were accepted as people in the neighborhood. And I mean, they were known to be a couple of steers without a cow. But, you know, hey, if that floats their boat, what the hell?

Bill: Yeah, I just, I would simply hope that the God that we're all kind of dealing with has a space for all of humanity and all of its expressions that isn't causing harm to other human beings.

Denver: I think it is worse to collect tithing to pay a professional minister than it is to have a homosexual relationship in which you are a faithful companion to someone else. No matter what the relationship is, I think it begins with fidelity and trust and honesty. I don't know how you become a suitable, trustworthy person if you're untrustworthy in the most intimate relationship that you have.

Now, the most intimate relationship you have was originally ordained to produce progeny, and progeny was intended to teach you something. I think both of you are fathers...?

RFM: Yeah. Mostly they teach me regret.

Bill: [laughter]

Denver: Well, and humility. And, yeah.

RFM: I'm still working on that one.

Denver: Yeah. I mean, the life's lessons that come from being a parent by far exceed any other experience that I've had. My children are exceptionally precious to me. They just... They make my life more whole. Some of my fondest moments in life have come inside the family—and not just with my wife, but with my wife and children. And so, that ennobling experience of the family is something that I would suggest needs to be included within life's experience, if at all possible.

Bill: Yeah, and just a note. So, people are noticing, I mean, two women in 2021 can certainly have a kid; two men can certainly have a kid. I know lots of gay parents, and they seem to be doing a hell of a lot better job raising their children than I sure did do in mine. And my... Again, I just want to throw it out because I want to represent some of the voices in the...as the viewers. My hope would be that you (as you move forward, in whatever this is or turns into) that you do a better job than the LDS Church at finding a fair, healthy, equal place for people whose humanity has been marginalized over and over again when they are doing no... They're doing as much harm or less harm in the world than I'm doing. And I hope that your God—and I'll say, "My God," because I would have to spend two hours debating what that sounds like or what that means to the listeners—but that your God or my God, that we find a place for folks to feel loved and to feel equal. Because I think that group of human beings have been marginalized and traumatized enough.

Denver: Yeah. And I do think that there are problems with all of us. But if what your focus is upon is plumbing the depths of connecting with God... I don't know how many people are interested in what I'm talking about if they have no interest in trying to comprehend the value of the marriage relationship and the explanation that I've given in "Our Divine Parents." If they do, then I have no problem with them. And I do think that there's enough trauma to go around without us inflicting more upon one another.

And I like what you said, Bill. I have no doubts that God loves everyone who's down here. And I have no doubt that he would like the atonement to accomplish the maximum possible and to avoid having it affect a tiny group of people that are religiously narrow-minded as the outcome of all His suffering. The objective is to have everyone that enters this world be added upon. And I can think of hundreds of ways in which you can add upon someone no matter what their sexual issues are.

Bill: Yeah, and I would go one step further, and again, I don't want to press. We can go to our last caller here in just a moment, and we can kind of wrap up the show. But my two cents... And again, I haven't spoken to the Savior, and I don't have any of those experiences. But I would suggest, too, maybe we all have to kind of sit down and come up with better language. I've heard, as you're talking the last few minutes, a lot of the words you're using, saying "problem" or other kinds of rhetoric, often... And I think it's reasonable to see some of those words as meaning "less than" or "problematic," and I just... I think...

Denver: Or judgmental.

Bill: ...I think we all ought to sit down and come up with better language. Not only are these folks looking for a place to be just human, they're also looking for the rest of us to change our language so that the space sounds fair and equal, too.

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Bill: So, anyway, final caller—if you're okay with that, RFM?

RFM: Yes. And thank you for taking those questions that were sort of interruptions on my part, Denver. I apologize.

Denver: Oh, yeah, that's fine. That's fine.

Bill: Yeah, so Dark Swarm is our last caller. He wants to talk to you a little bit about your Scriptures. And so, Dark Swarm, you're on the air—Mormonism Live with Denver Snuffer, Radio Free Mormon, and Bill Reel. You're gonna close this out, my friend. What's on your mind?

Caller 3, Dark Swarm: Hello there. I would like to hear more about Denver's new edition of the Scriptures. I've heard that they're attempting to distance from the LDS Church so that more people can view them. What's your thoughts about that?

Denver: Yeah, all of the Scriptures are available free online. Surprisingly, there was a website URL (scriptures.info)—all of them are up and there. We did get a leather-bound set prepared, and those are available, and there's still a handful of these that can be purchased through the scriptures.info website (I think there's a link to get there). But you can read them free online.

Dark Swarm: Hmm.

Denver: What the Scriptures are is an effort to go back and try to reclaim, as best as it is possible now to do so, the original Scriptures as they were first translated by Joseph Smith, in the case of the Book of Mormon, and as the revelations rolled out to Joseph Smith when they were first recorded. The Doctrine and Covenants that the LDS Church offers have been substantially modified, edited, revised, and don't reflect what Joseph originally did. Doctrine and Covenants section 27, for example, was only about five verses long originally. Oliver Cowdery (in the Book of Commandments) out in Independence felt at liberty—because he'd been told that he could do some things—he felt at liberty to expand that. It grew; it became a monster—revelation 27; it includes the first recitation of a visitation by Peter, James...

RFM: Peter, James, and John.

Denver: ...and John. Yeah, that wasn't in the original revelation that got stuck in by Oliver. The press got destroyed in Independence, but pages got gathered up and smuggled out in the skirts of some women; those pages got bound. And then THAT was the prototype that got used for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, where Joseph added the teach...the Lectures on Faith. We've gone back to get the—as near as possible as we can—the original revelation to Joseph, the Lectures on Faith in the form that Joseph published and vouched for them, and we've included that in the Doctrine and Covenants, which has been renamed "Teachings and Commandments"—T&C instead of D&C.

Dark Swarm: Oh!

RFM: And part of that, Denver, by the way, is you got rid of section 132, correct?

Denver: Yeah, we got rid of 132, and we got rid of 110—there are some problems with them. And there's an explanation, actually, in the Scriptures for what got dropped out and why. Provenance is a problem with a number of things. We could probably spend an hour on that! The Book of Mormon...

RFM: By the way, going... I'm sorry, just before you get to the Book of Mormon (because I'm fascinated by all of this), but you've also added a few sections to the Teachings and Commandments (which is your version of the Doctrine and Covenants)...

Denver: Correct.

RFM: ...including two sections that detail your visions or, well... Jesus appeared to you/visitations of Jesus. So, if anybody wants to read those, they can go to them. What sections are those, Denver?

Denver: They're in the T&C, the Teachings and Commandments sections 160 and 161. You can read them there. And those are excerpts from a journal that I keep. Anything that happens gets recorded contemporaneous with the event. If I later talk about it, I only talk about it as a quote from the contemporaneously-recorded event. I don't

elaborate on it; I don't embellish it. It's just what's there and only what's there, and it doesn't grow with time. So 160 and 161 are where you could read those two.

The Book of Mormon has a really interesting provenance for what we've got. Joseph Smith translated it, and scribes wrote it down. They didn't take that to the printer. They took a copy that Oliver Cowdery rewrote; it was the printer's manuscript. The printer's manuscript got copied by Oliver Cowdery, taken to E.B. Grandin, and then E.B. Grandin did all of the punctuation (it was John Gilbert, his employee, that set it up and did the typesetting and punctuated) because what the printer's manuscript looks like is one long sentence. So Grandin and John Gilbert punctuated the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith began to revise the Book of Mormon before he was killed, and the revisions that he made in the Book of Mormon appear to be corrections. When Oliver Cowdery copied it, he made, on average, a mistake every page and a half. When the printer printed it, the printer made some mistakes. Joseph was apparently going back to the original narration that he gave and correcting the Book of Mormon to make it conform to the first version.

We know that (or we can conclude that) because the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon got deposited into the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, and then, years later, it got taken out—it had rotted; only about 28% of the original manuscript still exists. But with that 28%, we are able to compare the what was originally translated with the printer's manuscript (that we have in full) to pick out the errors. and then we have the ability to see what Joseph was doing when he was making revisions along the way so it looks like that original printer's manuscript. So the Book of Mormon that we published is an attempt to get back, as near as possible, to the original translation.

Now, here's where the story really gets interesting. Joseph Smith's revisions were not picked up when the Book of Mormon... Joseph authorized them to print it in London. When the Book of Mormon got printed in London, it was an earlier edition that hadn't been corrected by Joseph, but it got printed in the mission field in London by the Quorum of the Twelve over there. When the LDS Church began to print the Book of Mormon itself, they did not use the version that Joseph had corrected. They used the version that was over in London.

RFM: Was that the 1837 version?

Denver: Yeah, yeah.

Bill: In Kirtland, yeah.

Denver: Yeah, so the Book of Mormon version contains errors that were made by the printer, errors that were made by Oliver in copying it, and errors that were made by a new printer over in London. And that's the version that's been handed down in the Book of Mormon version from the LDS Church is that. We've tried to fix all of that. And in the Foreword to each of the volumes of Scripture, there's an explanation given that tells all of the effort that went in to try and fix it and to make it more correct.

RFM: Did you rely at all on Royal Skousen Herculean efforts in this regard to try and correct...?

Denver: Yeah, that was used in the examination as well. And his latest version where he did a side-by-side comparison and he tracked it down through, that was really helpful.

Bill: Perfect. Anything else, RFM?

RFM: No, that's it. Except that, you know, we could go on for a long time. We've already gone longer than we usually go. But I have really, really enjoyed the conversation, Denver Snuffer. I appreciate your coming on the show and giving us of your time, and hopefully we can, maybe, get you to come on some...

Denver: Hah!

RFM: ...time in the future to talk about everything that you're doing now and all the great things that you're doing—because it's been a few years, and a lot of people I've talked to in my experience has been that you sort of seem to have fallen off the radar. And some people were wondering if you're even around anymore, if you're even doing anything anymore. Somebody thought maybe you had died. Obviously, that's not the case.

Denver: Well, this is a few months old; this is about a year old [holding up books]. And there's another one coming out here shortly. Yeah, I continue to work. And the purpose is to push the Restoration further along, to get more of it on the ground and back into the hands of people.

RFM: All right, well, you're certainly very busy. And no, you haven't fallen off the radar. So, thank you so much for coming on the show. And it says RFM. Yes. And this is...

Denver: That's so I don't... Yeah...

RFM: That's me. #lazylearner.

Denver: There you are.

RFM: I think that's all of us here tonight.

Denver: Well, my note was up so I didn't call you by your name.

RFM: I appreciate that. You had made a comment about in the private chat, saying you had the note up there to remind you to call me RFM. And I said, "And I have a note up on my computer to remind me to call you 'Your Holiness.'"

Denver: Your Holiness, yeah.

RFM: Yes. And you take a joke. You're so great. I appreciate it so much.

Denver: Yeah.

Bill: Denver, thank you for your time.

Denver: Yeah. Good to talk to you. Take care.

Bill: Yeah, appreciation to Maven for running things behind the scenes. By the way, it does look like the phone system now works, RFM, where you and I can both communicate with the caller. So, that worked out great, as well. And listeners, just want to say thank you. I appreciate so much everybody tuning in today, and it was grateful for Denver to give us his time. And folks, if you like Mormonism Live, please go to mormonismlive.org and donate. And don't forget...

Closing: Give Brother Joseph a break!

2021.12.17 Christmas Fireside

West Jordan, Utah
December 17, 2021

There are a lot of ways to triangulate into the story of Christmas. But I thought one thing that might be interesting to look at would be the significance of women and their role, motherhood, and the coming of children into the world, generally as a theme and then—ultimately—specifically in the case of the Christmas story. But I want to go a long way back before starting and take a look at a child that was born about 1100 years earlier, when Israel as a people had stabilized, had gotten an inheritance in the land, had been observing the law of Moses and the festivals that had been established under the law. They had a known hierarchy. They had locations where the center of worship was located. And everything had settled down into a pattern where you could clearly identify people in authority; you could clearly identify how, where, and when the religious observances ought to take place. And Israel as a people had assumed a very stable form.

And it was **utterly corrupt**. The center of the religion housed and was presided over by a family who engaged in drunkenness and immorality and seducing of women in the shadow of the tabernacle. And they were utterly off the mark—completely compliant with a recognized structure, unquestionably knew who was in authority, and everything about them was offensive to God.

And in the midst of this mess, an Ephraimite's wife, who was barren and couldn't have children, went up to the tabernacle on one of the festivals (because they were observing the festivals—the only reason to go up would have been on one of those occasions). She went up to the tabernacle. Don't know the date; don't know when; don't know which observance brought them there. But while there with the rest of her family enclave, she prayed that her barrenness would be removed and she be able to have a child.

And the wicked priest Eli—who tolerated his whoremonger sons, Hophni and Phineas—saw her moving her lips, but no words were coming out. And he made the normal assumption about the condition of the folks at the tabernacle at that time, and he assumed that she was drunk. And it was in the morning, and he more or less chided her for being drunk so early. (I mean, this is the kind of behavior we expect in the afternoon or the evening, but not in the morning.)

"You shouldn't be out here drunk and carrying on this early in the day." And she corrected him and said, No, she was praying. And he (without knowing what she was praying for) said, "A religious, righteous woman! May the Lord grant your prayer." The **priest** was unworthy. There was no reason why God would respect what this priest had to say. But he said to her, *[May] God...grant you your petition* (1 Samuel 1:5 RE), and this Ephraimite woman conceived and bore a son.

So, you ought to ask yourself: Why would the blessing of the presiding high priest (descendant of Aaron, sitting in the position of authority) who clearly could not raise sons in righteousness and who tolerated wickedness around the tabernacle, why would

his statement to Hannah result in God granting her petition? It's NOT because Eli's faith made her whole. It's because HER faith made her whole. She took the word of Eli, and God vindicated HER faith and gave her a son.

So really, the greatness of the story of Samu-EL—a name that means "the voice of God"—the reason why the story of Samu-el becomes significant is because of Hannah and **her faith**. God wasn't going to give to this woman of faith a son who didn't match the worthiness of the faith of the mother that sought the blessing of the son to come.

And so, Samu-el comes and is born. (I mean, the story is in the First Book of Samuel, and I've more or less summarized it.) God heard, and Samuel was born. And so, a barren woman conceives because of faith, and Samu-el comes into the world, and it changes the entire trajectory of Israel's history at that point. In fact, it will be Samu-el who's entrusted by the Lord to create the kings—first Saul and then David—create the kings that would replace the way in which things had been run. And Samuel found that offensive. But God told him, "Don't worry about it, Samuel. They're not rejecting you; they're rejecting me." And God's big enough to absorb that kind of faithlessness from His people and still bear with them.

Well, Samuel, was taken by Hannah (when he was weaned) and delivered to Eli to serve in the tabernacle—because he was a gift given to her from God, and she was returning the gift back to God after he was weaned by giving him to the high priest to raise. And Samuel grew up under the auspices of the presiding high priest in the tabernacle. And Hannah came up year by year, as the festivals were celebrated—[they] don't identify the festival, but I'm fairly confident it was the Passover—and brought a new coat to fit her son each year because Mom was not going to abandon the son, though the son had been given back to God as her offering.

We don't know the timing of the incident that happens that really changes the whole direction of where this story is going, but at one point, after making the observance that:

And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. ...when Eli was laid down in his place and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of [the Covenant] was [it was a tabernacle], and Samuel was laid down to sleep — that the Lord called Samuel. (1 Samuel 2:8 RE)

And Samuel went back to Eli ('cuz he'd been called) and asked him what he wanted, and Eli said, "I haven't said anything. Go back to sleep." That repeats itself three times, and Eli finally says, "You're being called by God. And the next time that voice calls to you, answer, 'Here I am, Lord.'"

So, the narrative tells us that Samuel did not yet recognize the voice of God—which is why he kept coming back to Eli. And then the incident happens again; the Voice calls to him, he answers and says, "Here I am, Lord." And then Samuel encounters the Lord for the first time. The extent of what happens when he encounters the Lord is not explained—it's just that the Lord spoke to him then. But as the narrative goes on, it confirms that

what happened was, in fact, the "open vision" that did not exist in those days. So, you have this apostate Israel—this decadent group of people with a corrupted, central hierarchy—and out of that, because of the faith of a woman, a child of faith is born. And the Lord deals with Hannah's son.

And from that moment, beginning at Samuel, something changes in the way in which the Lord will deal with Israel for generations. There is continuously a hierarchy and continuously a high priest, and continuously, there are Levites that are serving, and the structure remains intact. Samuel could not be the high priest because he was an Ephraimite. But he could be a prophet. And despite the structure, Samuel functioned as the voice of God to the people in those days. And he would be the one, ultimately, that anointed the king. And he'd be the one that ultimately replaced the king with the anointing of a second king.

God continued to deal with Israel through prophets throughout the Old Testament period of time. And it was an **extraordinary exception** if one of them was from the tribe of Levi and qualified to be a priesthood holder. And yet, they functioned as God's messenger, as God's spokesman—which presents a problem. Because the question is: How on earth is it that prophets can come along who don't fit into the hierarchy and match the pattern of governance that was established by Moses and respected throughout the Old Testament period? And Joseph Smith gives us the answer to that question, which is: God Himself ordained them. You had to have Melchizedek priesthood in order to enter into the presence of the Lord. But God cured that by conferring upon them the authority when He made His presence known to them, because God's a clever fellow, and He knows how to get around whatever rule there is that gets established.

So, Israel continues on their downward spiral. God peels off ten of the twelve tribes through captivity, and Assyria removes them, takes them over the Euphrates, dispossesses them of their land. They get freed, but they don't return to Israel. They're prophet-led after their scourging, after their imprisonment, after their enslavement—but they're prophet-led after they repented. But they never return. When they cross the Euphrates, upon their return, they turn north, and then they get lost. So those are the lost ten tribes.

Judah and the Southern Kingdom, they remain behind until—from 725 until about 600—so, for another one and a quarter centuries. And then they're taken captive by Babylon, and they're treated similarly. And when they return, Ezra, Nehemiah... They reestablish, and they reestablish a hierarchy (and the hierarchy matched what Moses had established). And it required that you be able to prove genealogically that you were of the house of Aaron or the tribe of Levi in order to be a Levitical priest or in order to be the governing high priest or part of the high priesthood's family in succession. And some people claimed that, that couldn't prove that, and they said, Okay, you can't function until there arise someone with Urim and Thummim that can get revelation to identify your genealogical qualifications to serve.

And so they divided up the folks that were able to return and prove (or get otherwise established by revelation) to be qualified to serve in the temple. And they divided them

up into 24 courses. One of the 24 courses was the "course of Abijah." And they would come to minister in the temple on a circulating basis; every 24 cycles, you'd get back to your course (except that when there was one of the festivals, everyone showed up—you had to have all of them in order to take care of what went on during the festival season). And so it was that Luke tells us that:

In the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah, and his wife — being of the daughters of Aaron, and her name Elizabeth — were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; ...they had no child. Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well-stricken in years.

And while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his priesthood, according to the law... (Luke 1:2-3 RE)

So, Zacharias has come to the temple. It cycles through—you have to go outside of the scriptural record in order to put together part of what's going on. But in order to serve in the capacity that Zacharias will serve (that we're gonna read about in just a moment), you had to win the lottery (and I mean, literally—they drew lots). And if the service in the temple needed someone and you had not been selected, then you remained in the drawing of the lots. But if you had been through and you had rendered that service in the temple, you weren't in the lot drawing. And apparently, based upon the record, Zacharias was an old guy, and he'd never won the lottery (kind of like those guys that drive up, you know, to Malad, Idaho to buy the lottery ticket when the number gets high enough, and they come back disappointed year after year). Well, Zachariah had been doing that because it was considered an extraordinary honor to have been allowed to go into the temple and to participate in the service that he was gonna render, in particular.

The way that the service got performed, they kept, outside the temple, they kept the altar of sacrifice burning continuously; it was always on fire. They cleaned it up from the ash from time to time, but the coals remained behind. When the occasion required the incense to be burned in the Holy Place, there were two priests who went in, one of whom got the ashes off of the little golden altar, and the other of whom put a shovelful of coals onto the golden altar (inside, before the veil of the Holy of Holies). One came in to clean, the other came in to deposit the coals, and then they were to depart. They could not turn their back on the Holy of Holies; that would be disrespectful. So they would back out, carrying what they brought with them, and they would leave. And then the priest who was allowed to burn the incense (that's who we're gonna read about in a minute), he then put the incense on the coals, and he gave a prayer before the Holy of Holies, outside the veil, while the incense ignited and burned. And the interior (above the altar), a column of smoke would rise up, and it would spread out on the ceiling of the Holy Place, which is where he was located, while he was offering a prayer—the ascending smoke being a symbol of the prayers of Israel going up to Heaven, and then when the column reaches the ceiling, it spreads out as a symbol of the Tree of Life and representation of the salvation that God offered.

The prayer that Zachariah offered was a set prayer. We can actually find it and read it today because Edersheim, a Jewish convert to Christianity in the 1800s, preserved the prayer. And the prayer, in its relevant part, asks God to "return the light of His countenance" to Israel. So, Zachariah offers the prayer and is petitioning God to let the light of His countenance return.

(Okay, you can't tell Troy everything that's gone on, 'cuz he's just arrived. So it'll be mystifying to him.) Over here. Good to see you, by the way. Yeah, hey, it started at seven. Did you know that? [Audience laughter.] Troy's a big guy; he can take a ribbing.

So, when the prayer gets offered, the only one that is inside the Holy Place is Zachariah. He's won the lottery, he's had the opportunity, he's recited the prayer. Everyone knows what he's praying for. And on the right side of the altar—emerging from what would symbolically be the presence of God in the Holy Place—comes the angel Gabriel, who identifies himself as: *I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God* (ibid. v.4). Okay? So Zachariah cannot make a mistake about who is talking and the authority represented by the voice of the person who's just identified himself. So, Gabriel says he "stands in the presence of God," AND "your prayer is to be answered"—so the light of God's countenance **will return** to Israel. "Your prayer's been answered; your wife is gonna bear a son." Elizabeth—who is barren and well-stricken in years, who is righteous before God, walking in holiness, observing all of the ordinances—she is going to conceive (the woman who is barren), and she's going to bear a son.

So now again, we have a woman who's going to conceive who cannot bear a child, just like Hannah before. And there's going to be a son sent into the world who's going to go before the face of God to prepare the way for the light of God's countenance to return to Israel.

And of course, Zachariah—who's there **representing Israel**, asking for God to do something for the **people** of Israel—is a little taken off-guard. "Okay, the light of God's countenance is going to return, and ~~you're Zachariah~~ you're Gabriel—you stand in the presence of God—and this is all great and wonderful, but uh... My wife is gonna have a child? I mean, we're both in 'assisted living' now. And this is not really... When I'm not here, we're in wheelchairs! I mean, she's got that little motorcycle cub that goes down the sidewalk, but..." It's the improbability of the mechanism that is being described for the return of God's countenance to the people of Israel that astonishes Zachariah. "I mean, wonderful, this is a **great** thing that you're going to do! And I'm happy for that. I just don't... I just don't get that one thing, you know: Elizabeth? And a son? Uh... that's, well, improbable. In fact, I'm calling BS. Okay, I know you're an angel and all, but I just... I'm... I'm not... I'm not seeing that."

And Gabriel says, "Oh, you want a sign, do you? So that you can have faith? Well, let me give you a sign. I mean, we've done rainbows; we've done floods. We produced leprosy on a hand, and we've removed it. We've parted waters. Let's see... Okay, I got it. You're gonna be dumb, and you're gonna be deaf. How's that for a sign? That way we're not screwing up anyone's neighborhood. We're not wrecking the irrigation system

in the valley with the water of the Jordan drying up. We're not gonna do any of that stuff. We'll just do it with you. How's that sound?"

...**very calculated maneuver**, because everyone knew how long the prayer would take, and Zachariah was in there too long! So everyone perceives that something's going on that's a bit irregular here. And one of the traditions—I'm not sure how credible it is—but one of the traditions was that the priest (who remained behind to offer the prayer) came in with a rope tied to one of his legs so that if he died while he was in there, they could pull him out, and they wouldn't go disrupt the peace of the Holy Place; they just retrieve the guy. And if that tradition be true, I'm pretty sure that Zachariah was...

"How can this be...? Gah! You know, give me some room here!" He was skeptical! But the people outside knew he was tarrying and something's going on. And it's beginning to become awkward. I mean, I can imagine people looking at one another and saying, "I don't know. What do we do? You know, you don't turn your back to the Holy Place. But we don't go in their face first. Do you back in to retrieve the carcass of the old guy? I mean, this guy's, you know... We all call him 'a raisin' behind his back—and that's being generous. I mean, what do we do? What do we do?"

He tarries long enough that it's **awkward** out there. And when he emerges, Gabriel's been really clever—because everyone wants to know, "Hey, hey, what gives?" And they perceive that something happened. And it's a way of saying, "Too sacred for you, at this point. You're not going to get the story just yet. You, Israel, in your messed-up, wretched, apostate state, you're not gonna know. I've got my priest. I've got my righteous mother who's barren, and I've got my miracle coming. But as for you people? You won't know. And furthermore, when that boy is brought to be circumcised, an angel will ordain him **on that day** to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, so that he will come with authority."

Samu-el came to try and fix and repair; John would come to overthrow. So in the apostate condition that Israel finds itself when the angel Gabriel is sent, he's sent to allow another barren, righteous, faithful woman to bring a son into the world that will go before the presence of the Lord Himself, to prepare the way.

Zacharias said..to the angel, How shall I know this? For I am an old man, ...my wife is well-stricken in years. ...the angel answer[ed and] said unto him, I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings...

And [so,] in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto the city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. (Ibid. vs. 4-5)

So, now we have a barren woman who is going to bear a child. And in the sixth month of her pregnancy, the angel Gabriel is sent again, this time to another woman—who may not have been barren, but she was also not married—and so her ability to bear a child is going to be equally miraculous with the coming of Samuel into the world, with

the coming of John into the world—and this will be the Son of God. It's in the sixth month.

Now, we actually can calculate (because they kept pretty good records) when, in the normal rotation of things, the course to which Zachariah belonged would have been serving; it would have been at one of two times during the course of any calendar year. But the problem is, we don't know whether the incident involving Gabriel appearing to Zachariah occurred on those days or on one of the festival dates in which the priests would be at the temple and would be sacrificing and performing the daily rituals and having lots drawn—because it happened on those dates.

Well, if it was in a springtime observance, then the birth of John would be in the fall, and Christ's birth would be exactly half a year opposite one another. Whether you knew it (or recall it), the tradition in the early days of the Restoration with Joseph was that the General Conference held on April 6th was held on April 6th because that was identified as the time when the Lord was born—meaning the Lord came in the spring. And if that's the case, they then had the fall conference exactly six months later, and that would be on October 6th (so that April 6th would be Christ's birthday, and October 6th would be exactly six months later—and no one ever pointed it out, but that would have been John the Baptist's birthday—if you accept the six months and you accept those dates).

There's a symmetry to that because, in the spring, you have new life breaking forth; you have a period of time in which the fall and the winter (representing death) is overthrown with the spring and the coming of new life—and the April 6th date kind of makes sense. And the October 6th date for John kind of makes sense too because you're... That's when you're wrapping things up; it's harvest time; it's when you're closing up shop. And if you're talking about judgment, that sort of makes sense that that would be coinciding with the birth of John, who came to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews and bring it to an end.

So, what the incidents represent in the story, thus far, is that a long-suffering God, who literally has put up with the disbelief, the apostasy, the wickedness, the wretchedness of people that He had called to be His—**that** long-suffering is not without its limits. But the limits are determined by God. He's the one that sets it up, and He's the one who takes it down. And part of the Christmas story is a reminder to us that even people with whom God has a sacred relationship (who He has called and restored the light of His countenance to in the person of Samu-el and other prophets that followed thereafter, including Isaiah, Zenos, Zenock), even people to whom He has extended His hand (stretched out still, despite their faithlessness), have their limits. And it is up to God to decide when the limit has been reached. And it's up to God to decide when He will overthrow it. And when He chooses to do so, then the only thing that matters, whether anyone respected the boy or not, was that the boy be ordained to do the work. And so John's mission, once he's been commissioned by God to do so, could not prevent the overthrow of the kingdom of the Jews. It was God's will.

A lot of people thought John a mere curiosity. He may have had a **father** that served in the temple—but **John** never did. He was raised in the wilderness; he was sort of a

curiosity: "Hey, I know. Grab a bag of new wine and new skins. Let's go out in the desert and watch the wild man ~~put~~ a tie-one-on and have a good laugh. The guy wears camelhair clothes. I mean, I'm chafing just looking at the guy. He eats freaking locusts, man. And, you know, he eats honey. (We can make mead out of honey, and that'll do the same trick as the wine—but he eats the honey!) I mean, let's go see him! Oh, come on, let's go out. Let's do this; let's get a good laugh. Hey, come on."

John was not someone that was welcome to the inner circle of the kingdom, of the hierarchy, of the priestly establishment. He was not bonafide in the sense that the Jews would accept. People listened, heard, and were converted. But they were largely people who **knew** they needed to repent, who (for all the problems that Israel had) recognized that they themselves had something wrong with them. And therefore, their hearts were softened enough that they could take in the message that he had to deliver. The priests that came out? They didn't believe; they had no reason to give up what they considered as **their authority, their position, their hierarchy**. They were bonafide.

"There was no beauty in him that we should desire him" is kind of an English translation that's poetical and non-literal. What the passage (which applies equally to John and to the Lord that he went before) would be better rendered, "He had no credentials that we should respect." "There was no beauty in him that we should desire him" has created in medieval artwork these caricatures of a butt-ugly Lord. Our Lord was not an unappealing physical specimen in the flesh. But He was an outcast, and He was not someone that got respected. There was no beauty, there was no credential, there was no bona fides, there was no respectability associated with Him that we should give Him automatic respect. The Lord came (just like John came) not entitled to automatic respect. It required the words of His mouth to be heard in order to determine whether or not the man spoke for God.

To say, "I have authority! You must respect me!" is so hollow and so insipid that no one ought respect those that come with that claim. But to speak words with authority that tell you truth, that bring light, that stir you to understand things that you did not before, that open the veil by letting in more light and truth, that by persuasion and pure knowledge give you an understanding that you did not possess before, that's what matters. And that's what Christ came with. And it pierced the hearts of the people who heard.

And when they came to Christ and said, "Okay, okay, yeah... You've got a good schtick here... BUT what **authority** do you have? I mean, we can't compete with you when you get up and you deliver a sermon like the Sermon on the Mount! But what we **can** claim is that we have the position of authority; we run the temple. We possess all of the accouterments—you don't have any of the stuff that belongs to the temple in your possession. We've got it all! So tell us your authority, 'cuz we can show you ours. We've got it all." And Jesus says, "Hey, I'll tell you what: You tell me what authority John had. And if you'll answer me and tell me whose authority John had ('cuz you didn't accept him in your ranks; he was an outcast; he was not preferred within your organization), you tell me what authority he had, and then I'll tell you what authority I have." They knew that was dangerous. So, "We can't tell you." And so Christ, likewise, said He couldn't tell them what authority **He** had.

Everything about this story, thus far and continuing on into the life of the Lord, everything about this story has nothing to do with bonafide authority by people who possess rank and position—nothing to do with that! It has to do with angels. It has to do with women of faith. It has to do with the ability of women in miraculous ways to conceive and bear and bring forth sons commissioned by God to accomplish a work. And when they have that, it's the only thing that matters. It changes the outcome of the history of Israel. It changes the outcome of the dispensation of Moses. God set it up, and God took it down. And He set it up in a fabulously-obvious public way. And He took it down with an obscure guy who stayed in the desert of Judea until the day that his ministry began. (It was almost like an anti-crescendo; it went out with a whimper, **with the authority of God to accomplish the takedown of the kingdom.**)

And the people of that generation—whether they thought John was significant and who may have rejoiced at his beheading, and who thought the Lord was insignificant and who were glad to be rid of Him on the cross, and who resisted the rumors of His resurrection—the people of that generation **knew their kingdom was overthrown** when, in 70 A.D., the entirety of their construct was destroyed by a Roman army. And they literally, they literally ate the bodies of their young dead children after their children died because of the extremity that the Roman siege put them under. So the overthrow of the kingdom of the Jews was an exclamation point and unmistakable. But the moment at which the **Lord** caused it to happen was different—and unless you knew what John was up to and you listened and accepted the message, you wouldn't know it had just happened. But it did.

So, the story then turns to Mary and the accomplishment of the announcement to her (the angel Gabriel sent to her and announcing it):

And when she saw the angel, she was troubled at his saying, ...pondered in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. ...the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob, **for ever**, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How can this be? And the angel answered, ...said unto her, Of the holy ghost and the power of the Highest. Therefore also, that holy child that shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren; for with God, nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid[en] of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word. And the angel departed from her. (Ibid. vs. 5-6, emphasis added)

"Behold the handmaid[en] of the Lord," the word handmaiden (Old English term), but it literally means "God's spouse." Behold His Wife.

So, this kind of intimate knowledge... I mean, Luke is writing this story. And I mean, one obvious question that ought to present itself is: How does Luke know what Mary is "pondering in her heart" when he writes his account? See, the people who are New

Testament scholars... Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke, and he wrote the Book of Acts. And in the Book of Acts, he uses the plural pronoun "we" at one point in the travels, and so they claim that Luke was a Gentile convert who got converted by Paul and joined him on one of Paul and Barnabas' missions (because the "we" plural pronoun suggests that that was when he came on the scene).

Well, the Scriptures we have in the Joseph Smith version... Joseph renders his Joseph Smith Translation version only in English. So we don't know what the Greek counterpart necessarily would be. But one of the very first things that Joseph did to change the account in Luke was to change the first sentence. And this is how the book of Luke begins in the Joseph Smith version, *As I am a messenger of Jesus Christ...* (Luke 1:1 RE), and then he goes on from there. Well, you've got "angelos" (or angel), you've got "apostolos" (or apostle) for the word that appears here as "messenger." I mean, we don't have the Greek text to go consult. And that only appears in English. But what Luke is saying is he's either an angelic ministrant who is commissioned with a message that was given him by God, or he's an apostolic messenger who got the information that he's conveying from the Lord. But neither of the options that you have suggests that Luke was some kind of Gentile convert with Paul and Barnabas going out and finding him in the Mediterranean basin and bringing him aboard. He's talking about the earliest events that occurred in the coming forth of the Lord with intimate detail.

Luke is one of the two men walking on the road to Emmaus. He identifies by name the other person: Cleopas (Greek name, similar the male counterpart to Cleopatra, the female rendering of the Greek name). But he doesn't identify the other guy, because that's him. So, Luke knows things about the Lord before He comes even into conception in the womb of Mary. **And** the Lord spent the better part of the day of His resurrection walking on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus and talking with them as they wondered about the events that had occurred of late. So Luke is no small potatoes. And Joseph Smith, I think, rightly changes the narrative to put him in a position to know these things.

Well, so, the handmaiden...

...and the angel departed from her.

And in those days, Mary went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. ...it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the holy ghost, and she spoke out with **a loud voice** and said... (Ibid. vs. 6-7, emphasis added)

Isn't that interesting that Elizabeth speaks out, but what she has to say is quoted by Luke, and he makes mention that when she speaks these words, she does so in a loud voice.

You know, the "Hosanna Shout" is is not supposed to be [spoken quietly, rhythmically, and with no enthusiasm]:

Hosanna.

Hosanna.

Hosanna

to God

and the Lamb.

It's supposed to be a shout. In fact, it's supposed to be a **chaotic** shout, with everyone yelling—and not in unison. Everyone knows the words, and they repeat the words. But it's just a cacophony, a **loud** outpouring. Elizabeth is pretty much doing just that when Mary comes to meet her.

Now, it doesn't go into any great detail, but it's pretty apparent that Mary stayed with Elizabeth throughout the time period—and that when Joseph and her encounter one another again, she was "showing." And of course, Joseph wants to be discreet about it. He has no intention of making her any further humiliated. And the angel Gabriel says to Joseph, "You don't worry about that. This is something God's doing. And you take her to wife anyway."

His genealogy mattered; Mary's genealogy mattered—He needed to be brought into that house. If the kingdom of Israel were still functioning, Christ would have been the king of Israel. It was necessary before Christ's ministry began that Joseph die so that Joseph [Jesus] was indeed the King of the Jews. And so, all the events that happened, happened in a very calculated way.

(Okay, Troy got here a little later, so I'll take a few more minutes. But I intended not to impose on people by keeping them beyond one hour, and it is right now one hour—well, we started a few minutes after the hour.)

Look, we tend to focus on the men when we read the stories. We tend to celebrate the coming of the angel Gabriel, and the guy to whom he spoke, and the status of someone burning incense in the temple, and John coming with authority and making the hierarchy upset, and Jesus, and the priest Eli, and Samu-el. But the fact of the matter is that the miraculous conception and birth of these men were entirely contingent upon the presence of faithful women who conceived and bore these sons into the world through faith.

It was Hannah's faith that got us Samuel, and it was Samuel that was the prototype of all of the Old Testament prophets. He was it. And following in his example—in his footsteps—were other prophets throughout the Old Testament era who came similarly called and ordained by God, in order to accomplish the various missions that they were sent. But it began with Hannah and the faith of Hannah.

When a woman who is "otherwise unlikely to conceive and bear a child" brings a child into the world as a result of the intervention of God (and my supposition is that that's happened throughout history **a number of times**), then the course of mankind's history

hinges and changes upon the faith of the woman and the birth of the child. And we tend to read the Christmas story without even noticing the overshadowing presence and role of the women—just like we read the story of Samuel, and we think, yeah, yeah, he ordained Saul to be king of Israel. And then he was the one who was blind when Samuel [Saul] came back from the war, and he brought with him all of the sheep and the cows. And he had told King Saul to destroy everything, including the animals—and Saul's lying to him and says, "Yeah, we did what you told us. Great day. I mean, we won the game. It was a shut-out. They didn't score a single ~~shut~~ touchdown; we routed them, and we did everything you told us to do." And Samuel says, "Then what's the bleating of the sheep and the moo-ing of the cows that I hear? Can't see 'em, but I can sure hear 'em." And so Saul disappoints the mouthpiece of the Lord, and bad things follow.

Look, **God does indeed control the outcome.** And it doesn't matter who's in charge, what the hierarchy looks like, how much property they possess, whether they have all the accouterments that make them appear to possess priestly authority. **All that is ever required to overthrow any establishment that God has ordained is for Him to send one person with authority to accomplish the purpose of overthrowing it.** And it doesn't even matter if those who are overthrown recognize it until 70 years later, when they're eating the dead carcasses of their own children to keep themselves alive, otherwise dying of hunger and thirst. It doesn't matter that they recognize or acknowledge it; it only requires that God **do it.** And if He's done it, then it's irresistible. It'll happen.

And so it is that the Christmas story includes **a whole lot of feminist issues** that we tend to overlook. I mean, the Scriptures really are replete with a whole lot more "central role of women" in the bringing of things to pass than we recognize. And the Heavenly Mother has informed us in one of the proverbs (I think it's eight, but you can look it up; I've quoted it in *Our Divine Parents*). She's informed us that SHE is the One who appoints kings and princes. She's the One that makes the determination. Father defers to Her when it comes to the choosing of the sons that are to be elevated. And so you risk a great deal when you fail to acknowledge the presence and the central **authority** of the Divine Mother. (I've been trying to make that point for a while now, and I don't know how much success that's had.)

Anyway, let me close by bearing testimony that miraculous conception/miraculous birth/timing—all of those things are not just done with "mighty men." The presence; the central role; the importance of the mothers who have done the work of perpetuating the species, bringing to pass the continual presence of man on Earth; the presence of women and their integral role in the whole of it is something in the Christmas story that we ought to take a moment to reflect on, as well, and not forget the vital importance of what women have and are and do and will do. *Neither is the man without the woman, [nor] the woman without the man, in the Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:44 RE) is another way of reminding us—in Paul's writings—about how the Creation itself was ordained. It was not complete until the two of them were together. The image of God did not appear on Earth until you had the man and the woman together. In the image of God *created he him: male and female created he them* (Lectures on Faith 2:8; see also Genesis 2:8). There's

not a single man in this room who's complete. The completion only comes with the presence of the woman.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2021.12.22 Salt Lake Tribune Interview

Mormon Land
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
December 22, 2021

Dave Noyce: Thanks for joining us today on Mormon Land where we explore news in and about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm managing editor, Dave Noyce. I oversee the Salt Lake Tribune faith coverage. I'm joined again by senior religion reporter, Peggy Fletcher-Stack. Hi, Peggy.

Peggy Fletcher-Stack: Hi Dave.

Dave: We remind our listeners about a new way to support Mormon Land. Just go to patreon.com where, with a small donation, you can access transcripts to our podcasts, our complete newsletter, and other gifts. Again, that's patreon.com/Mormonland. Now for today's show.

Some members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that their church has become staid, legalistic, and bureaucratic. They yearn for more of the mystical encounters espoused by church founder, Joseph Smith, and his early followers. In 2006, Utah Attorney Denver Snuffer published *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*. It became an overnight sensation with those Latter-day Saints who wanted more spiritual experiences. That book and the volumes that followed attracted the attention of church authorities, and in 2013, Snuffer was excommunicated. Hundreds of other members joined him at gatherings and in small groups, and thus was born the "remnant movement," which today touts 1000s of adherents. Denver Snuffer joins us today in studio to discuss the movement, its past, present, and future. Welcome.

Denver Snuffer: Oh, thanks.

Dave: Glad to have you with us. So Denver, tell us a little bit more about the birth of this movement and why you've ventured down this spiritual path.

Denver: My departure from the LDS Church was not voluntary; I would have remained a member had they permitted me to remain so. They just thought that, apparently, the things that I was saying/the things I was writing were incompatible with their desire to claim the authority to rule and reign and control in a way that invades even what a person thinks. And so they kicked me out, although I was willing to remain.

And shortly after that, I began a series—it was a year long; it was exactly 365 days long... I began a series of ten lectures throughout the (what we call) the Mormon corridor in Boise and Idaho Falls and down into Farmington; we went into Colorado; we went into Nevada, into Arizona, delivering a series of ten lectures. And at the end of the lecture series, the tenth lecture, we invited people to be re-baptized, which was a USUAL event in the life of early Mormons; it's an UNUSUAL event today.

There's no church; there's no organization. It's simply an act of following a command by Christ to be baptized. And so, people have been re-baptized, have remained Latter-day Saints, they have remained Methodists, they've remained affiliated with whatever group they want to be a member of in an organizational sense. But rebaptism itself is a signal of faith and repentance and acceptance of Christ (as opposed to joining an institution—there is no institution). But there are a lot of people who believe similarly...

Dave: So, are most the people that are in the remnant Latter-day Saints, though?

Denver: I would say, right now, the majority is clearly former and perhaps disaffected Latter-day Saints. But that hasn't been the only group that there's been an outreach to. I've done a series of lectures or presentations—Los Angeles, Dallas, Atlanta—approaching Christians, in many respects because of the aggressiveness of the LDS Church's missionary program. They get there first, and they get there early. And then Christians form their opinion of Joseph Smith based upon the narrative story told by the LDS institution and its missionaries.

One of the books that I wrote, which is aimed primarily at a Christian audience, is *A Man Without Doubt* (and I brought a copy of that, which I'm gonna leave with you folks today). *A Man Without Doubt*, it focuses on the Christian nature of Joseph Smith's life. It takes the three longest compositions by Joseph Smith, and it gives you a historical setting so you can understand the context out of which the document was composed, and then the composition itself. I call it the three greatest failures in Joseph Smith's ministry or life—and then his response in dealing with the failure.

The first one was the effort to get the higher priesthood conferred upon people (that happened at Morley's farm). And the history of what happened after that is a disaster. The people upon whom he conferred that authority universally fell away, apostas[ized], became enemies; one of them wrote a series of nine letters denouncing Joseph that got published in the newspaper. And in response to that failure, Joseph went to work trying to get people to understand faith more—and *Lectures on Faith* came out of that experience.

He got confined to the Liberty Jail, and he spent approximately half a year (just under six months) there. And in the Liberty Jail, he composed the "letter from Liberty Jail." The LDS version of that appears as Doctrine and Covenants sections 121, 122, and 123. The entire letter is in this book. And that arrest came as a result of betrayal by members of the organization of the church. He was dealing with a mass apostasy, an excommunication of the three witnesses/of members of the Quorum of the Twelve in the 1838 timeframe. And he wrote the *Joseph Smith History*—because John Whitmer (the brother of David Whitmer, who was also excommunicated) took the history—he was the church historian—and there was no history. So, the *Joseph Smith History* that he wrote is in response to the problems that resulted at Far West. And all of the history that leads up to those documents is in this book as an introduction.

And the suggestion to a Christian audience is that maybe you ought to take another look at Joseph. If you understand the context and then you see the way in which he responds to these crises, to these betrayals, to these insider friends turning their backs

on him, then you'll understand the man a little bit better. And that's A Man Without Doubt —primarily for a Christian audience, but Latter-day Saints will probably get a lot out of it, too.

Dave: So, Denver, you just talked about... First of all, why is it called "remnant"? What's...? Is that something that began organically or as a...

Denver: Yeah, it began organically, and I don't know that there is a name quite yet, although that's kind of the settled term that people call it.

Dave: And is there any kind of structure? Are there leaders? I mean, you've sort of hinted at this, like, are you a leader or...?

Denver: Well, the answer is that there's no real structure. There are fellowships that get formed. And then they can grow; they can split; they can reorganize themselves. The only organizational governance that exists are: men hold the priesthood—but a man cannot exercise priesthood authority outside of his own family unless he has seven women sign a certificate vouching for him as a worthy man who is to be trusted in exercising authority. It requires the seven women to sustain him before he can use priesthood authority outside of his own family. If someone were going to baptize someone, for example, and they're not a member of their family, they would need to have a sustaining vote by seven women.

The other governing principle is that if a man becomes or is viewed as having fallen into some kind of transgression that makes him untrustworthy, then the right to exercise that priestly authority outside of the family gets revoked by a council of 12 women who have to reach a unanimous decision. And if the 12 women reach a unanimous decision to revoke the priestly authority, then his certificate is taken from him. And he can't exercise priest[ly] authority outside of the family that he belongs to.

Peggy: Who issues those initial "licenses" (or whatever)?

Denver: Yeah, the sustaining certificate—it's issued within, generally, within fellowships. The requirement is that the women who signed need to be acquainted with the man's daily walk, and those are the words that get used: "acquainted with his daily walk," meaning you can't get a stranger to sustain you; you need someone who essentially knows what kind of person you are and feels like you can be trustworthy.

If the man is married, one of the seven must be his wife. If his wife will not sustain him to exercise priestly authority outside the home, then it doesn't matter if seven other women will. She has to agree to it. So, while men exercise priestly authority, women do all of the controlling, vouching, and removing—and priestly authority has been revoked by women several times within the movement.

Peggy: Okay, so that's sort of the structure. Do you have basic tenets? Is there an Articles of Faith? Are there 13 Articles of Faith? Are there 20 Articles of Faith? Are there...?

Denver: There aren't... There aren't particular Articles of Faith. But we do have our own canon of Scripture, and I've brought for you a set of the Scriptures that I'm gonna leave with you.

Peggy: Okay.

Denver: If you are interested in how best to understand the differences (the major differences), then you can look in what's called the third volume (called the Teachings and Commandments). And there's three sections in the Teachings and Commandments — sections 156, 157, and 158—that will really give you the anchor/the bedrock for what the differences are. And then there's another one that I wrote down (which is 166) that I think helps explain why the LDS Church has gone into a period of radical doctrinal-shifting since 2014—and that's 166. But I'll leave that with you.

Dave: Okay.

Denver: Three volumes, and they're yours to...

Peggy: So, what's your... Again, I guess we'll call this a "movement." What's the view of Joseph Smith versus Brigham Young?

Denver: Joseph is unquestionably accepted as someone that had a mission from and accomplished a work on behalf of God. Joseph Smith's revelations, largely, are accepted—slightly different form than what you have in the LDS Church and more of them than what you have in the Doctrine and Covenants—and are canonized in what's called the Teachings and Commandments (the T&C). Joseph also had revelations that were not canonized, and they appear in the T&C. And the entirety of the letter from the Liberty Jail is included in the T&C, as opposed to excerpts from it.

Joseph was and is recognized as someone that began a work that will eventually culminate in wrapping things up and the return of Christ. But when Joseph died, Emma Smith made the comment that "without Joseph, there is no church." And I think that largely proved to be the case.

Things took a turn with Brigham Young. I personally think that we still owe a debt of gratitude to Brigham Young, no matter what, because... One of the comments I've made about him is that he figured out (unlike Joseph), he figured out how to monetize Mormonism. Joseph was had a pending petition for bankruptcy when he died, and Brigham Young became the first multi-millionaire west of the Mississippi—because Brigham knew how to monetize Mormonism. THAT you can say is a bad thing, but it's also a good thing, in the sense that I don't think that the Book of Mormon would have been preserved, the teachings of Joseph would have been preserved, Mormonism itself would not have been preserved if it had not been for Brigham Young.

I don't think (just like HE said), I don't think he was a prophet in the same sense of as Joseph Smith. He did not claim to be; he claimed to be a Yankee guesser and someone that could be trusted to preserve things. And he did. And we owe a debt of gratitude—despite all his excesses—we owe a debt of gratitude to the man, and I'm grateful for

what he preserved because the Mormon missionaries that came and persuaded me to convert to Mormonism in 1973 were as a direct result of the successes that Brigham Young brought to Mormonism.

I don't think he preserved it intact. I don't think that... For example, there's ample proof to satisfy anyone that's willing to look at it that Brigham Young introduced polygamy, certainly practiced it in a form that differed from what was going on while Joseph Smith was alive. And I don't think polygamy was or is a moral practice. Brigham Young endorsed it, he defended it, he practiced it, and he produced offspring with a lot of women. And Joseph Smith, whatever your view may be of that, had children/he fathered children with Emma Smith alone. And I think that single problem defines, I believe, the difference between the two men (as many other things do, but it's one of the more vocal ones). And we don't believe in or practice plural marriage.

Dave: What's your view of Russell Nelson, the current LDS Church President?

Denver: He's the fellow who came to my stake and released the prior stake president (who had put me on the stake High Council) and called the new stake president who would ultimately excommunicate me. And it was Russell Nelson who handed my membership records to his newly-called stake president and told him that the committee had decided that this man needed to be dealt with. And so, Russell Nelson—I assume on behalf of the Strengthening Members Committee (he said "committee"; he didn't define which one)—was the one that had me kicked out. So...

Dave: How did...? What...? How did you get crosswise with the church? I mean, what is it that they did not approve of (even if you disagree, of course)?

Denver: Yeah, I could see in the LDS telling-of-their-history that there were many things that were either inadequately or even falsely portrayed and that there were gaps that really needed to be filled in. One of the people that was affected by the lack of candor in Mormon history by the institution was a son of mine who was a returned missionary. He had gone on an LDS mission, and in the process of time, he had fallen away, left the church, and was not interested in it any longer. So I took the problems with Mormon history, and I wrote a book (*Passing the Heavenly Gift*) that was intended to acknowledge—candidly—some of the problems with Mormon history and then to suggest, in spite of that, it's possible still to preserve faith. But I discussed candidly that a number of the claims that are made institutionally are on either thin ice or underwater. And that book—which was designed to allow people to preserve their faith in the Restoration—was viewed by people who had NOT come to some crossroads or crisis because of the lack of institutional candor. People that weren't aware of these problems, reading the book, were horrified that I'm talking about these kinds of things.

One of the passages that was, in particular, highlighted by President Nelson and the stake president in discussions with me involved Heber J. Grant. Heber J. Grant recorded—in a letter that he wrote to a woman—that he was unaware of anyone who had had any contact with the Lord since Joseph Smith's death. He also recorded (in his journal) comments that his mother made to him about how he was more interested in money than he was in spiritual things, and he acknowledged in his diary that he had

never had an inspired "dreaming" or any kind of spiritual experience. And those are appear in the book, and I'm quoting from Heber J. Grant's own diary. Well, I was accused of denigrating a church president by quoting from the church president's diary. And my response was that if he's being denigrated, it was by his mother—or himself—because he was quoting HER in his diary, and he was WRITING in his diary. And so, if there be objections to what was in the book that was denigrating, it's really candor on the part of Heber J. Grant. There's a lot of that kind of stuff in the book.

Peggy: Weren't you also...? Didn't you talk about your own conversation with Deity?

Denver: Only to mention the fact that it had happened.

Peggy: Okay.

Denver: It was not... The book, The Second Comforter literally has nine words in it about me and that experience. And so, yes—but there's another backstory to that...

I don't know; I'm talking a lot. Do you... Is that what you want?

Dave: What's that...? What was the experience? And you know, what did you write about it, to make these nine words (or whatever)?

Denver: When I have had any kind of an encounter with the Lord, I have written down what happened contemporaneous with the event. I recorded it in my journals (I have about 13 volumes of journals now), and when they're made public, the only thing that I ever make public is a direct quote from the journal. I didn't make anything public in The Second Comforter book other than the fact that it had occurred. Subsequently, I did make public some of the events involving the Lord—events dealing with the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane—were taken and made part of a chapter in a book, Come, Let Us Adore Him. That excerpt has been taken out of the chapter and put into the Teachings and Commandments, so you can read it in there.

Peggy: How many kinds of face or one-on-one experiences have you had with the Lord?

Denver: In terms of number?

Peggy: Yeah.

Denver: I don't have a count really. I...

Peggy: But quite a few?

Denver: Yeah, I tend to make a lot of mistakes.

Dave: Are we talking visions, personal encounters...?

Denver: Yes...

Dave: Which?

Denver: Personal encounters...

Dave: Okay.

Denver: ...and visionary encounters. But here's... This is my general observation. If you talk a lot about that kind of thing, it attracts the attention of a certain kind of personality. That kind of personality is quick—QUICK—to be impressed and become enthusiastic. But they're shallow, and they don't stay around. And they create a lot of problems in their going.

To the extent that it is possible for me to take something I've been instructed by the Lord to cover, I do it by using Scripture—existing Scripture. It is only in the extremity that there isn't something that I can use that I will resort to talking about something that is heretofore uncovered by existing Scripture. I don't like the idea of sensationalism, because it attracts the wrong kind of person. I also don't like to ever retell a story using more and new and different words—because I've seen what's happened with the (between 9 and 13) versions that Joseph made to the First Vision encounter and how people say, "Oh, he must have been making it up because he left something out here, and he added something there. Therefore, it must not be true." So, when I do make something public, I go back to the journal, I quote directly from the journal, and so what you've got in (to the extent that it has been canonized) are excerpts (literally) from my journal, word for word, with what got recorded contemporaneous with the event itself. And I try to limit it all to that, and to tell it one time consistently, and to leave it at that.

But sensationalism... It doesn't accomplish what you think it would accomplish. The truth that persuades people is not a fantastic story about an encounter with God. The truth that persuades people are things that appeal to the integrity of your heart and the kindness, the goodness, the decency within you that aligns with something truer and higher and better. You know when you are doing right and pleasing God because you've just done something to help or bless the life of someone else. When someone relies upon fantastic stories to attract attention, very often they're trying to raise money or get a claim or get power or authority over people.

Dave: So, you talked about a canon.

Denver: Yes.

Dave: Just so our listeners... Is your canon...? And just briefly is it, like, do you use the Bible, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants? All? More? It sounds like things have been added, of course. Pearl of Great Price? What's your canon?

Denver: The front matter(s) in all three volumes of the canonized Scriptures explain themselves. But to summarize what went on: Joseph Smith, in a number of revelations that appear in the Doctrine and Covenants of the LDS Church, refers to the "fullness of the Scriptures." He had a very specific objective in mind when he talked about the fullness of the Scriptures—it was to have the King James Version of the Bible with inspired revisions and commentary published as a new version of the Bible—and then put together with the New Testament and the Book of Mormon in a single volume. The

Old Testament would be published separately. And then they would include the Doctrine and Covenants, which began with the Lectures on Faith (one of the three works that I talk about in that A Man Without Doubt).

What the canonized Scriptures consist of are the Joseph Smith version of the Old Testament in one volume, which includes what would appear as the book of Moses in the LDS Pearl of Great Price—that was always intended to be part of Genesis, so it appears in the book of Genesis, in the fashion it was originally prepared by Joseph in the Inspired Version. It is the Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament in the second volume, together with the Book of Mormon. And then the third volume is a Teachings and Commandments that include things that have been left behind by Joseph, by Hyrum Smith, and then some of the things that I have done. And in the third volume, there's also a Glossary of Terms. That Glossary of Terms, I think, is one of the best theological educations that you could get right now if you want to know about Mormonism and the Restoration—and it's quite extensive. It's probably, you know, 40% of the third volume (are the Glossary of Terms).

Peggy: So, do you have missionaries?

Denver: Well, not in the sense that someone's called and sent out on a mission...

Dave: No name tags and all the...

Denver: None of that stuff. But yeah, there are a lot of people out there missionary-ing. And one of the... As I mentioned, A Man Without Doubt was written to try and redefine Joseph to a Christian audience. A new book that just came out (which I'll leave with you also) is titled The Testimony of Jesus: Past, Present, and Promise, which is also specifically addressed to Christians.

I'll be at a conference in Kentucky in next March. And the hope is that Mormonism can be re-envisioned by the Christian audience as something that is not necessarily The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with name tags and white shirts and knocking on doors and "What do you know about the Mormons? Would you like to know more?" This book deals with the history of Christianity, the history of Protestantism, and the history of the Restoration in a way that I hope helps Christians relook at things. Much of what the Christian world has today, no matter what denomination you go to, would have been considered heretical and non-Christian for the first thousand years of Christianity. And so, Evangelicals that are even later in time than the Protestant fathers think they have a hope in Christ based upon their interpretation of New Testament passages. What this book suggests is that maybe we ought to allow Christ the prerogative, if He chooses to do so, to speak again and redefine what it meant and means to be a follower of Christ. And so that book is for a Christian audience. And I'll leave that with you. There should be plenty of fodder in what I'm giving you for a good article.

Peggy: Do you have... For communion or the sacrament, do you use wine as the...?

Denver: Yeah.

Peggy: So, it's wine. Do you have other regular rituals? Do you have any temple rituals?

Denver: None at this point, but we are raising funds to build a temple and expect to do so. We don't have a command to build a temple at this point. But we do have a statement to us from the Lord that He always commands us (His people in any generation) to build a temple to Him.

Joseph Smith had begun a process of restoring something that included temple ordinances, but they never got completed. They weren't regularized into print until about 1877 by Brigham Young. All of the early church presidents—Brigham Young, John Taylor, even Wilford Woodruff—all of the early presidents said that the temple rites were not correct, they were not complete, and that they expected a resurrected Joseph Smith to come and to put it all in order. That's been dropped, and the assertion today is that they've got everything, it's all intact, it's exactly as it needs to be, and that nothing's missing.

We anticipate that much (like many other things that were left incomplete when Joseph left us/was martyred) that the temple will be something far more expansive than what the LDS Church has perpetuated.

Dave: Do the remnant followers—people who go to these fellowships—do they tithe? Do they make donations? Do... I mean, is it a...

Denver: Yes, but it's a little different than the LDS practice. The tithe obligation is not based upon your gross income; it's based upon your excess. If you don't have anything left over after you've taken care of feeding, housing, transporting, and educating, and taking care of medical bills, then you don't have tithe. But if you have something left over after that, then that 10% is donated in a fellowship.

But the donations aren't aggregated into some central fund. The fellowship itself usually includes people who have needs. If someone needs help with food, or shelter, or transportation, medical bills, or education, then the tithe that got collected in the fellowship is then distributed within the fellowship to the people with the needs. It doesn't go to pay anyone. It goes to help take care of people.

And that requires—if you're going to be someone that helps in the movement—that requires that whatever you do you donate. I don't get paid anything. No one gets compensated for anything. Conferences—they get organized, get paid for (the expenses) by the conference organizers; if people want to donate to help defray some of the costs, they do that. But no one is making a living, and we don't have a professional clergy. And we don't... No one's compensated by any kind of a fund. The money gets used to help people who have needs.

Peggy: So, how did you fare during COVID? Did you have mask requirements? Did you have vaccination expectations?

Denver: There was... Everyone was left to their own choice. There were conferences held. I don't think I saw many people wearing masks, although there were one or two.

No one said, "What are you doing that for?" that I know of. If they wore masks, that was fine. If they didn't, that was fine too. The majority... Visually, it looked to me like the majority both did not wear a mask and didn't bother staying six feet apart. And in terms of vaccinations, that was left to everyone to choose for themselves. I have family members who have been vaccinated; I have family members who have not. I think everyone in my family has had COVID at one time or another. But everyone decides for themselves based upon the best information they have.

Dave: As we start to wrap up Denver, a question: Is there one true way... Do you folks believe there's one true way back to God?

Denver: Well, I think the purpose of this Creation is to be added upon, and I don't care where you go or what you do (and I believe this is in the Book of Mormon—every nation has some pointed allotment of truth) everywhere you look, you are going to be added upon. Even if you live a short, wretched life, you're still being added upon by the experience that you get down here.

In the hierarchy of eternity, there is a Being who has exemplified the highest, the best, the truest, the most pure form of what it means to live fully human and fully godlike, and that's Jesus Christ—who came here and lived as a sacrifice and as a pure soul who was intending on elevating others. We believe that He rescues this Creation by the life that He lived and the power that was given to Him at the outset of the Creation, and then His stewardship over it allowed Him to bring us back out of the grave eventually.

But Joseph Smith said in the Lectures on Faith (that used to be in your Doctrine and Covenants and that are in the Teachings and Commandments), Joseph Smith said that the prototype of the saved man is Jesus Christ. And if you will be saved, you must be precisely what Christ is or else not be saved.

Christ attained to the resurrection, meaning the grave could not hold Him. You will be resurrected—and you will be resurrected and I will be resurrected because Christ is redeeming this Creation. But at some point, in some cycle of being "added upon" in the distant future, you must become precisely what Christ is or else not be saved.

And so, I don't know about you, but I'm a long way away from something like that. I'm down here trying to improve upon myself in the time that I'm given, and to try and bless and benefit the lives of any others, and to certainly not be a hindrance to anyone if I can avoid being so. But I don't think that I am at all approaching "attaining to the resurrection of the dead" or being like the prototype of the saved man, which is Christ.

And by the way, there's a talk (that's now a paper that you can read) called "Our Divine Parents," which explains the prototype of the saved woman. And you might want to take a look at that if you're interested in looking at the difference between the role of the male and the role of the female—because the male is incomplete, and the female is incomplete. But it's the union of the male and the female, which becomes the image of God—they together (and only together) can become the completed image of the Heavenly Parents. And the paper, "Our Divine Parents," attempts to explain in a little more detail.

But yeah, I think everyone down here is gonna be improved by the experience that they get here, no matter how miserable. But eventually, we're all gonna have to progress and grow and become like the prototype of the saved man.

Dave: Well, Denver Snuffer, thanks for joining us today.

Denver: Yeah.

Dave: Be well and stay safe, k?

Denver: It was far less painful than I thought it would be. And let me put a plug in that the Salt Lake Tribune is now a nonprofit organization...

Dave: It's true.

Denver: ...and you mentioned, just briefly at the beginning, what you're up to. Anyone that wants to support the Salt Lake Tribune, generally, or this program can get a tax deduction under 501(c)(3), and if you do it before the end of the year, it'll help you with this year's taxes.

Dave: That's absolutely true. Thank you for that promo. And thanks to Peggy Fletcher-Stack...

Peggy: Always a pleasure.

Dave: ...and our producer, Chris Samuels. We remind our listeners that they can keep up on all of the happenings in and about the church by subscribing to the Salt Lake Tribune's free Mormon Land newsletter. Just go to SLTrib.com to sign up, and we'll talk again next time on Mormon Land.

2022.02.26 True Blue Mormon: Independent Faithfulness

Presentation at the "Rescuing the Restoration" Conference

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

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Christianity was languishing at the time that Joseph Smith lived, and Joseph Smith took Christianity and changed it (to borrow from Mark Twain) to the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. Joseph Smith envisioned a form of Christianity in which the God of Heaven Himself was accessible, living, proximate, nearby to each and every one of us—as opposed to Christianity in a diluted form, in which the philosophies of men (which are considerably far more boring than the declarations of Scripture) were mingled with and diluted Scripture into something that only a philosopher could really appreciate. Joseph Smith's "living Christianity" promised things that were akin to what Christianity looked like when the New Testament was being composed.

The culmination of the development of doctrine and teachings by Joseph Smith was a temple ceremony that (in a diluted form) is still reenacted in LDS temples today—in which the journey of Adam and Eve is simply figurative, and those who participate are instructed to envision themselves as if they were, respectively, Adam and Eve. The journey culminates with an experience in which "having been true and faithful," they're invited to "converse with the Lord through the veil" and then, having conversed with the Lord through the veil, to "enter into His presence." That part of the ceremony is rife in the form of Christianity that Joseph Smith restored, from the beginning and throughout. It can be summarized in a single verse that Joseph Smith gave us by revelation which says, Verily thus sa[ith] the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes [his] sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am (T&C 93:1, emphasis added; see also D&C 93:1).

See, the religion that Joseph restored divides things up into categories that the vocabulary of the Book of Mormon clarifies:

You have "belief" if you have a correct understanding of true teachings that are given to you in an authentic way that actually reflect the religion that God would like you to possess.

You have "unbelief" when you have something other than that. If an error creeps in, you have unbelief. By and large, Christianity today is composed, essentially, of unbelief held by unbelievers because they cannot have belief without true doctrine, and you cannot reject the words of God and claim to be a believer in Him.

The word "faith" is applied to those to whom angels have ministered.

And the word "knowledge" is applied to those who have entered into the presence of the Lord. Joseph Smith was attempting to restore a form of Christianity designed to give mankind knowledge. So, you "shall see my face and know that I am."

In another place (this is language from the Testimony of St. John), the Lord said:

Remember that I will ask the Father, and he will provide...you another Comforter, that he may be by your side endlessly. You will obtain the record of Heaven, the truth of all things which is denied to the world because the world refuses my Father, and therefore they do not know him. But you know him, for he is with you, and shall provide answers to guide you. I will not leave you comfortless. I will stand at your side also.

...To those who show love for me, my Father will show love to them, and I love all those, and I will personally minister to them. (TSJ 10:11-12, emphasis added; see also John 14:15-21 KJV)

This is the gospel of Christ. This is the promise that was made. In the Book of Mormon that Joseph Smith restored, we have a promise:

It shall come to pass that if the gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day...

..."that day" being the time when the Book of Mormon should come forth, "that day" not being when the Lord was resurrected. At the time of the Lord's resurrection, what He said was, "They understood me not that I was not gonna go to the Gentiles at that time. They were gonna hear about me through the ministry of my servants, but I will not show myself to the Gentiles in that day." Here Nephi is writing about the time in which the Book of Mormon would come forth, a much later time period—the difference between approximately 33 AD and 1830 AD, so:

It shall come to pass that if the gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks, and harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father. Yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land for ever. (1 Nephi 3:25 RE, emphasis added; see also 1 Nephi 14:1-2 LE)

...if they will hearken unto the things that the Lord intends for them to receive in that day.

So, there's a process that's described in the Book of Mormon, the religion that Joseph Smith restored.

He sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory...

See, angels come to visit with and minister to people. Those to whom the angels minister now are able to behold the glory of God.

And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore, God conversed with men...

The angelic "faith" secures for them "knowledge"—because it's their ministry to bring them into the presence of God.

Therefore, God conversed with men and made known unto them the plan of redemption which had been prepared from the foundation of the world. And...he made known unto them according to their faith, and repentance, and their holy works. (Alma 9:7 RE, emphasis added; see also Alma 12:29-30 LE)

This is a religion Joseph Smith was restoring. This is what's testified to in the Book of Mormon as the manner in which these things unfold. It's a question that gets posited by Moroni, towards the end of the Book of Mormon:

Hath miracles ceased? Behold, I say unto you, nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they [the angels] are subject unto him [God], to minister according to the word of his [God's] command, shewing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry [that is, the job that angels are employed by God to perform; this is the office that they occupy; these are their responsibility—the "office of their ministry"] is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels...

Angels declare things to men; the men to whom it is declared are called "chosen vessels." Now understand: This is Moroni. In Alma, it's made clear that angelic ministrants don't just come to men. They come to men and to women and to children—but we're not in Alma now, so don't be hung up on the fact that he is addressing the office and the calling in the masculine. Okay? It's of no moment.

...declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him; and by so doing, the Lord...prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the holy ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men. (Moroni 7:6 RE; see also Moroni 7:29-32 LE)

All of this serves the purpose of accomplishing and fulfilling the covenant word God gave previously to those that secured covenants with God in past generations—so that God's promises are vindicated, and no word that God ever pronounced from the beginning to any of those that have received a covenant from God will fall to the earth unfulfilled. They will all be fulfilled. And the system in which that takes place is:

Men who have faith receive the ministering of angels. The purpose of the ministry of the angels is to assist so that the fulfilling of the covenants can take place by declaring it unto the "chosen vessels."

They, in turn, have the obligation to disseminate the information to the residue of the people so that they may have faith in and receive ministering by the Holy Ghost so that the work can be done.

The word "residue" is interesting. It shows up here; it also shows up in another place in which, three years previous to the death of Adam in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman,

there were gathered together seven who were direct lineal descendants of Adam who stood within the Holy Order, and the Lord came and ministered to them. And the residue of Adam's posterity who were righteous were also present on that occasion. So when the word "residue" is used here in Moroni, think about how the word "residue" gets used, likewise, in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman when Adam, three years previous to his death, is ministered to by Christ, and the residue were also present. So, it's not belittling anyone.

Let's go to that Alma thing that I referred to. It's in Alma chapter 9 [16]. And it says that He sent angels to converse not only to men but also to women and to children also (and I'm using the new set of Scriptures).

Well, what is the purpose of the Lord in causing all these things to happen, okay? It's so that we can attain to an understanding of the things that the Lord would like you to comprehend about Him. In the testimonies that we have in the four Gospels, we learn about the sacrifice that Christ made, His passion, His death, His resurrection. But apparently, the four Gospel accounts do not give prominent enough explanation of the Atonement suffering that the Lord had, because in the early days of the Restoration through Joseph Smith, Christ gave a more fulsome explanation of what it was that He went through in atoning for mankind's sins. This is language from a revelation that was given in 1830:

I command you by my name, and...my almighty power that you repent, repent lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore — how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer, if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (T&C 4:5; see also D&C 19:15-19)

Not one word of the suffering the Lord describes in this revelation talks about the cross. He's talking exclusively about the experience that He had in Gethsemane—which is one of the curiosities about the Restoration, with Christendom having crosses everywhere (yeah, that being the result historically of Constantine and the battle on the bridge, in which his troops painted the cross on their shields and won an unlikely victory over the adversary when the leader—the idiotic leader—of the opposition rode out in full armor onto the bridge and fell into the water, and gravity took care of the rest). So, here we have the Lord, after talking about eternal punishment and endless punishment, giving you a description of what it was that He went through and telling us that that was rather exquisite.

In our day in our Scriptures (meaning the Restoration Scriptures that were approved at a conference in 2017 and adopted as a new set of Scriptures), a revelation in our own

day is given by the Lord to describe what He went through so that we can understand and have more faith in Him. And this is from modern Scripture:

I knew a man in Christ about four years ago who, being overshadowed by the spirit on the 26th of February, 2005, had the Lord appear to him again. And the Lord spoke to him face to face in plain humility, as one man speaks to another, calling him by name. As they spoke the Lord put forth His hand and touched the eyes of the man and said, Look! The man had opened before him a view of the Lord kneeling in prayer. It was...a dark place. The air was heavy and overcast with sorrow. The man beheld the Lord praying in Gethsemene on the night of His betrayal and before His crucifixion.

All the Lord had previously done in His mortal ministry by healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, curing the leper, and ministering relief to others as he taught was but a prelude to what the Lord was now to do on this dark, oppressive night.

As the Lord knelt in prayer, His vicarious suffering began. He was overcome by pain and anguish. He felt within Him, not just the pains of sin, but also the illnesses men suffer as a result of the Fall and their foolish and evil choices. The suffering was long and the challenge difficult. The Lord suffered the afflictions. He was healed from the sickness. He overcame the pains, and patiently bore the infirmities until, finally, he returned to peace of mind and strength of body. It took an act of will and hope for Him to overcome the affliction which had been poured upon Him. He overcame the separation caused by these afflictions and reconciled with His Father. He was at peace with all mankind.

He thought His sufferings were over, but to His astonishment another wave overcame Him. This one was much greater than the first. The Lord, who had been kneeling, fell forward onto His hands at the impact of the pain that was part of [the second, greater] wave.

This second wave was so much greater than the first that it seemed to entirely overcome the Lord. The Lord was now stricken with physical injuries as well as spiritual affliction. As he suffered anew, His flesh was torn which he healed using the power of the charity within Him. The Lord had such life [force] within Him, such power and virtue within Him, that although he suffered in His flesh, these injuries healed and His flesh restored. His suffering was both body and spirit, and there was anguish of thought, feeling, and soul.

The Lord overcame this second wave of suffering, and again found peace of mind and strength of body; and His heart filled with love despite what he had suffered. Indeed, it was charity or love that allowed Him to overcome. He was at peace with His Father, and with all mankind, but it required another, still greater act of will and charity than the first for Him to do so.

Again, the Lord thought His suffering was over. He stayed on His hands and knees for a moment to collect Himself when another wave of torment burst upon Him. This wave struck Him with such force he fell forward upon His face. He was afflicted by this greater

wave. He was then healed, only to then be afflicted again as the waves of torment overflowed. Wave after wave poured out upon Him, with only moments between them. The Lord's suffering progressed from a lesser to a greater portion of affliction; ...as one would be overcome by Him, the next, greater affliction would then be poured out. Each wave of suffering was only preparation for the next, greater wave.

The pains of mortality, disease, injury, and infirmity, together with the sufferings of sin, transgressions, guilt of mind, and unease of soul, the horrors of recognition of the evils men had inflicted upon others, were all poured out upon Him, with confusion and perplexity multiplied upon Him. (T&C 161:1-8)

This goes on to describe what He went through in Gethsemane, in further detail, and then the resurrection and His coming forth out of the grave.

So, why does the Lord want us to comprehend something about what He endured in Gethsemane? In Isaiah, there's a passage that says:

When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see...the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 19:3 RE, emphasis added; see also Isaiah 53:10-11 KJV)

What Christ acquired through His suffering was knowledge and understanding of everything you have or will ever go through or suffer. He understands. But He doesn't understand that in order for you to simply be the passive recipient of a blessing that He confers as a consequence of what He went through. He went through it so He can guide you to the same end. There is no magic fairy dust. You must rise up. You must overcome sin. You must leave behind you the things that bring about guilt and remorse. He has finished His preparations. And now the Righteous (who has knowledge of how to bring you through that) can guide you, can lead you, can succor you in your affliction so that you too can overcome that portion of the world that you have to contend with.

Listen to the words that the Lord gives us in an answer concerning the covenant that He's renewed again in our day:

Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth...

This is Christ talking: "I lead to all truth."

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

...the same thing that Nephi had prophesied would happen in this day. Christ is saying He'll do it; we will get it from Him "in power, by my word, and in very deed."

For I will come unto you if you will come unto me. (T&C 157:53, emphasis added)

There's this passage that we've got—it's probably recitable by all of you who are here. I want to look at that as I conclude and put it in the context of everything that you face and everything that you will face, through and including your own ultimate final disease and death. Okay?

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters...

You know, the waters are going to be turbulent! That's just the way it's gonna be. But if He is by your side, the turbulence is of no moment. He leads you beside the still waters because "Peace, be still" is His message, even when you are in the midst of the hurricane itself.

He restores my soul. He leads me in the [path] of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...

You're going to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. But if death has no claim on you because of promises He has given to you, what is there to fear? Why not look forward to what comes next? It's gonna be far more interesting than what you're going through lying in your final illness or coping with whatever they do to you in the medical industry on your way out.

I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff...

Well, what's the rod, and what's the staff? They're things you use to beat or steer or grab or jerk the animal to get the animal back on the right path. These are implements of (frankly) cruelty—not because you're trying to hurt your sheep; you're trying to keep them from falling off the cliff; you're trying to keep them from injury and death. You may have to discipline with a rod or with a staff. But the discipline is designed to correct, improve, and pull them away from an even greater danger or their own destruction.

Your rod and your staff — they comfort me...

And why is that? Because you understand the purpose of the Lord behind what it is that He's doing for you. It's designed to make you ultimately live.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...

You're gonna have enemies. Well, okay. They can do you no harm. Christ said, "Don't worry about those who can destroy the body. Worry about those things that can destroy the soul." He's literally saying, "Don't be afraid of death." There are gonna be enemies. They're going to conspire. They're gonna do things purposefully to try and inflict and to injure, to set back, to harm, and ultimately to kill you. And He's saying, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." It's of no moment.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalms 23:1-2 RE; see also Psalms 23:1-6 KJV)

...in the midst of potentially turbulent waters, valley of death, and enemies surrounding you. Why is that? Because Christ overcame the world. He understands anything and everything that we will be put through. And when He says, "Peace, be still," and counsels and comforts and guides you, He does it from a position in which He understands everything. "Art thou greater than He? The Son of Man hath descended below it all" (see T&C 139:8; see also D&C 122:8).

Expect turbulent waters. But you can still be at peace because of Him. This is the message that Joseph Smith's restored gospel is trying to get across to us: an immediate, accessible, proximate Lord and Savior who understands and comprehends what you are going through and what you will go through and has the ability to sucker you in your every need. It doesn't mean your burdens are gonna go away. It means your burdens are gonna be made understandable to you so that what you experience is acceptable and does not harm your soul.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Okay, so we have 11 minutes in which all the people who spoke are still here, and it's open for questions, and you can ask them anything, including, "Why'd ya ask the people to talk who talked?" There were great, by the way; they were all great (except that last speaker).

Anyone? Oh, is that wired to the system, and it's on? Does anyone have a question they want to ask to anyone?

What?

Audio/Visual: Yes, you must go up to the microphone.

Audience Member: If there are people who would like to ask questions and not be on tape, can you agree that they won't be?

Audio/Visual: No video. We can say, "No video."

Audience Member: We can say no video.

Audio/Visual: But the audio still goes.

Audience Member: But it's not gonna... Okay.

Denver Snuffer: They've already sent the folks to photograph the license plates. They know if you're here. [laughter] Yeah.

So you wanna...?

Audience Member: Right here's good.

Audio/Visual: No, we can't hear you if you don't come up. Please, if you're going to ask a question, nobody can hear you unless you come up to the microphone. Thank you.

Audience Member: Now my license plate number isn't gonna be sufficient.

DS: Yeah.

Question 1: I was just wondering what's going on with the work with the Lamanite Nations or the Lamanite people as the fulfillment of the Gentiles is done, and the Lamanite people will be involved in the last days' (you know) New Jerusalem and so forth. I'm just curious as to what's going on with that.

DS: In many respects, the safest way to proceed with finishing some things is to get the work done before rolling it out for public view so that it can roll forward unhindered in getting to a state in which it's no longer able to be frustrated. And work among the Lamanites has been ongoing for some time now. And there are concrete steps that have been and are being taken. And there will be announcements that reflect the progress that has been made once we have something more to talk about.

But believe me, a lot of work has to go into getting something ready to roll out. And although I know there are a lot of people that would like to volunteer to do a lot of things, the fact of the matter is that sometimes "a lot of people" only get in the way of one another—and it's better to focus in and try to accomplish some things.

The Scripture project was undertaken by a committee of people that ultimately required that the work be divided up. It was a research assignment. It wasn't a composition assignment. It required a lot of plowing through a great deal of old texts in order to try and locate the most accurate material. And it didn't matter who did it, the result should have been exactly the same. But when you're dealing with limited resources, you... We can't buy multiple sets of books costing thousands of dollars in order to give 50 people the opportunity to do something. We have to have it make some economic sense and get the work done.

There are a lot of things like that, and right now there is an extraordinary effort that has been and is ongoing in focusing on both the Jews and the Lamanites. And in due course, when something has been suitably achieved that is worth holding up and saying, "We got something done," everyone will know about it. But until then, people are laboring hard behind the scenes to try and get something done with as much focus and as little notice as possible. It's the only way you get work done, really.

So, is that it? What's the time?

Audience Member: I have a question.

DS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah...

Question 2: As members of the Church, we're taught that we receive the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost at confirmation. And I personally don't believe that that is the case, although I think we can receive many baptisms of fire that can help sanctify us. I think

even Elder Bednar mentioned in a 2010 conference talk that (you know) it's an injunction to receive the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. So my question is, what role do you see the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost playing in receiving the Second Comforter, which is entering into the Lord's presence?

DS: Yeah. It's a great question. It's a big subject; there's a lot that probably ought to be said in order to set the stage for an answer to make a whole lot of sense. However, briefly and hitting just some high points:

Within the Book of Mormon text, Christ gave authority to baptize by saying, "You have authority to baptize." Christ gave authority to go perform a ministry by saying, "You have authority to go perform a ministry." The priestly conferral of authority was the voice of God speaking to empower the individual to do it. The Holy Ghost, however, when they get to that (and it's covered—I don't know if it's one verse in the LDS version; it's one paragraph in the new Scriptures) mentions four times Jesus touched them; He touched them all. And He touched them. He touched them, okay? Everyone that got authority to baptize got it by simply the voice of God. Conferring upon someone the gift of the Holy Ghost came by touching the Savior, okay? That was a prerequisite.

Now, hold that thought for a moment because there's another line. It... You see it in the history of Joseph Smith in the LDS version [or in] Teachings and Commandments section one of the new Scriptures, in which Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery get authority to be baptized by John the Baptist, and then they go out, and they baptize one another. Upon their baptism, [claps hands] the Holy Ghost... They... It's clear from the record that Joseph did not yet have authority to lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. They baptize, and [clap hands] the Holy Ghost is poured out upon them, so that when Oliver is baptized, Oliver immediately begins to prophesy. And when Joseph gets it, he proclaimed many great and marvelous things are about to unfold. And he talked about... He doesn't call it prophecy, but he describes that he's essentially doing exactly the same thing. And then the two of them, "being enlightened by the Holy Ghost," set about to understand more mysterious passages of Scripture in a way that they could never have previously attained to, which means that they had the Holy Ghost allowing them to comprehend Scripture in a way they couldn't have ever done.

That description (which is more fulsome in Joseph Smith's history or the T&C 1) mirrors the shorter description that's given in the Book of Mormon. Every single Book of Mormon baptism is accompanied by the receipt of the Holy Ghost with no laying on of hands. Okay? It just happens: baptism and the presence of the Holy Ghost. In the LDS model: "We lay our hands upon your head and confirm you a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and say unto you, Receive the Holy Ghost." Those are the words. That is... Those are the ordinance words (I know, 'cuz I've done that...many times). They are not conferring upon someone the gift of the Holy Ghost; they are admonishing them to do something and to receive something.

So, baptism and the presence of the Holy Ghost occurs (within the Book of Mormon model and in the Restoration-through-Joseph model) automatically upon baptism. And Christ describes His gospel, and He describes His doctrine; and in both of them, the

way that the Lord describes them is: You go get baptized, in faith, repenting; and upon that, then the Holy Ghost ministers to you.

The difference between the "gift of the Holy Ghost" and "receiving the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost" and the "presence of the Holy Ghost" and the "ministry of the Holy Ghost" is oftentimes described (if you're willing to read through a lot of Ensign articles, General Conference talks) it's conditional, okay? You have to repent of your sins, and you gotta stay in the right way, or the Holy Ghost is going to depart from you. And they tell you that. The Holy Ghost will leave you if you're not a good little boy. And that means that you've got to (oh, I guess it was Boyd Packer): "You gotta leave that little factory alone."

The Holy Ghost can be offended and withdraw if the presence of the Holy Ghost has come as a consequence of faith, repentance, and baptism. The gift of the Holy Ghost that the disciples were given by coming into direct contact with the Lord was the power to confer upon someone the indelible presence of the Holy Ghost... (Keith, you gotta stop laughing. You're gonna make me... I move on from these things, and if I stop and think about it, I think, "Oh, you're such an ass.") ...the indelible presence so that when you offend the spirit, it doesn't withdraw. In some respects, it gets louder; it convicts you and convinces you that what has been done is an error—which then requires some explanation about what it means to offend or to deny the Holy Ghost, and it's not...

Denying the Holy Ghost is not doing something you know to be wrong while the Spirit is counseling you not to do so (because people will do that for a whole host of reasons, some of which may include the desire to try and achieve a good end by doing something that they know to be off the mark in the hopes that it'll work out). Denying the Holy Ghost means that you come out in outright rebellion against God, that you are committed to a contrary course; you are working at cross purposes to God's purposes, and you're doing so deliberately—with the intent that you're trying to overthrow the kingdom of God.

In order to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, if you read the Book of Mormon and you pay attention to what it's saying, it mandatorily requires that the person who is going to confer the gift have come into contact with the Lord. The Lord confers that directly upon the person. What the LDS Church model suggests is the same thing that the "Oliver Cowdery/ Joseph Smith baptism before the higher priesthood was restored" and what the Book of Mormon model suggests, which is faith, repentance, baptism. You've got to repent of your sins. You've got to witness unto the Lord that you're leaving those sins behind, and acting no hypocrisy, go in, and receive baptism—at which point, the Holy Ghost is secured. It comes... It bears witness of the Savior.

I was baptized into the LDS Church in 1973, and I recall on the beach... We baptized in the North Atlantic, off the coast of Maine, and cold water—and I recall kneeling after the baptism in North Atlantic cold water, the Spirit being poured out upon me and being warm from head to toe. It was odd. I physically felt warm. I mean, I would agree that you call that "fire in the Holy Ghost" because it... I was shivering. And I was so warm that I was absolutely comfortable. And funny things happened after that—I mean, odd things.

I did prophesy. And I did read the Scriptures, and they came alive. I'd been read the New Testament by a Baptist mother my whole youth, and they were kind of boring. And now they were astonishing! The Scriptures came alive in a manner that could not have previously been attained to.

And we're after six [o'clock], thankfully. Thank you all. (Don't forget your ring.)

2022.03.26 Hear and Trust the Lord

Presentation at the "Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm" Conference
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
Lexington, Kentucky
March 26, 2022

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

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

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

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

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

of the New Testament Text" [The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament], in which he shows that the text was to the New Testament was changed in order to support one side of the argument that was being made (over the nature of who Jesus Christ was) during the debates that went on in the second and third century after Christ had died.

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

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

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

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

The Catholic Church separated from the Eastern Orthodox Church at about 1000 AD. And in the eastern half of the Christian world, they wouldn't tell you that you can go to the Catholics and be saved. They have their own tradition; they have their own set of beliefs. And they preserve some things that the Catholics let go of. One of the things that the Eastern Orthodox Church kept on is the belief in the deification of man—that man may eventually become God. That's not believed in the Catholic side.

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

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

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

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

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

saying, "Whitney's husband.") They were all delivered with precision about the subject. Now, some of you are probably, in hindsight, thinking, "This sounds like there's a lot of luggage being toted around as a consequence of Mormon history." And that's true enough. There's a lot of stuff that got said today that is only necessary to be said in order to distinguish people who believe in the Lord's Restoration of Truth from those that claim institutionally to OWN the truth.

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

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

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

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

We don't pay, hire, or support ministers. If you don't sacrifice to minister to others, you cannot acquire faith. When Joe invited me to come and speak at this conference, and I agreed to do it, I understood we had to buy our own plane tickets for my wife and I to travel here, we had to rent our own car, we had to pay for our own hotel room. I didn't expect and I would be insulted if they offered to compensate me for anything that gets done—because faith is a principle of action that requires that you engage in sacrifice.

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

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

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

Christianity was such a divergent group that when Constantine decided to make Christianity the state religion of Rome, he thought he was getting a religious organization that he could subordinate to the interests of the Roman state, and it would be unifying and gratifying. What he found out was that Christians believe things so differently from one another that Christians were killing Christians over debates about Christianity and how it ought to be practiced. And so, in hindsight, it is now called (it's a

rather flattering sort of BS term, but nevertheless) it is called the "First GREAT Ecumenical Council," the Council of Nicea, out of which comes the Nicene Creed, which was the attempt to standardize (under the direction of the Emperor) a definition for what the Christian faith minimally consisted of so that we could get our story straight! And they held votes, and they were literally sequestered by the Emperor until they came up with a definition—and even then, they still had a couple of holdouts who got exiled out of the Roman Empire. But voila, from the ~~great-ecumenical~~ First Great Ecumenical Council, now we have a definition of Christianity that we can use.

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

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

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

There's something... Well, it doesn't exist anymore. But there's something called the Home Teaching program—where members visited one another to encourage them in faith every month. The predecessor to that was the Home Missionary program. The missionary program came to members' houses and asked you a series of questions.

The series of questions were designed to determine whether or not you should be "blood atoned," because Brigham Young believed in a principle which was that "some of your sins are so bad that Jesus won't suffer for them; your own blood has to be shed for that particular sin." So, if you committed a blood atonement sin and the home missionaries visiting discerned that, then you needed to shed your blood in order to atone for your own shortcoming so you could be saved. (And by the way, the person who got killed in this manner would later thank you because you made it possible for them to enter into the kingdom.) This is the kind of nonsense that went on when the Mormons were isolated from the larger American community.

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

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

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

I have good news for everyone, and I have bad news for everyone. But first, the bad news: None of your churches are gonna save you. None of your current Christian forms are gonna save you. None of your Mormon forms are going to save you. If you intend to

secure for yourself hope in Christ, then it is requisite, it is mandatory, it is absolutely essential that you hear the voice of God when it speaks to you in YOUR generation. It is necessary that someone be sent with a message from Him—just like Joseph Smith was sent with a message from God to tell you about how you can extract yourself from sin and error. And Joseph secured (for those who were willing) the possibility of their own salvation by obedience to the ordinances of the gospel which he could authoritatively declare. Paul says, "How can you believe if you don't have someone who is sent, and how can you be sent if not being sent by God?" Joseph met the criteria: He was sent. He did bring a message. It did have the power of salvation. It IS possible to secure salvation once Joseph's voice gets raised. And that voice and those ordinances remained authoritative until they get broken.

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

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

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

Well, something got alluded to in passing, and I don't know how many picked up on it. But in 2017, again at a time when there were alignments in the heavens (because the heavens often testify to what the Lord is doing on Earth, just as the heavens testified when Christ was born—and there was an alignment in the heavens, and wise men came to the east in order to find who it was that had been born "the King of the Jews")... Well, in 2017, God spoke again and offered to this generation/those living today/you people who are within the sound of my voice (whether you're here in this hall today or you listen to the recording) offered to you—today—the possibility of salvation through a new covenant. And part of what He's telling you in that new covenant is that He has some things that He expects to accomplish before He returns in glory to judge the world. You think Christ is coming again, and that is true enough; He's coming to judge the world. But before that time, He expects to establish a covenant people so that the religion that was once here at the time of Adam is here again. Paul wrote about how the

gospel had been fore declared unto Abraham, and Paul's exactly right: Abraham knew the gospel. But so did Adam. So did Enoch. So did Noah. And so now can we too, not as part of the words of an old book, but as part of a living community of people that believe, have accepted a covenant today, and have sacrificed in order to bring forth the works of salvation today.

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

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

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

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

Joseph Smith organized a church with a series of co-equal groups: a First Presidency (3), a Quorum of Twelve Apostles (12), a Quorum of Seventy (70), and then Stake High Councils (that were 12 members in as many stakes as existed geographically throughout Mormonism). Every one of those was equal to one another until Brigham Young got his hands on the reign of authority. And then Brigham Young used a verse that says, "Where the Twelve can't go, they can call upon the Seventy to go fulfill an assignment." And he said, "No longer are they equal in authority. I get to boss the Seventy; I'm the head of the Twelve," and they became subordinate, and ultimately, he got tired of power-sharing with the other members of the Twelve, and within three years, he wants to be the First Presidency again. And today, in the LDS form of governance, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consists literally—absolutely literally—of one person. The president of the corporation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owns every building, every university, every business venture, all of the acreage that consists of over 2% of the landmass of the state of Florida, all of the Hawaiian farms, all of the radio and television networks, all the motion picture production stuff, all the newspapers—ONE Mormon, and he owns it all. And that one Mormon is a "corporation sole." And when he dies, then the senior-most member of the Quorum of the Twelve becomes the member of the corporation sole, and then HE owns it all. That's what Mormonism has turned into today. It is a vast financial empire, so much so that the religion that Mormons claim to believe in is really one of the smaller "side projects" of the Corporation of the President. There is a lot of money in religion. It's one of the two oldest professions in the world. And it's slightly more profitable than the other but not at all dissimilar.

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

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

Mormons have no hope in Christ because they belong to a church that gave them "authoritative ordinances." Without faith in Christ and a change to your heart and a

willingness to obey the teachings that come from Christ (the latest of which is the covenant that instructs us what we are to do), then it doesn't matter what organization you do or don't belong to. Salvation is to be found by following the words of a living God—and that God is not only living, He is speaking. And what He has to say is remarkably profound. We've brushed up only against a small part of it in the talks that have been given today. But a lot of what has been said presumes that you know something in the background of Mormonism and the Restoration in Joseph Smith.

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

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

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

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

2022.03.36 Hear and Trust the Lord Q&A

"Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm" Conference
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
Lexington, Kentucky
March 26, 2022

This is a continuation of the "Hear and Trust the Lord" talk that Denver gave at the "Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm" Conference.

So, having said that, I've already gotten one question that the answer's, "No, I would not advocate using marijuana to get close to Jesus." Nor peyote, nor... Gah, we got off the plane in Louisville, and like the first 50 signs—I didn't realize there were even this many varieties—the first 50 signs were different kinds of bourbon. I mean, I finally saw these bourbon signs enough that I asked my wife, "Who do we know I could buy some bourbon for? 'Cuz clearly it's a thing down here." And it's a big thing, and it must be great. I'm not a bourbon drinker, but wow.

Okay, so do the Thomas Sisters have any questions? 'Cuz they've been here listening to all this weird stuff. And it just occurs to me you're kind of favoring us by showing up. You've been listening in on this stuff. Do you guys have any questions?

Thomas Sisters: We're good.

Denver Snuffer: You're good? Okay. Are there any CHRISTIANS who have questions? ('Cuz your Mormon questions are just...) Do we have a Christian who's got a...?

Okay, we can go! Oh, what? Okay. Yeah.

Question #1: First of all, your shirt, where did you get it?

DS: Oh, I saw this, and I went online, and I said, "I gotta wear that!" So we bought it. Yeah. "Normal isn't coming back. Jesus is." I think we got it on Amazon. Yeah, on Amazon. And I think if you just search for "T-shirt normal isn't coming back," I think you'll find it.

Question #2: Can I ask another one? I had a whole page of 'em, but the Vern and...

DS: Yeah, they answered them all. So...

[Question #2 regarding cremation]

Cremation? Well, cremation will not prevent a resurrection, because if you read the account that John gives in the book of Revelation about the dead coming forth, one of the places that will surrender their dead is the sea/the ocean. Once you drop a body into the ocean, it's pretty well gone in fairly short order (even if you don't drop it in a crab field in the Deadliest Catch terrain). And the bones will dissolve, everything will resolve back. So it doesn't present an impediment to resurrection.

However, you've also got the example of the Lord who, upon being resurrected, they rolled the stone away from the tomb where He had been laid, and He literally came forth, and He was in the garden; He was still there at the site that morning when Mary and others came to the tomb. And when He appeared later, He asked them to handle His hands and His side and His feet and to see that, you know, He bore the same wounds and the same physical body. And so, the argument is that if the body has not decomposed into nothing, that then the very same body that you lay down will rise again from the grave.

One of the ambitions that Joseph Smith failed to achieve in his lifetime was to build a mausoleum in Nauvoo, in which his parents and his wife and his children could all be buried so that in the resurrection, they would come out of the grave at the same location and then be able to, you know, hug and embrace and kiss one another upon coming out of the grave—which suggests his belief in the literal coming forth of the actual physical body that you lay down in the grave. And if that be the case, then, of course, burning it up and turning it into ash is kind of a desecration of something that is the image of God. And there's that theological argument.

I've learned of one fellow who intends to have his body cremated and then to send the ash off to have it crushed into a diamond—and then to have the diamond be the property of his widow after his passing, which is, you know, kind of cool. Yeah. Yeah. But, you know, in the end, I think no matter what you do, you... Everyone's gonna come forth out of the grave. And some may want to create as many impediments to that as possible 'cuz they're not proud of how they lived, and so they'd like to delay the coming forth. But I don't think it's gonna stop things.

It was an early teaching of both, well, of Christianity, generally. It was an early teaching that you did not suddenly flare into existence as a spirit and a body at the time of your conception in the womb of your mother but that your spirit preceded your coming into this world—that you have a long history before you ever got here. Okay? That idea is very comfortable inside the Restoration because of the book of Abraham and the book of Moses (the revision of Genesis) makes it clear that we have a long, long history before we ever enter into this world as having been YOU, having been a separate sentient spirit-being. And from the book of Abraham, it becomes clear that some of the people who are here now (in the flesh) lived and had a physical body in another cycle of creation in an earlier round and that they didn't just exist as spirits before they ever got here. So you have to ask yourself if it is possible to have a body, resurrect the body, and then have that body somehow get integrated—more as spirit than body—into another body and another cycle of creation, what exactly is the resurrection? And what exactly happens with the body? Okay?

We view ourselves as incredibly solid because we can't put ourselves through walls; can't do that because the atoms and the movement of the molecules and the charge between the electrons is such that it has a form of solidity that makes it impossible to pass through. AND YET, Jesus came forth out of the grave with the very same body, and He entered into the room with the door locked. (How'd He get through that wall?) And He ate! He ate fish that He cooked with coals on the... I mean, He's moving

physical matter. He's consuming physical stuff. He's walking into physical rooms, and yet He also has the ability to do something which physically we are unable to do, which ought to tell you something about the resurrection. All spirit is matter, but it is more refined and pure. So if all spirit is matter but more refined and pure, can you not take that spirit and reduce it to a more solid form?

Right now we have temperatures that exist in our neck of the Milky Way that go up to 20 million degrees. The difference between cold matter and hot matter is the vibrational speed at which it is moving. If it is at 20 million degrees, it is almost impossible to describe it as anything other than a gas. Okay? But we also have temperatures that go all the way down to absolute zero. And when you get down, you know (what is it? It's less than 400 degrees below zero in Fahrenheit), the it just stops moving altogether; you freeze even the molecules. Everything's slowed down. So it's possible that "quickenning" (it's the word used in Scripture) is not just quickening meaning "turning something cool, neat; it's quickened; it's like Nestle's Quik, except better." Quickening might actually be a description of the physical state of the being, that it is sped up/it exists at an energetic level that is far above the energetic level at which we are functioning here. And therefore, it assumes a form that is, you know, "spirit" matter, which is quickened and refined and lacks the kind of solidity that your physical body exists in here and now. And my conjecture is based on limited observation, but I think that's what I saw.

So I think there's something to... You know, read your Scriptures, and look into that, and study a little bit of physics, and see if you don't see it converging at some point in something that kind of makes that view look...

So I wouldn't burn something that's gonna dwell in everlasting burnings. I would wait for that to arrive on its own. Yeah, you gotta...

Question #3: As a child, was Christ tutored by the brass plates?

DS: See, now there's a bit of interesting speculation because now you're gonna have to have converging social interaction that so far the Scriptures have not let us comment on. So, it's a great question! Great question. Okay. Anyone else? Yeah?

Question #4: I'm trying to figure out how to phrase the question, but in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in Heaven," and we know from Scripture that He's known as the Father and the Son. And we also know that He becomes our Father as we become a child of Christ. So when I pray or when we pray, "Dear Heavenly Father," also keeping in mind that in Third Nephi that the people were praying to Him, and He said, "It's okay." But when WE pray, we pray, "Our Heavenly Father." Are we supposed to be praying to our Heavenly Father or to Christ as our new Father as we become His children? That's my question. I hope that made sense.

DS: Yeah, okay. First, the idea of the Father and the Son as a theological issue has created a marriage between scriptural language and philosophy that turns God into an unknowable, incomprehensible being in which He is three-in-one—and yet, He's not three, He's one—without dividing the substance. "The Father uncreate, the Son

uncreate, the Holy Ghost uncreate; and yet, there is not three uncreates, there is one uncreate. The Father incomprehensible..." (see Athanasian Creed vs. 8-12). This... I'm reciting a Christian creed, by the way. All of you believe this if you're a Christian or a Catholic or a Protestant, "The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible, and yet, there are not three incomprehensibles. There is one." (This is Athanasian Creed? Which one is that? No, no it's not Nicene; it's a later... Athanasius, yeah, okay, yeah.

Okay, so the point is you touch up against the oneness of God, you touch up against the Father and the Son, you wind up in the middle of a theological mess. Jesus (in the New Testament, King James Version or New Revised Standard Version or whatever) offering the intercessory prayer (in the chapter 17 of the gospel of John) prays that the apostles and His disciples "may be one, as thou Father and I are one, that they may be one in us" (see John 9:21). See, He's not talking about turning Matthew and Peter and the others into one and then, you know, morphing like something out of Matrix into single "whatever." He's talking about this unity that exists in the conviction, the belief, the purpose, the understanding, sharing in the same mind, okay? That's what He's talking about. So when you say, "Christ taught us in the Sermon on the Mount to pray, 'Our Father who art in heaven,' and Jesus is becoming the Father, are we praying to Jesus or are we praying to the Father?" And the answer is yes. Because there is no difference between...

I mean, I could tell you things about how prayers get answered, and it's not what we sometimes think it is. There's a lot going on on the other side of the veil that is left out of the story—and for good reason, because it isn't necessary. But there is no prayer that gets answered, at any level at which the prayer does get answered, in which the information that's conveyed/the message that is granted is not approved, ultimately, all the way to the Father. But the Father resides in a place in which ALL THINGS past, present, and future are manifest before Him continuously so that there isn't a past and a present and a future; it's all one in His presence. Okay?

(I don't know if I should even be telling people this, but...) In order for those who reside in the presence of God to come and actually connect to this physical creation, just like we have to undergo some profound transfiguration in order to be caught up into Heaven, there is a similar process that's required in order to descend from Heaven. And it is not pleasant for those who are used to a higher order of things to condescend here. And therefore, there's actually... I mean, one of the phrases that gets used is that there are sentinels who guard the path. There's a Cherubim and a flaming sword sent to guard the way to the Tree of Life. And, you know, analogy though that may be, it's referring to actual things. There are those who...

Well, if you look at the vision of the Three Degrees of Glory, an angel who was in a position of authority in the presence of God fell and became Lucifer. So we know that turned out badly, and he's a ne'er-do-well, and we don't like him, and he doesn't like us, and he's aiming to disrupt the purposes of God. But the phrase that you ought to pick out of that is that he was "in a position of authority in the presence of God," which as a description ought to suggest that if that was the case in the instance of an angel who

fell, it only makes sense that it would be true also of angels who have not fallen. And if there be angels who are not fallen who are in a position of authority in the presence of God, then meditate on that idea for a notion of, you know, prayers and answers and who we're praying to, which is always... EVERYTHING is always done in the name of the Father. Everything is always ordained at the outset by the authority of the Father, and the glory and the praise and the honor be the Father's. But there are those who are moving along in a process that if they're "trusted" are trusted and if they're "true and faithful," they're true and faithful—and if they're given a position of authority in the presence of God and you lost your keys and you're praying to find your keys, do you really need God the Father? Can a local angel who's looking around saying, "This guy's an idiot. 'Look behind the sofa there!'" There, I used my angel voice: "They're behind the sofa." Actually, that's more like the king in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. "Joseph!"

Yeah?

Question #5: I have a question. In the Testimony of St. John (in chapter one and throughout the Testimony of St. John), it refers to the "cosmos," such as, "the creation of the cosmos was organized by a messenger," by Christ. Does this refer, that use of the word cosmos, can you comment on whether that refers to a galaxy, this creation specifically, or the entire universe?

DS: Oh. Christ created more than this world. The testimony of the afterlife says that the worlds are...and were created [by him], and the inhabitants thereof are the...sons and daughters of God (T&C 69:5). Okay? (I didn't bring my Scriptures, but I remember some of them.) That tells you that Jesus, personally, was responsible for more than the creation of this world. That tells you that when a creation is made of a world on which there is a divine purpose involved, that it is inhabited by people that are children of God. And if they be children of God, then they're gonna be redeemed.

I just think... There is something in the additions to the Scriptures that describe a vision of the Lord returning in His glory, the language for which was prescribed specifically, and those are the words that have to be used and the only words that can be used. But there's stuff in the new Scriptures—if you look at them and you ask yourself that question—that will really help you get your hands around some of that. But I don't think it's right when you're told to "color within the lines" to color outside the lines. So, just look carefully at the Scriptures with that question in mind. You might be surprised how much stuff there is in there about that.

Yeah?

Question 6: Yeah, the theme of the conference is "Hear and Trust in the Lord in the Storm," so when you're lying at the bottom of an icy ramp, and your life has just changed, what do you do to stay in tune with that voice and to trust in what's coming next?

DS: I don't, I don't...

Audience Member: Can you repeat the question?

DS: Oh, yeah. He said, When I fall and I'm laying at the bottom of an icy ramp with a broken arm, what do I do in that circumstance to, you know, stay in tune? And there really is an answer, except I don't... I hate being emotional... 22nd Psalm.

The 22nd Psalm has a phrase in it. Well, let me see if I can do this better. Okay. When Christ was being crucified on the cross, one of His final acts was to recite, My God, My God, why [hast thou] forsaken me? (Matthew 12:28). Everyone who was present knew He was reciting the opening words of a psalm. He was not asking God why He was forsaking Him; He was testifying that He was the Messiah—and a messianic psalm that had been composed about the VERY scene that was then unfolding was His testimony that all those that look at him "shoot the lip out and mock Him," that He was "surrounded by dogs," that "his garments were parted," and that "they cast lots." He's reciting the messianic psalm about the very moment that all of those people who were skeptical about Him were living when He began to sing, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He apparently, at that point, was so near death that He couldn't do more than the first line. But if you read that psalm, it will slap you up in the face.

Okay, there's a line in there about how His bones stare at Him because everything is disjointed. And this [the broken arm] hurt. And it hurt, you know, right up there with the greatest amount of agony I've encountered. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was... I went into shock: I was shivering and blacking out and all that from pain. And what I was thinking at the time is, "I don't know how the Lord did it. I don't know how He endured what He endured." If you read that psalm and you realize... I mean, first of all, I COULDN'T do it. I would have blacked out, and they'd have been hauling around a limp body, nailing it up, and you know, it would have been sort of anti-climatic. You know, "Don't stick a spear in him; you'll wake him up!" It's pathetic. But He hung right in there, and I... I just marveled at Him.

Anyway, there was another... Oh, way back there. Yeah?

Question #7: I was wondering... You probably never deal with this at all, but if you notice pride within yourself, what is something you do, or what do you think of, or how do you kind of...?

DS: Well, I'm... I came up here, and I was looking at his drums, and I was thinking, "If I just had my right hand, I could do something!" I got a set of drums in my basement, and I'm a little proud of some of the stuff I can do there.

But pride—when it comes to the things of God—makes no sense at all. I don't think I've ever done an adequate job with anything that's been entrusted to me, but somehow people are good enough to compensate for my own shortcomings. There have been phenomenal things/miraculous things that have been achieved as a consequence of the faith of people. I may have been able to facilitate a few things getting done, but GREAT things have been and are getting done—not by my efforts but by the efforts of other people. I rented and paid for and went to ten venues to begin things in the Ten Talks that got given, and after that, the conferences have been organized by people of faith. The

facilities that have been arranged have been done by people of faith. The recording that's been done... I wasn't even responsible for recording any of the ten talks; a fellow volunteered, and you know, it was a good idea that he do that. But I just went to give talks; I didn't give any thought at all to preserving them. And he began a practice of doing that and then making them available on CD—which, in turn, led (ultimately) to the Restoration Archives, in which a vast library of recorded material has been preserved. Well, I look at everything that has been done, and I admire a lot of the people, and I'm in awe of some of the successes that have been achieved. I don't personally take any pride in that. I think what I've done, I've done inadequately, haltingly. But I've learned a lot! I've learned a lot. I have a better understanding...

When the Scripture project was approaching its completion and the idea was that we would take it to the Lord in prayer, my first thought was, "Something like that deserves the dignity, it has the solemnity, and it has the importance that the prayer ought to be written down." Because when the Kirtland Temple was dedicated, the dedicatory prayer was written down, and then it was read. And so, while it's really unusual in my life (it may be the only one I've ever written down), I sat down to write a prayer because I believed—I had this conviction—that that's what needed to happen.

I sat down to write the prayer, and the prayer was given by revelation; the conviction was all that I brought to the party. That prayer more succinctly deals with the entire sweep of the history of the Restoration in just very few words—I mean, I've written volumes of history trying to explain things, and that prayer does it more clearly, more accurately, more succinctly than I ever did. So if I compare that prayer (which, literally, all I was, was the scribe that wrote it down) with what I've written, all that does is make me feel verbose and inadequate—'cuz I take a lot more words to say what the Lord can say in fewer words. Well, when the prayer got answered, the answer came with such clarity that I thought, "Oh, I'd better write this down!" And I was forbidden. "No." And that just seemed odd. Why would you...? Why would you get so clear an answer if you're not supposed to write it down? It's got to be written down.

And then it changed—so that the words that would have been written down wouldn't were not the same. And I thought, "Oh, that's why I didn't write it down, because it was a diff... There was a change; it needed a change to be made. So, now I can write it down. Now I can write that." No, I was forbidden from writing it down—because the prayer changed again. And what it finally... This happened several times. And what it finally got through to me was: Heaven responds to what happens on Earth immediately, instantly; They see what's going on. We are turbulent; we are in motion. And how we are in one moment doesn't reflect the maturity that we acquire in a later moment in the give and take of abusing and misusing and misunderstanding one another and then being humiliated by that and then growing up a little bit and being a little better person. And so, the answer changed because the real world changed until, finally, it got to the... And I held off. I held off because, in my view, this could be different right up until the very end.

It finally stabilized because of the PEOPLE, not because of me. Because of the people, it stabilized, and then the command came, "Write it." And so now, the whole thing came

in one writing. And it wasn't the same as it would have been a month earlier, a week earlier, or two weeks earlier, because there were still people that had to work some things out "as between one another" that hadn't stabilized yet. And it was a fabulous education.

The Lord's invested a great deal in getting things done. I'm not the smartest, the best, or (I don't even think) the most worthy—but I WILL follow direction. And I WILL limit what I say and do to what I'm told to say and do, and go no further. And I do think there's a great deal of material yet to tumble out from Heaven. But Heaven alone is gonna control that, and I don't take any pride in any of it. But I do think that I've been serviceable, and I'm glad at that. I just wish I had been more so; I wish I could persuade more people. I know there are people with probably legitimate complaints and criticisms of me that find that I create a barrier for them in connecting up with the Lord and what He's doing now. That's unfortunate. I wish I were not an impediment to anyone. I wish they would just read the material and forget about me because the material stands on its own. It will lead you to truth. It will lead you to light. You don't need to say, "Oh, he's this, or he's that" or "He's NOT this, and he's NOT that." And I'll admit, I'm not THAT! But God IS something, and He's working. And He's working right now to achieve an end, and it's going to be glorious.

There was another hand up here I thought. Yeah, yeah?

Question #8: What's the risk we'll fail?

DS: Oh, man.

Audience Member: What's the question?

DS: What's the risk that we will fail? Zion and a city of God that got caught up to Heaven, in the history of the world, has been accomplished two times. There will be a third time, but this Zion will not be caught up; instead, Heaven will come down. It's prophesied. It's promised. It WILL happen, but the prior two—literally—one was antediluvian, and one was immediately post-deluge, and look at all the generations of people that have come and gone and have not seen Zion. I mean, the Lord's lamentation is, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not." That lamentation is found in every volume of Scripture that we've got (including our new Scriptures; every volume of those). So the impediment isn't God's willingness to bring Zion; the impediment is always our end, not...

How can you have one of the most qualified New Testament scholars that exists in the world today be agnostic? I mean, how is that possible? It's because "getting the information" doesn't mean "living the religion." It's because "memorizing long passages of scripture" doesn't mean "living the religion." You can have all the theology and understanding that any man has ever attained to, but if it's not alive in you—if that spark of the divine is not part of your experience and your life—then it's still nothing more than an idea.

When the Mormon missionaries came and taught me (and they taught me the Joseph Smith story), I literally thought all Mormons saw angels. I literally thought that was what the Mormon religion was. I got baptized, and it was some short while after that, that I get caught up to Heaven, and I'm in the presence of an angel—and it didn't... It didn't surprise me; it didn't put me off; it didn't... I thought, "Yeah, this is that new religion that I joined! This is the way this works! Yeah!" And so, I'm acting more like a tourist than anything else. I'm confident I was a disappointment. I mean, you've got all the solemnity of eternity in the countenance of this Being. I can quote him; I've done that before: "On the first day of the third month, your ministry will begin, and so, you must prepare"—that was his message. (You've heard that; I've said that a time or two.) But I didn't ask anything. I didn't... I thought, "Hey, I like this new religion! This is kind of nice. But this seems like such a humorless fellow, you know?—dressed in white and looking all like granite practically..." BOO! You know, he probably came back to return and report and said, "What the hell are you thinking with that guy? He's not all that!" Yeah, there's another story. I don't tell that one, but maybe I should.

Yeah? Yeah?

Question #9: I have a question about miracles.

DS: Miracles.

Question #9 (continued): Yes, in Third Nephi, when the disciples were asking about what the church of Christ told them that if it is built upon my gospel then the works of the Father would be manifest in them. You read in Fourth Nephi about healing the sick and the lame walking. What is it that we lack, if we are one on the path of the gospel, to get those words of the Father manifested?

Audience Member: Can you repeat the question?

DS: Yeah, he's saying that the works of the Father get shown forth in people of faith, and what is it we lack that we don't have the miracles that they talk about in Fourth Nephi, and the obvious and the simple answer is: faith. I mean... I...

It's a funny thing about faith and healings and miracles and signs, okay? On the one hand, signs do follow those who believe. And on the other hand, those who seek for a sign lack faith; very often, those who seek for a sign are adulterers because it's a wicked and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign. I have seen signs and miracles; there's people in this room that could tell you about miracles that have occurred as a consequence of faith and obedience. And I don't do that. I don't talk about that. Because very often the people most interested in that are people that go from one titillating story to another titillating story. Christ would admonish those for whom miracles were performed to tell no one, to keep it quiet. And part of the reason for doing so is because those kinds of incidents inspire and attract a certain type of person—and those people are quick to convert, fickle, they have shallow roots, and they don't go anywhere. They dry up in the heat of the day. So all it takes is a little opposition, and then those that flock in to that run away.

I have witnessed miracles. I have seen miracles. I don't talk about them because I believe that, in the end, the more we focus on the search for finding and experiencing those, the less our search is for bending the knee and submitting to the will of the Father. And there may be more on that in the future—because I was pursuing that very specifically and recently learned that God has purposes behind who He heals and who He does not heal and why He does and why He does not. And I'm not sure that it would be of any use at this moment to talk about that, but God knows what He's doing. And sometimes there's a much, much bigger set of dynamics that are involved in what's going on down here: who's taken, who's left, why someone is taken, and what purposes are achieved. But God literally is in charge of everything. And miracles do happen. Just because they're not, you know, turned into a headline doesn't mean that they haven't and that they don't occur. They do.

Yeah?

Question #10: I've got a question about baptism.

DS: Baptism.

Question #10 (continued): It says you have to have six or seven women. And I only know two.

DS: Oh.

Question #10 (continued): So where do I get, if somebody wants to get baptized, where do I find six [seven] women that knows my...

DS: Well, you ought to get another four [five] women to talk to the two women that know you, and one of the places where that happens are at conferences, and this is a conference. I mean, some of you ladies need to get to know this fellow. (There—that sounds like an early pioneer Mormon Utah come on if I ever heard one!) No, we should/you should take care of that here at the conference, and if the two women who do know you can talk to other women who are present here and they can/the other women can ask you questions, you should be able to get that taken care of right here during this, before this is up.

Yeah, there's an arm up back there...?

Question #11: Yeah, in Third Nephi, when the Lord... I'm going off of the Ten Talks when you made mention "their works not their book", their works not their book with the remnant of Lehi [indecipherable]. Can you talk about that for a second, what he meant by that? I mean, if I understand right, we're working a mighty change to bring a book to them, but what are the works more specifically that even the Lord said would be that sign?

DS: (Well, apparently my time is up.) Okay, so one of the ways in which John is described after his translation is that he became a ministering angel to "minister to those who are heirs of salvation." The responsibility to work out salvation is the responsibility of mortals. If...

No generation is going to have an advantage over another generation by having a resurrected, visible, angelic ministrant walking around as the preacher. They minister to people whose responsibility it is to teach. And so, the works that they do behind the scenes are the works that angels do (hey, Steph, can you bring the sling up? I'm gonna put my arm back in), that the works that they do are behind the scene, and the same kind of thing that would be done by an angel (and not publicly), they (the ministers that... the translated three Nephites, John, and others) do, "holy men whom ye know not of" do are designed to fulfill and keep the covenants of the Fathers. But it's all...

Everything that's going on has been and is designed to achieve the fulfillment of the covenantal process in which God's gonna keep faithful to the agenda that began with Father Adam and Mother Eve and is intended to culminate in a wrapping-up scene in which the world is judged, the wicked are destroyed, and there is a season of peace brought on the earth. And between the beginning and the end, there has always been a process in which angelic ministrants behind the veil educate and then send forth mortals to teach mortals so that the work of salvation gets done BY mortals, and the test is the same in every generation.

No generation gets to say, "Yeah, but they had THIS." I mean, Christ is the closest thing we have to something that's supernatural that walked on the earth, but look at how few people followed after Him. When He gave His bread of life sermon, practically everyone abandoned Him and went back the other way. And by the time He enters triumphant into Jerusalem—and they're laying down their coats, and they're laying down their palm trees, and they're celebrating: "Hosanna, Hosanna"—well, a few days later, no one interferes when He's marched up to Golgotha and nailed to the tree! And the few people that, you know, they trusted in Him, and look what a big disappointment He is. It takes the resurrection, and THAT was largely held to a private event of a handful of faithful people. And by the time you get to the book of Acts and you look at the numbers, there's about 500 people that believed in Christ. That's about it. So, you know, you can say you would have believed had you been there, but from all the thousands who WERE there, in the end, only about 500 of them believed. And as the sad story of Nauvoo was told today, how many of them believed? How many of those people that were contemporaneous with Joseph Smith ever realized just what an extraordinary blessing he was to have had around in their day? I mean, it was an utter... It was an utter failure.

Let me end 'cuz I've...

(Oh no, I'll tell that story some other time...)

Thanks for coming. I hope that people beyond this crowd listen to some of the comments that were made here today. I thank the organizers and the Thomas Sisters and everyone that's participated or will participate, and I'm sorry that I won't be around tomorrow. Thank you for coming.

2022.03.26 Group Conversation

"Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm" Conference
Lexington, KY
March 26, 2022

Denver Snuffer: ...to hold on to institutional Mormonism. It is a mess.

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Bart Ehrman was a believing Christian when he started down the... He's perhaps, outside of Catholicism, he's perhaps the leading Protestant Christian scholar of today—agnostic. The closer you look, the more of a mess you've got on your hands.

Matt Lohmeier: So, let me ask you this...

Reed Larsen: I've been reading some of his stuff.

DS: Great stuff.

ML: So, have you heard of the BYU professor called Thomas Wayman?

DS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you know, that's crap.

Adrian Larsen: He's the one that "Joseph was gay..." Joseph was gay crap...

ML: Yeah. I just saw the video yesterday.

DS: Yes. No, no, I just saw.

ML: Okay, so I'm behind the power curve. Everyone's already heard of this guy. I'd have books in the house by him or that were edited by him. But I just saw these videos show up yesterday with "Joseph's gay; Jesus' gay lover is John the beloved"...

DS: Have you noticed how his mannerisms have become increasingly effeminate over the years.

AL: I should probably be rather ashamed then of the jokes. Somebody that sent me this —and some jokes ensued on text, and it got worse and worse. But why stop there? "Abraham's wife never had a kid, but he was a 'friend' of God." "Are you sure it wasn't Gay-braham?" I mean, it gets worse and worse.

DS: Oh, yeah, but see...

ML: This is gonna be an argument as Steve made.

DS: You might as well go there.

AL: Right. Yeah, the argument is just as specious. So yeah, we went back and forth. It was... It was bad.

ML: Okay, so I've got a question.

DS: Oh no, we don't do questions.

ML: Oh, that's all we've been doing until you showed up. We can't ask questions anymore?

AL: And I can't keep answering because I'm making stuff up at this point. So it's your turn.

ML: It's about the "Question and Answer" session. I'll open it up for dialogue then.

DS: I have a question about the "Question and Answer."

ML: I've got a question about the "Question and Answer" session. Okay, so you mentioned...

DS: What is the worst movie Bruce Willis was in?

ML: No, we can't go there yet.

AL: Die Hard 3.

Vern Horning: Ah, man... Surrogates.

DS: No, no, what about that sci-fi show?

AL: Sorry, Matt.

ML: I get it.

DS: OK, no, you were saying...

ML: I gotta read this...

RL: Are you gonna have Tommy John surgery so you can get your fastball up to 90 miles an hour now?

DS: No, Tommy John is in the elbow. This is the shoulder.

RL: The humerus, yeah?

DS: Snapped like a [indecipherable].

RL: Sorry, Matt.

ML: The Wisemen came TO the east...

RL: Came to the east—the Wisemen—from the west?

ML: I mean, I spent years...

DS: No one picked up on that!

AL: We all picked up on... We've been discussing it.

DS: Okay. I want you to assume for a moment that Joseph's explanation of the Garden of Eden being in the Americas is accurate.

ML: Okay.

DS: And I want you to assume for a moment that you needed something from the Tree of Life in order to bring a body back out of the grave.

ML: Okay.

DS: What direction would the people bearing the gifts from the east that included anointing oil for the Tree of Life, what direction would they necessarily have come from?

ML: Depends. I mean, you can go either way...

AL: The Americas to the east.

DS: Yes, it would be far more efficient.

ML: Okay.

DS: To the east.

ML: So they would have had to have come... So, that's why it takes them a couple years to get over there.

James Fargo: This is not what I came into. This is not...

DS: And can you imagine....? Hey, James Fargo is a reputable man, and he walks out with Aaron Bishop. I can only account for that to geography. They live in the same (roughly) county and not...

JF: Light cleaveth unto light.

DS: Yeah.

AL: Yin and yang—they're canceling each other out. You were saying something, though, about...

DS: About which?

AL: Well, you had just left off the anointing oil...

RL: Going from west to east...

ML: Well, he didn't say "anointing oil." He said something from the Tree of Life. Well, no—you did say anointing oil.

DS: Well, yeah. I have to tag back up to that.

ML: Okay. Yeah, that's right.

DS: ...which was, you know... If you think about a creation being self-contained in the ability to take care of everything that needs to be taken care of, as part of the whole thing, and then you've got the Tree of Life, which everyone assumes is a metaphor and not an actual thing... Yeah, well, why do you need to guard it if it's merely metaphorical, you know? We always take what's literal to be metaphorical and what's metaphorical to be literal.

Christian Sanders: Actually, I wanted to ask about that because, I mean, you have spoken about... Because in the creation story... The [indecipherable] creation story is an analogy, right? And it's sort of like, okay, when does that story end? Because does the creation story entail Adam and Eve's time in the Garden, or is it just creation that's the analogy, you know, and now we've started out into the literal, you know, first man/ first woman, you know, kind of this idea of, like, you know, yeah... Where does the analogy end? And where does the literalism begin? And what things...

DS: How old do you think this planet physically is?

AL: Trillions.

Unknown: 2.54.

DS: I mean, the nearest anyone can date it is in the billions of years. Okay. So do you think this planet has been used in one cycle of creation (being ours) and never before and never again afterwards?

RL: Well, didn't Joseph Smith say that this planet consists of fragments of other planets?

DS: That's one way to describe it.

AL: But it's used over and over?

DS: Yeah. Why does the end of the millennium and John's revelation read rather like the beginning of the creation in the book of Abraham?

Yeah?

VH: How much downtime between cycles?

DS: Apparently, almost none.

Tausha Larsen: So, this earth has a ways to go?

VH: So then the question: Have we advanced further technologically than other rounds? Because you would think Hoover Dam and our interstate freeways and then some works of man that... Do you think they've destroyed/get destroyed pretty quickly?

DS: Let's say that the earth is an intelligence (and actually a feminine intelligence, at that). And let's say that she... And the only time we hear from HER is in the Enoch text of the book of Moses when she laments the wickedness that is on her face (as her,

being the mother of man, you know)... So it's a female entity. Let's say that SHE has fulfilled the measure of her creation and that SHE, now, can move on (in whatever sphere that is) to something newer and better and higher. And so she un-occupies "this" and moves to something better—and for a moment, it ceases to be animated by an intelligence, and there will be another that comes to occupy it. What happens to your interstate when it's no longer maintained in an order that an intelligence holds control over? What happens to it during that—I don't care how short it is—during that time period before "another" comes to fulfill the measure of the next cycle of creation?

Unknown: Mars?

Lori Larsen: It falls apart.

AL: Yeah, Mars.

Unknown: Mars...

DS: Yeah...

Unknown: Venus.

DS: It certainly doesn't hold all the bonds of...

LL: ...together.

DS: ...concrete together. I would bet...

LL: And is that a higher or a lesser order of intelligence than where we currently find ourselves?

DS: Well, it's certainly a different one than the one we're in.

LL: Yeah.

DS: And apparently the highest and best and greatest is the one that we're trying to figure out how to behave in. If God would just not give us, oh, ambition, sexual appetite...

AL: Beer.

DS: ...taste, sense of taste, I mean, every one of the... Gluttony—oh, where'd that come from? Well, okay, stuff tastes good. And all that sexual misconduct, where did that come from? We're in puberty. You know, the body is an unruly animal. We got desires, appetites, and passions that belong to this physicality that... Look at every weakness that men have. I mean, why did they hoard? Why are they greedy? Because they're insecure: they're afraid they won't have clothes to wear and food to eat and shelter to protect them, so they need a whole lot of excess of everything in order to gain carnal security. It's that carnality thing. "Take no thought what ye shall eat," you know, or what you should wear. God clothes the grass in the field. He'll take care of you, too, so "forget about it." And yet, you know, people that have more are afraid of losing the more that

they have. It just doesn't... In these bodies, it just doesn't end. It's like putting you on the back of a stallion and saying, "You have to ride this thing, and you've got to work out how this is gonna work." Because it will use you up if you don't gain control. And, you know, there you are. It's just dust. But holy crap is this dust insistent, relentlessly! Especially when you break part of it.

AL: It gets really mad.

CS: So, going back to an intelligence that holds the, you know, this earth together, essentially...

DS: Yeah.

CS: ...and perhaps a different intelligence each cycle, would that not apply to also...

Unknown: (There are no seats.)

CS: ...also things within the earth. So, I mean, you have... So, if death didn't enter the earth/this world until after the fall and we have what appears to be remnants from BEFORE the fall...

DS: Yeah, yeah.

CS: ...of previous life inhabitants of a sort, of fossilized inhabitants... So what's the reconciliation there?

DS: [chuckling] The...

CS: Like, why wouldn't they also return to...

DS: Be ground to dust?

CS: Dissolved, yeah.

DS: A lot of [indecipherable--enhancement?]. And a lot of it will be [indecipherable]. But that doesn't mean that...

[crosstalk]

We're gonna go?

Stephanie Snuffer: Yes. If this is what this is...

DS: Well, have a seat! Let's talk. Okay...

SS: We're not here to listen to you.

DS: Reed is now gonna answer the last question.

RL: ...what?

AL: Go, Reed!

RL: What is the last question?

Unknown: I've got a question for Reed. Well, actually, Tausha, ask your question to Reed.

RL: Uh oh.

TL: Ask my question to Reed? I don't want to ask my question if Stephanie's in here.

Unknown: It's for Reed. It's a question for Reed.

SS: We came back here for a very specific reason.

DS: [indecipherable]

SS: No, you were not.

VH: Actually, Denver was asking us questions.

SS: No, he was not. I can tell. This is him holding court, and we're gonna leave.

DS: But hold on. I'm gonna ask a question.

SS: Okay. I'm not kidding. That's not why we're here.

DS: Why would some elements persist in a semi-organized state and other elements not if the cycle of creation involves a different spirit stepping up? And in order to fulfill the measure of creation and move on, does that get accomplished in a single cycle? Or does it take more?

AL: Interesting. So...

DS: Has it taken YOU more?

Unknown: Yes, yes.

AL: Certainly.

DS: Will it take more still for you?

AL: Certainly.

ML: I guess there's an "it depends" in there.

Unknown: In Second Nephi, it says, "Christ layeth down the life according to the flesh, so that by the power of the Spirit he can pick it up again." I think that's it. If you lay it down, you can take it up again.

DS: If everything about it is willful. Yeah. WE only go kicking and screaming.

AL: So, this notion of a different intelligence animating the earth in a different cycle being tied to the sorts of things that get preserved from the sorts of things that do not

get preserved—even in the fossil record, for example; in the earth's crust, for example—that's an interesting idea that's tied, then, to which intelligence animates this, and does it come down to preference? You know, "I like the moose; it's sticking around."

DS: Joseph was very complimentary about the fidelity of the earth—the spirit of the earth—to the charge that was given to her in the creation and that the earth had fulfilled the measure of her assignment.

AL: That would imply that there are rebellious planets that are that have less fidelity.

DS: I'm not sure I would always dismiss it as "rebellious." As inexperienced, incapable, ignorant, learning...

AL: Interesting.

DS: ...moving along in the path... I mean, Joseph said you're saved no faster than you get knowledge; well, the absence of knowledge doesn't imply the presence of willful wickedness as much as it implies inability, stupidity, sloth, just not measuring up, you know?

Unknown: Not measuring up to the...? What is it? The measure of its creation?

DS: Yeah, fulfilling your full measure of creation. I mean, if you look back—you probably don't even need to go back a year—you can probably think of mistakes that you've made you would like to have done better (in just the last few months). Well, how would it be to look back over the course of a life and to think about every opportunity/every choice/every moment and to think, "I lived it to the highest and the best"? And as far as I know in THIS creation, we've got a few that are pointed to and the Scriptures say they were "perfect in their generation." But that's, in my view, that's faint praise. Okay? It's not perfect; it doesn't say perfect. "Perfect in their generation." What does that mean? Well, in the context of the raw sewage that they bathed in daily, they were kind of tolerable.

Unknown: Graded on the curve. Yeah.

DS: Exactly. And therein lies the problem. Very few are adequate for absolutes, and Christ was one of them.

AL: Meaning every moment He had lived to the full measure/lived correctly and being able to look back and see that moment-by-moment.

DS: Yeah.

AL: That's absolutely remarkable.

DS: Yeah.

Okay, this has to be a conversation.

David Christensen: Adrian, I'm reading your blog.

AL: Yeah.

DC: When does number six...? It was only gonna go to six. Will there be a seven and eight?

AL: As far as I know at the moment, it goes to six. And, you know, much of what was said today is exactly where it was going, and that is: Everything up to five was gloom and doom; Six is: if you want some hope of not being swept off, you need to have a right to this promised land. And the right to the promised land is granted by covenant from the one who owns the land. The covenant is offered. And I'm looking for a nice way to say... There are a lot of folks I know... Not a lot. There are folks I know who—even folks that are baptized—who've said, "I don't need that covenant. It doesn't apply to me because I have XY&Z going for me," which is nice, or "I have a bloodline going for me," which means, "I don't need to accept what Jesus is offering me at this extreme point in history right before everything gets swept off. I'm fine. I'm good without it." And I'm hoping to challenge that notion and maybe convince people that what's coming is probably a lot rougher than we think—and there's specific language in the covenant and specific promises of protection made, and I think that those promises are there because they will be desperately needed. And so, not only accept the covenant if you haven't, but keep it if you have. That's kind of where that's all going.

DC: Well, I have to admit, when I read your very first one... I'm late to the party, because you broke my bubble with Christopher Columbus, like...

AL: I'm sorry.

Unknown: Yeah, that was a lot of people.

DC: [indecipherable] ...I was listening in Denver's talk today, and I'm [indecipherable]... Have you done a new thing? You've been kind of... Where did that all come from? And then, with the whole Roger Williams, I'd love to kinda know where you... Had you been studying that? And to rename the guy that we've been always...?

AL: Years ago, I was preparing for a Scripture study that we were doing (a Saturday night study). I was in the Scriptures; I came across that man. I was reading... So, I'd...

TL: He came across Christopher Columbus.

AL: No, I came across the "man among the Gentiles." And so, I was reading about Christopher Columbus to talk about him in Scripture study, and the more I read, the more I'm like, "Eww." And so, I was pondering that and questioning (and not something I'd blog about...), but a name popped into my head, a name I'd never heard (that I know of): Roger Williams. I'm like, "That's nice. Who's that?"

That was years ago, and I filed it away and probably forgot about it. And (...what? Three weeks ago?) we were on vacation, and I was reading the 116 Pages book (that I referenced) and saw the pattern and thought, "Well, gee, that's really interesting." And Roger Williams popped back into my head from way back when, and so I did a couple of research did some more research and put it together. And a lot of people get warm

fuzzies from the Spirit, and that's their definition of "inspiration." And more times than not, my definition of inspiration is, "Oh, shit." And that was one of those moments when that all came together. And I'm like, "Ohhhh..."

TL: Although, it's still conjecture.

AL: Oh, yeah, I'm not saying I'm right. I'm just saying...

Unknown: Adrian, was it like, "Oh, shit, I have to SAY this," or this is the cognitive dissonance like... What was that? Like, when, you know, when something comes, you're like, "Oh, crap. Now I have to deal with this."

AL: See, I was planning to blog about destruction earlier, and I had a whole different idea planned, and this stuff all presented itself. And I was... I had a very heavy, crushing conviction that this is what I need to write about. And that was the "Oh, shit." There were several other... Yeah, there were several others, you know, realizing the implications. I don't like... Anybody here want to go out publicly and say, "Hey, guys, it looks like about eight years left, more or less." I mean...

DC: 30 [2030], right?

AL: Yeah, I expect a buttful of arrows for that. And I don't... I'm wildly uncomfortable writing stuff like that. And so hopefully, I'm wrong. And take it all with 1000 grains of salt.

Lynne Robbins: I just want to know if coffee was involved in this.

AL: Coffee?

LR: Well, you said caffeine helps you study Scripture.

AL: Oh.

LR: Just curious.

AL: You remember when Denver got asked if he was praying when something happened (to the Stake President)? And he said, "Well, that's not a fair question, because any spare moment that my mind's not otherwise occupied, there's a prayer going on." Yeah, I can't think of a day without coffee in quite a while. Sooo...

RL: Or a moment without caffeine, huh?

DS: Caffeine-induced frenzy.

AL: Yeah, it's the product of a frenzied mind.

Unknown: Or ADHD. It helps you think.

Brian Bowler: I think it's interesting that the pattern that... It's not fun to talk about the gloom and doom part...

AL: No.

BB: But part of it is: I think we need to become convinced that there's no other way that we can be saved. You know, it was like Moses had to be convinced of his own nothingness. And we all have to be convinced, eventually, that any other reservations (that "maybe I could do this or this," or there's a lesser, less Babylon-ish way to get by, you know; "there's a little corner I can hide in and get past"), I think that all has to be swept away, that the only real person that will ultimately help us pass over this trial we're going through will be the Lord. He's the only power that will be able to bring any one of us through it. And so part of that is breaking down any reservation and blowing up our bubbles. The way we see the world is going to be crushed and broken, and then that's where He can fill in the gaps. Anyway, so that's the... It's weird; I do want to talk about the good. And that's coming. But you've got to be convinced that there is no other way.

DS: One of the frustrations with talking to Evangelicals is that they turn the word "gospel" into "good news." And the assumption that comes from that is that everything must be GOOD news in order for it to be related to anything Jesus wants us to hear. "It's got to be GOOD news. I've got to feel GOOD about it. It's got to make me feel good." And when they hear something that says, "You're awful, and you have to repent," they say, "Oh, I know that's false. That's a false spirit. That's not good news. They just gave me bad news! That's the devil himself."

Unknown: That's just not with... The LDS community is the same way.

DS: Yeah.

Unknown: I couldn't... They wouldn't let me teach things because it made people FEEL bad.

VH: Yeah, I had a friend who said to me/he told me, you know, "Everything you're telling me, all these Scriptures, I don't feel the Spirit." Because it's just an uncomfortable feeling.

AL: I had someone on my mission, we gave him a Book of Mormon; they promised to read it. We go back a week later and ask them. "Oh, I threw that book in the trash."

"Why?"

"Oh, I had a dark feeling when I tried to read it."

Oh, well, yeah. Clearly, it's of the devil then.

Unknown: Wow.

DS: There's a lot of people that think that anything related to a continuing restoration brings a "dark feeling" because, well, "You're actually telling us that Russell Nelson can lead us astray?" That's horrifying! Teach men truth but leave the claims of the hierarchy intact, then they'll listen to ya.

Unknown: Negotiating.

BB: I think no one likes feeling vulnerable. And the problem is, like, when you start truth starts breaking up what you know, you're left with this... There's no foundation below you, and it's so freakin' scary that you would rather choose almost to be your delusion or illusion than the reality—because it's SO uncomfortable, and like, as I went along, it's like, "What can I trust, Lord? I can't even trust ME at times." I'm an unprofitable servant. I don't have all the answers. I can go down many wrong roads and realize that and that feeling. You have to have a certain cognitive dissonance that you're—even in your best moments—you're probably not all right. And we like being right (as Gentiles). It's painful. It's really painful to have your world blown up, and as soon as you put it back together, it's going to be blown up again, you know? And that's this whole path that all of us are on, and you gotta say, "You think you got it back together?" Yeah, I thought I've had this figured out several times. You know, I'm like, "Crap." And then the Lord goes over here, or something goes over there.

AL: The sandy foundation—you're constantly scared of falling.

BB: Yeah.

TL: So, as Whitney was giving her talk today and just... We reviewed a lot of the mistakes that the saints have made. And I'm just... I guess I'm wondering, what mistakes are we making now? Are we making the same ones that they did? Do we have the adulterous hearts that they did that caused it all to fail? And it was after the Kirtland Temple—when all that light came—it was immediately after that that everything just went downhill. And so it seems like the more light that comes, the more difficult it is, too. So, I guess, these lessons from history, what are we doing that's the same or different or...?

CS: Actually, I had a question for Whitney, and I was gonna ask you this probably later, but I figured this would be a good place to ask it now. Have you had—if you're comfortable; if you're comfortable!

Whitney Horning: If I'm not, I won't answer.

CS: Okay, great, great, great. I don't know if you've already written about this or not, but I had heard the idea that... Because when it came to Joseph's sealings, you know, he hadn't just sealed women to him. It was like, you'd seal sons, daughters, men, like, families to him. And I was trying to search into, I was trying to, like, back up that claim; I did some stuff. Have you come across any things like that or...?

WH: Yeah, so Denver actually had a talk where (in the "Civilization" in Colorado) where he goes over the law of adoption. I think it's also in A Glossary of Terms in the Scriptures.

CS: Right. Right. And I...

DS: Yeah, and Bushman described what Joseph was up to as "yearning for familial plentitude in Heaven," the purpose being to expand his family so that when he got into Heaven, he had brothers and sisters and fathers and uncles and aunts and relations—

and it was about familial plentitude, which just shows you that Bushman is grappling with something that... He could not get his hands around it.

The diaries of the brethren in the late 1800s—just before they finally cut off adoption practice—in the diaries, they're talking about, "What was it that Joseph was up to?"—'cuz in the Joseph Smith Papers, it doesn't even show up until October of 1843. He'll be dead eight months later. And the first mention of this kind of practice is October of 1843. And it's an obscure reference to the necessity for adoption to get into the Kingdom. So, it's not fully explained—but he's doing something—and then he's dead, and he's gone, and they start doing something to imitate it. And by the time you get in the 1880s, their diaries are saying, "We didn't understand what this was all about."

George Q. Cannon says, "I didn't believe it when Joseph did it, and I don't believe it now." I mean, they're saying things like, you know, This is—whatever the hell this is—we don't know what it is, and we shouldn't be doing it." Until finally Wilford Woodruff put some "absolute" into it in a talk he gave to the Utah Genealogical Society in the 1880s, and they edit out THE paragraph that deals directly with it when they publish the talk. And so the talk today is sans the adoption stuff. But they got to the point where you did your genealogy as far as you could do your genealogy, and when you reached the end of the road, then you seal that person to Joseph Smith. And so, we're all connected into the family (the way that Joseph is trying to do it)—which flips everything on it's ear.

RL: Well, interestingly, all of the temple presidents of the time kept notes as to what was accomplished each day in the temple. And if you go read their diaries, you'll see in Manti and in the different temples around, they talk about, "Today, we baptized this many people for the dead, this many for healing, this many endowments were done, this many sealings, this many adoptions," and they keep track of all of this, right? So they knew it was a specific ordinance that was necessary. And they were actually doing this (even though they didn't know why). And that persisted for decades. So adoptions (as a specific tool to accomplish the construction of a family) has nothing whatsoever to do with marriage. The problem is that people conflate the two. They think marriage, you know, sealing, adoption...

DS: That was deliberate!

RL: ...it's all the same thing, and now it looks like polygamy.

CS: My main question was like, do we, anybody, do either of you have a list of names of the families, the children, the husbands that were also sealed to Joseph, or is that kind of like... Do we have record of that?

DS: Devery Anderson's Quorum of the Anointed gives a list, and I think it's a pretty good one. Devery... It's a three-volume set. Devery Anderson...

DC: [indecipherable] ...she wrote books about the temple. She's written a couple books.

[crosstalk]

ML: The Quorum of the... The three books Denver's referring to were published by Signature Books, and they're probably out of print, but you can find them online. And there's The Nauvoo Endowment Company. This is one of the three volumes that...

Unknown: [indecipherable]

ML: I'm sure you can.

RL: By the way, fantastic talk today, Vern. You too, Matt. You two were really, really good.

LR: We're calling you Vern now instead of Whitney's husband.

RL: Yeah, yeah.

Unknown: You've risen.

WH: I want to go on record, I spent many years being "the bishop's wife." And people would come in [indecipherable], "I have a name." They'd be like, "Yeah, the 'bishop's wife.'" So I feel like this is [indecipherable].

VH: So the question is: Was Joseph really doing endowments in the Red Brick Store? Or is that a lie from the apostles so they could give legitimacy to what they invented and put into the Salt Lake Temple?

Because it would make sense that if he's trying to get a temple built, that he would do something that sacred outside it?

AL: Well, they did baptisms in the river.

VH: And then it stops.

AL: Yeah, but for a time, it was acceptable. And then it had to stop. I wonder if endowment was the same sort of thing—and perhaps even knowing there was a fuse burning on his own life...

Unknown: So I can... I have a question. Nobody knew what the endowment session... They didn't actually have endowment sessions before Joseph Smith died, did they?

Well, that's what I was gonna bring up. Hugh Nibley talked about parallels between the LDS endowment and early Christian practices. And there's some in Pistis Sophia and several other places where, you know, there's a creation story, and then there's sets of covenants that are made, and there's a prayer circle. So, it looks like there's things that are parallel.

Well, so my question about that is: If post-Joseph Smith they developed an endowment session, was that ever right in the face of the Lord, in the view of the Lord? Or was it... I mean, if Brigham Young was part/had part, too, in developing that, then was it ever really right?

MF: Can I...? Okay. There's a quote that Johnny Page, I think it's probably in Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy, where Johnny Page was one of the Twelve. And he said he went... He told his wife (after they went through the endowment with Brigham Young), he said, "I went through the endowment with Joseph, and this was nothing like it." So like, what he learned from Joseph was totally different from what Brigham did.

Unknown: And he was the only apostle that didn't go along with the Brigham Young movement.

MF: Yeah, yeah. So, there probably was something...

Unknown: So, technically, the endowment session (that they have changed repeatedly and repeatedly and repeatedly over the years) never really was correct to begin with. Is that right?

Terry Fausett: I've always assumed that was part of what was going TO BE restored when the temple got finished and Joseph could get those answers and directions. And since Brigham never received the Savior and was still looking for Him when he died...

Unknown: (He was still looking for wives, this is what he was looking for...)

TF: [indecipherable] ...didn't receive the Savior, so how can he receive that information to do that?

Unknown: So, we don't really care that they keep changing things and changing things because they weren't right to begin with. I mean, I cared when... I couldn't understand it when I was active in the church. And now, you know, first, I don't really care, but it's just so bizarre thinking about it, you know, that it was never right from the beginning.

Although, there is this very uncertain consideration [indecipherable] in that a lot of this stuff has also been helpful in getting people to a (I don't know...) "higher point" in spiritual lives. There's a number of different things there that, at least esoterically speaking, you do make a certain progress up to the Lord, right? And that whole process getting there is associated with that ascension process.

And you're on faith as an individual rather than...

Unknown: Correct.

Unknown: ...the origins.

Unknown: And so, okay, I don't know that it was given specifically to anybody credible, let's say, but I do believe that there is some aspect of it that is actually spiritual and helpful in that ascension process.

AL: And I think there's records that talk about Joseph doing something in the Red Brick Store and setting it up as a garden and so on. So, it's my understanding that Brigham managed to preserve and corrupt something of what Joseph had—so it's based on something that was correct. It was a poor imitation. And it's been... And it's degraded ever since. But nevertheless, the idea that there are increasing degrees of glory,

ultimately conversing with the Lord through the veil and entering His presence, and that that is our journey—if it preserved only that, that's instructive and helpful. And it's good to know. That's how I view it.

Unknown: I thought it was really interesting (and I can't remember who was giving the talk), but seeing how God doesn't change things from one prophet to another. You know, I mean, he/they add things—knowledge or something like that—but He's not going to reverse the revelations of another prophet. So, like, Joseph Smith didn't reverse anything that whoever was the last prophet before him.

MF: Joseph Smith's papyrus book of, you know, like Hugh Nibley's books—that's a big one. At the back in the appendix it's got, like, the Sofa P...whatever...

Unknown: The Sophia.

MF: Yeah. And a bunch of different ones from countries like Iraq and, you know, those old, old places, their records, and they all have this Garden of Eden story in it as part of their ceremony. So He's done this in all different places. So I can understand how Joseph did that garden drama—that parable or whatever. But it was, of course, Heber C. Kimball that was really intimate with the Masons (wanting to be a high-level Mason) and then Brigham Young (wanting the wives). So between the secret rituals of the Masons and the spiritual wifery, they came up with their endowment, and I think that's kind of how we've got where we're at.

DS: Let's just go back and remember the way some things unfolded. Yeah, Joseph Smith got the papyri in Kirtland, and he began to work to translate it. And he didn't finish it, and he didn't publish it. And then in late 1842, he published in the Times and Seasons the first and then the second installment that we now know to be the Book of Abraham as an installment of what he had gotten by revelation/translation, promising there would be another installment that came out, which never came out in public, but which it appears was what he did—because if you read the account of the Book of Abraham, it goes right up to the Garden of Eden. The next installment/the next increment shows up in private as a translation—the promised next installment—in what we know as the temple, which picks up in the Garden of Eden. And we know from independent sources in diaries and journals that the Red Brick Store, what was going on there—included a garden scene and an angel with a flaming sword that was guarding the Tree of Life because people interrupted what was going on there—that that was an ORAL tradition.

Brigham Young went through that initiation. There were others who had gone through that initiation who were still alive and were still present. Joseph died, the ceremony stopped, nothing picks up again until November (late November) of 1845. And by February of '46, they are driven out of Nauvoo. So the ceremony recommences late November 1845, and then it ends in February of 1846, during which the Twelve presided over what was going on. But more than Brigham Young had been through the Red Brick Store initiation. Had he made MASSIVE alterations, that would have been detected and denounced.

Between February of 1846 and the commencement of ceremonies in the Endowment House on Temple Square, there was only ONE endowment done (and that was on Ensign Peak for a missionary that was leaving—to endow him). And then the Endowment House picks up, in which Brigham Young more or less managed things.

Then they dedicated the St. George Temple. At the dedication of the St. George Temple, they start taking down—because there is a temple—they start taking down the Endowment House, but it's still orally transmitted, orally preserved, orally continued. Then the Logan Temple comes online, and now they're gonna have two temples very far apart geographically. I mean, it's like 500 miles apart between them 300 miles apart between them.

RL: Well, and each of the temple presidents kind of had control over how it was done.

DS: So now at the dedication of that temple, the decision is made to reduce the endowment to writing—for the first time. Now, this is like 1877. So, Joseph's dead in 1844; you're now 33 years later that you're finally going to reduce it to writing FOR THE FIRST TIME. It got reduced to a typewritten copy in the 1877 timeframe. And it did not change again until the Reed Smoot hearings in Congress when Joseph F. Smith is asked about the oath of vengeance that's taken as part of the temple rites, and Joseph F. Smith DENIES that that is part of the Mormon covenant-making (because if it were a part of Mormon covenant-making, then that would mean that Reed Smoot could not be seated as a senator, and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve is not going to be a U.S. Senator).

The first change that is made to the manuscript that's typewritten is Joseph F. Smith changing it by eliminating the oath of vengeance. That's the first one, and that was done contemporaneous with the Reed Smoot hearings. Whether he went to Washington and answered the question and said it wasn't part, intending to come back and delete it, or whether he knew he was going to be asked that question and so he deleted it before he went out so he could deny it, we don't know the timing on that. But we do know that it was eliminated; it was crossed out. That's the very first change made in (what?) 1906 to the thing that had been written down for the first time in 1877.

And then, by the time you get to cutting back the...

AL: Penalties.

DS: ...the penalty... I mean, they didn't eliminate them; they just remove "the bowels gushing out" and "the tongue being..." All that. They eliminated the graphic description. But they didn't eliminate the penalties. That was another kind of slow-inching. And then in 1990, "Katy, bar the door," there's been a flood of changes that have occurred since then.

Unknown: There was... Wasn't there another change, though? Didn't Brigham Young have a lecture...?

DS: Yes, a lecture at the veil.

Unknown: Yeah, at the veil.

DS: But that was a one-off event.

VH: And there was the congregation singing.

DS: Yeah. If you went to the temple and heard Brigham's lecture on Wednesday and then you went back on Friday, it might be a different lecture.

Unknown: And so it wasn't really the "endowment."

DS: But they did reduce that to writing, too, in 1877. But until then, it was "stream-of-consciousness Brigham," you know.

Unknown: "This is our God, and we have no other God."

DS: If someone stole a goat earlier in the morning and now he's giving his lecture, you might hear a whole lot about thievery and goats and... I mean, how that fit into the creation and was, you know, living properly...

Unknown: So, how are those things recorded? Like, 'cuz, as you know...

DS: Typewritten, preserved in notebooks in the Salt Lake Temple, on the floor between the level on which the First Presidency meets and the upper level where the Seventy meet, in a room that James Talmage used to write Jesus the Christ.

Unknown: But, Denver, wasn't the... When the endowment was reduced to writing, that was pretty much John Nuttall that did that, just reading back to Brigham, to see if he added in changes.

DS: There was actually a committee of three people that worked on it; Nuttall was part of it as scribe—but I mean, they all got to voice their remembrances. The biggest vulnerable points were: Joseph's gone in 1844, and it's in November of 1845 when they... Everything then was what they could recall of what Joseph had done. And so the question is, how much did they recall? And Brigham...

Look, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff... EVERY one of them said, "The temple rites are not finished. This is not done. This is not right. This is the best we can do. Someday, Joseph is gonna come back and he's gonna fix these rites." It was... They NEVER said they got it nailed right. They always said, "Joseph's gonna return, and he's gonna fix this, and it's gonna get done right."

It's not until after Joseph F. Smith that they begin to say, "We've got it," you know, "You're secure in your afterlife if you come fetch from us what we have to offer." I mean, it became one of the major sales points, and it remains one of the major sales points for the religion brand that they offer. "We can promise you stuff. And you'll get it."

AL: Does anyone know where this notion came from that Joseph is coming back? Because that still gets kicked around, and there's, you know, people making claims now. But where did that come from?

DS: Brigham.

VH: I was wondering if they were saying that it'll take a resurrected Joseph Smith to restore this. Were they thinking, well, "When the Christ comes, the Millennium begins," correct, "Joseph comes back as a resurrected in the morning of the first resurrection. And then we'll get it all straightened up."

AL: Oh, is that it?

VH: That's what I think it is. And then it makes me think people now ('cuz there are some groups like the "Doctrine of Christ" group), they really believe that—that this resurrected Joseph... And then I asked someone, well does it have to be... "Does he come back as a glorified personage, like Jesus Christ?"

"Well, no, he's just gonna be born again"—like it's a rebirth; it's a Dalai Lama thing.

AL: Well, that's not the morning of the first resurrection.

VH: No, so it's kind of changed a little.

Unknown: "Doctrine of Christ" people actually have somebody picked out.

Unknown: Yeah.

DS: Phil Davis.

SS: Wait, I want to go back to Tausha. Hey, Tausha had a good question that nobody's answering.

Unknown: Yeah.

TL: That's a hard question. Nobody wants to talk about it.

SS: Well, that's the interesting thing: Nobody wants to talk about it. You want to talk about all these other things that actually don't really matter in the grand scheme of things.

DS: I was in the bathroom. I don't even know what the question is.

SS: Tausha's question is: "Are we messing up the same way? Or different ways?"

DS: Oh, I heard that question.

SS: Yeah. And nobody answered it.

DS: I ignored that. Yeah.

SS: And I don't care if anybody answers it. But it's really interesting that you'd rather talk about all this other stuff than that question. Because that's an important question.

LR: Well, I didn't ignore it. And something happened here for this actual conference that kind of puts that in perspective, which is: Denver says, "Yeah, I'm not speaking on

Sunday, and there's a 90-minute gap, so deal with it," and then what does the organizing committee do? And then we have Joe Alexander who hears the voice of the Lord saying (as he's asking, "Who do we ask to speak,"), the Lord tells Joe Alexander, "I want to be asked to speak at the conference." So now the organizing committee is going, "What the hell do we do?" because we've invited the Lord to speak. Does He show up in person? Do we have that kind of faith? Does He speak through somebody? Are we supposed to have a prayer meeting? We don't know how to do LDS 2.0—uncorrelated, without minute-by-minute scheduling—for a conference. So Tausha, are we doing the same thing? Or have we learned what to do with a 90-minute gap? How close are we to hearing and listening to the Lord's voice in this conference? We don't know—'cuz it's scaring us to death as an organizing committee. The Lord wants to speak; He told Joe Alexander, "I want to be invited to speak." What does that mean? What do we do with that? Like, panic. And so we may not be as far along as we think we are when a 90-minute gap in the program, which is totally set out minute-by-minute, gives us pause. We don't know yet. So this is a new thing for us. And where are we in that? Brian?

BB: If we're uncomfortable with space, as I've seen through a lot of conferences, we like to program everything out. And that's a gentile thing is that we don't know how to come to a meeting and to say whether to let to preach, teach, exhort, have music, you know. But that's, like, down here we...

I find in our progression, we either want to be "here" or "here"; we want to jump this chasm without going through a process of growth. And so, part of... Kind of back to the endowment; we're all talking about the endowment—but there's fruit that came from that endowment. There's people here that connected with Heaven because of what we have, you know. So there was enough there; it's like... But we get caught away with details and forget to connect with Heaven and to let Heaven guide us versus wanting someone to preach to us or someone to tell us what to do.

So, I mean, I think what Tausha... I would say we've made every... I've seen every mistake made in the Nauvoo period, and I've made probably most of 'em myself, too—and I don't say that hyperbole. I feel like when Denver was talking, I was convinced of my own weaknesses 'cuz I see how I was a committed so much to... I was into the LDS Church so much that I was a religious freak sometime. And then I also chased after things I shouldn't chase after. So the two things that you mentioned, kind of, priestcraft and the sins of the flesh is like, yeah, get a [indecipherable]. So we all, I think, we all are still trying to progress, but as I... I have hope 'cuz I felt/I still feel like we're here talking, you know, we're here trying, so... I feel like the Lord's trying to take us along a path. In Colorado there was...

We're recovering from Babylon. I joke about this sometimes: Babylon Anonymous. We're kind of like the children of Israel leaving Egypt, and they have all these bad habits—and I think that's part of what, I think, we're trying to do is overcome these bad habits and learn how to live differently with each other, not to be passive-aggressive, not to talk about each other. You know, I think much of what Stephanie is doing is trying to develop a new culture that we're not used to; we're used to this other way of dealing with each

other. And so we ARE recovering from being in this world, and we're trying to learn how it is to be in a to [be] godly with each other, how to say, "No," to each other and not get offended of, you know... So it's an uncomfortable and vulnerable process—I feel like—that we're all going through. And we don't know...

We both have all have left feet right now. I mean, I feel uncomfortable sometimes because I know I'm not "right" (still) inside. And I'm like, wow, my natural instincts are... I can't trust some things that I used to trust. I'm having to learn how to walk all over again in a different manner. And it's... It IS uncomfortable. And so that's... But then I know there's also somebody that really wants to help in this, and I just have to listen to that enough and not give up.

There was an answer given by Denver today about how that desire to give up—I've seen it in others; I've seen people... When we become aware of just how what a vulnerable state we're in, it takes much effort to keep going and not want to say, "Okay, I tap out, God," you know; "I've had enough for this existence..." you know, "...but let me take this up in the next one." It's har... Every minute we stay here is kind of like a continual miracle that we can keep on adding upon. I almost died years ago and wanted to die, for [indecipherable], for intercession. And so, I've looked at every minute since then... It has been so valuable, that I want to HAVE this.

So yeah, we are here, and it's a miracle that we're here. And for me, it gives us/should give us a sense of gratitude that we even HAVE a chance and that He is paying attention to us.

LR: So Monday morning, the conference organizing committee asks the question, "What did we learn and what ought we to have learned from this conference?" And I hope we ask that question and get a good answer. Because this is a new thing; Kentucky's new ground. This isn't Utah and Boise. This is the mission field, and we've gathered people here that are cold-calls, never heard it before, never heard the name. What ought we to have learned about the Lord being invited to speak? That'll be the question Monday morning.

Unknown: You know, I really appreciate your comments, Brian, and what was... It was very well-put. There are a lot of things we're still learning and still figuring out as this stuff goes along. You know, something that kind of occurred to me when we were talking about this scripting and scheduling thing is: You know what? We're all just sitting here together, talking about stuff in pretty much an unscripted environment right this instant. This is kind of like an unscheduled meeting, as it were. And it seems to me like a lot of these things kind of happen all over the place. Why did it have to be skipped?

BB: See, that's the.. What I... For years I saw (in putting the conference together) that eventually that we can... The old conferences, they used to show up, and typically, Joseph Smith was chosen—but it's like they could choose somebody to kind of conduct/guide it, but everybody would work out/decide what business needs to be taken care of in the community, which the community was there to... There was complaints and everything that would come up, and you deal with those things. And so it was more you arrange to show up and be there. We're not... We haven't been ready for that as a

people 'cuz it's like it's too much chaos. 'Cuz if there's an open mic, you never know what's gonna happen with an open mic, you know. And there's been a lot of stuff. All these false spirits or half-truths or partial truths that people get excited about and want to rush ahead causes its own chaos. And so...

But in looking forward and backward years ago, we had to start someplace. We had to come out of the wilderness, start to practice doing something different, you know, and recovering from it being in the LDS culture, recover from being unequal. We're not used to being equals—like, we want somebody (like I said) to always tell us/organize it, you know, and it's... That's hard. But eventually, we can get to a point... In Moroni it talks about, "They gathered together and spoke one with another concerning the welfare of their souls." And they also (like I said) decided whether to preach, teach... The CHURCH decided. We don't know how to do that still, quite yet, but we get there by incremental steps. And that's where the patience comes in, is letting Him guide us all, and each one of us getting our working out our own ambitions and false pride and fears of not having enough or being left out (and all those instincts that are within us we have to struggle with), that if we can come to that kind of calmness to trust that the Lord won't forget any one of us here, and if we have faith that He won't forget us, then we can let things happen that we would otherwise be uncomfortable letting things happen, so... It's when it comes back to, first and foremost, trusting Him that He never forgets any one of His kids. So...

Lisa Roseman: [Indecipherable] my outward success as a gauge of how I was doing and how pleased I was with my performance, then I would be terribly depressed. I don't look at my outward performance; I look at my INWARD sensitivity to feel what I've done wrong and how quick I am to repent of it. That's where I look at my (and I don't even want to say) "success." It's really "my failure" is what it is. But the failures have made me more sensitive to what I do and what I say, even though it seems like I'm not making much progress a lot of times. But I think what we should look at in ourselves is: Do we repent quickly when we know we've done something wrong? Is it "real-time" repentance? Or is it "three days later" repentance? Or is it "never" repentance? Because, really, repentance is going to help us in our salvation and that communication with the Lord. I mean, the doctrine of Christ, it always is, it's a very simplistic type of systematic approach to success through failure. And, I mean, if I thought that I could be successful because of what I did right, then gosh, you know, I'd be totally deluding myself. So don't get down on yourself, because I feel your heart in your desire, and your intent is good to want to do right. And that's what the Lord desires.

BB: We have to rely wholly upon the merits of Christ, not on ourselves. So to answer your question, I mean I... That's hard. I mean, I think we have made all the mistakes, but... All we can give Him is our willingness. I mean, the sacrament prayer talks about willingness, and that's the one thing we can... We can keep screwing up, but if we keep trying to come back to Him and be willing to be taught again, when you fail again... I mean, having failed a thousand times on some things, it's like, it's so hard to come back to Him and say, "Well, I keep trying, but..."

"Bless his heart." I've heard, "Bless his heart," quite a few times.

Unknown: Tausha, what was your question again?

TL: Well, it was just, looking at church history and the ways that they failed, are we failing in the same ways, or are we succeeding? I mean, having them as our guide (or the guide as how to NOT succeed), I mean, where do we land? And as I look back at church history, I mean, they got off on the wrong foot pretty quick. You've got Oliver asking Joseph, "Hey, go ask through the Urim and Thummim if I can be one of the three witnesses."

"Hey, Joseph, go ask through the Urim and Thummim if..."

AL: I can translate.

TL: "...if I can translate." So immediately, they were relying on the prophet too much and not having the direct relationship with God themselves. Then you go through the years and you have the Kirtland... The temple came, but then you had the Safety Society mess-up in the banking, and Oliver and counterfeiting money, and then the polygamy thing all comes in, and then diverting funds from the temple to build homes, and so it was just this... Yeah, I look at all these mistakes and then just try to see where we are at. Are we making these same mistakes? And where are we at? How can we do better? Are we gonna do this, or are we not? Is it an individual thing of rising up, being redeemed, receiving the Lord? Or is it more of a group thing of "let's make sure we have enough money for the temple"?

SS: I think... I find it interesting that all of that is outward. I mean, obviously, a lot of it comes from your heart, but you're talking about outward behaviors. And I don't think your outward behaviors... No, they're a representation of what's inside, but if you... I don't know how to... None of it's gonna matter if you can't figure out who you are and how you operate in the world. It... None of it's gonna matter. None of it's gonna matter unless you understand how I perceive you, or I understand how you perceive me. It's not gonna matter what you do because the mistakes are gonna start... They're gonna perpetuate themselves. It feels like what the world is missing is for the ability to people for the ability of people to be quiet and be still. "Be still, and know that I am God."

"What lack I yet?" We run around doing lots of really fantastic things—fantastic things—much of them motivated by [indecipherable] and the power of God. And obviously, don't put them down. But they have to be balanced with the ability to be still.

I have this theory; I mean, it's not a theory—it's actually real. We go around and DO things so we don't have to do the real work of figuring out how we are in the world.

TL: How we are in the world or with God—or both?

SS: Both—with "you and me" and "Him and me," and you know, and missing this big piece of, basically, the yoga of Christ and the centeredness and the awareness and the stillness of being able to hear God tell you what is wrong with you. Not "You're not reading your Scriptures enough." Not "You should have done this." But basically, you know, "Your relationship with your kids really needs work." You know, "You're a good

dad. You provide. You do the things that you need to do, but your kids have no connection with you whatsoever. They don't even know you." I'm just... These are just... I'm just throwing these... These are the things that are going to make people fit to be in community with other people. I mean...

DS: There was... I don't know if it's still around. There was a moment when there was that sexual impropriety going on involving... The catchphrase was "bonded spirits," like we were bonded together in a prior...

Unknown: Existence.

DS: ...existence. And so, you know, "We belong together now, honey, so let's get naked." That crap showed up, and I hope we dealt with it. But for all I know, that crap's still out there. And I mean, what really blew apart Nauvoo and ultimately destroyed both the community, the peace, the lives, the whole thing was—ultimately—sexual immorality.

SS: ...AND people's un... (Again, this... I think these are tied in.) Your... People's unwillingness to have the internal fortitude to do something about it. "I don't want to offend. I don't want to hurt. I don't wanna be ostracized. I don't wanna be the one to..." I mean (I think), knowing what you're talking about, I mean, the EXCUSES people were laying out for not dealing with it was just kind of mind-blowing. And I think this goes back to: We don't have... As people, we're doers; we're not be-ers. We just like to do. Doing makes us feel so good.

Unknown: What did she say at the very beginning in Kirtland, where things first began to manifest going sideways; it wasn't even sexual impropriety, but it really was the spirit of excelling and the spirit of materialism that gripped the church with get-rich-quick schemes—because everybody could see: "Others are gonna be moving in; we can buy the land now and resell it." And there wasn't the community. "Oh, we have a commandment to build a temple; let's go build a temple." It wasn't until Joseph received an additional revelation saying, "Hey, build the temple," that they then put in a push. But I don't know that the people actually changed.

And that's what I think blew things up the first time—was a disappointment about materialism and getting rich, and "All we have to do is trust the Prophet, and everybody's gonna be, you know, happy in Zion." And from there, given that there was a hierarchy, there was always envy and strife about who's in charge and who's closer to Joseph. And they got pushed from place to place out of pride-of-position and being above others and being able to be something that, you know, "I'm this in the world; I should be this in the church, too." And I think then, by the time they got to Nauvoo, that's when the sexual immorality had really become the mature matured—because of missionaries going to places where there was an awful lot of communal societies that were doing that, and you had some false spirits that persuaded Brigham and Heber and friends to do things wrong.

But I look at US, and I think we've... Having a flat, completely flat, everybody's- gonna-be-dependent-on-the-Lord, we're actually gonna realize that you have to know God and

be connected to Heaven—that has put 90% of the "excelling over one another" away. I think some people, honestly, they still want to be "there's an inner circle" maybe, or "I'm closer, and I hear these things and that things," but Denver, you know, in your blog—from the very beginning—you always put, "Don't rely on anything anybody tells you, just what I said in my writing." That I think has killed 90% of that.

Unknown: No, he said EVEN his himself and his writing.

Unknown: Yeah, search it out and find it.

Unknown: Yes. Well, he wants people to find and make the connection themselves and not be overly dependent on the dispensation head.

DS: If you've got a rank-and-file hierarchy, how do you be one—one heart, one mind? I mean, I can understand the value of teaching to come together in one heart and one mind. But to have no poor among you with a rank-and-file...

I mean, eventually we will have a temple—I believe. Eventually, I believe people will want to bring their gifts to the temple. My expectation is when that happens and there is something that accumulates of value of that temple, that that'll be turned over to the women to distribute among the poor. I don't think men oughta touch it. I don't think men oughta be involved. I think the women oughta care for the needs of the community in the same kind of vision that the Relief Society had, where the purpose of the society was to take care of the needs of the... Essentially, the children come first. But I think as soon as you invent structure, you invent disunity and inequality.

SS: Well, and I think it would be... It probably would just be wrong not to just...

You're right, and there's really nothing new under the sun. And it is a CONSTANT battle.

Unknown: But this is a new thing. There are very few organizations I've ever seen or read about that have attempted to do something like this.

SS: Right, but the urges still exist.

Unknown: Yeah, well, we're all bad habits.

SS: Yes. Yeah. No, no, no, and to resist those is great, and you know, to the extent that you're doing it, you're doing a good job, but there's nothing new under the sun.

Unknown: For me it was a culture shock.

SS: The newness has to...

BB: Alcoholics Anonymous tried to do the same.

SS: No, it's just new creatures in Christ, the same old... We're the same old people.

BB: It's the same patterns.

SS: Same old things.

BB: I noticed, and it's funny, I...

When I was in Alcoholics Anonymous and all these other anonymous groups, I noticed they had the same issues. The reason it's called "Anonymous" wasn't because they were worried about their reputation; it was because they were worried about a strongman taking over each group. It's like it was the disposition... They'd have a spiritual experience, have a change, and then they want to come over, and then they started fighting with each other for power. And they had these same urges/same instincts within each one of them that destroyed community. And so, they actually tried not to have an unorganized, locally, everybody-had-their-own-fellowship/group. And it was all local control, no central office—and of course, eventually, they got a central office and whatever else and screwed it all up. But that's, you know, same patterns. They were trying to do what we're trying to do, and not... And they came up with twelve traditions of how to try to accomplish that. Money, power, and prestige was their the main things that diverted from their primary purpose, which was to help each other connect with God. That was the whole purpose of gathering was to help each alcoholic connect with their higher powers.

DS: We've been able to take the money out of it...

BB: Yeah.

DS: ...completely.

BB: Yeah.

DS: No one gets anything.

BB: Yeah.

DS: We're not supporting...

BB: When I was in treatment, this AA guy told me... He had the spirit with him, and I was like, "How can he have the spirit with him? He's like a general authority." And I asked him, "So you used to be Mormon?" And he's like, "Well, yeah." But I said, "Well, why aren't you Mormon now?" He pointed to this one tradition: money, power, and prestige. He said, "The Mormons are all screwed up because of this. The Book of Mormon's true. Joseph was a prophet. They screwed up," and it blew my mind 20 years ago. I was like, "Wow, that can't be true." But yeah, it was true. So, anyway...

Unknown: But to Stephanie's other point, because it... And it ties on what you said. I think, I know for myself, some things that I've wrestled with...

Unknown: Talk louder, please.

Unknown: Talk louder.

Unknown: ...some things that I've wrestled with for years, one day an inspiration came to me about how to deal with it. And it's not anything I'd ever thought of before. And it's like, okay, how do I build that into a habit, 'cuz it's such... It happens, mentally, so fast,

and yet I... It was the right thing to do. And as I've done it, a broken little piece of me now works much better than it used to be. And I think probably all of us have had those kinds of experiences where the Spirit has whispered something—it's almost like microcode—something deep down inside that if you just change this or just attempt to do things differently than you've been doing it like this (in your thinking or in your acting), and it shifts, and it made me a better person. And I think that is that inner thing that Stephanie is talking about. And if we're all doing some of that, then I think that we're rising and ascending and being more palatable and more tolerable to God and to our spouses and friends than we have been in the past. And so, I think in Joseph's time, they were always having external pressure, and external pressure definitely focuses you and causes you to call upon God. And it always worried me that we're gonna HAVE to...

DS: My ride is leaving.

Hey, I enjoyed coming and being here and seeing all you and hearing the talks. You know, Whitney, yours (in the prior conference) and this one go together. People really need to hear that. One of the gravest problems that the LDS community has is reconciling their polygamous history with virtue and goodness and honesty. I mean, the whole of Mormonism in the LDS format is predicated on the idea that you can lie—you can lie under oath, and you can do it for God. And I I don't believe you can do that.

Unknown: ...[indecipherable] same stuff every day; same stuff, different day. It's... We never get out of that. It's like you know, like so she's saying, if we're gonna repeat ourselves or whatever, you know. Same stuff, different day. Same stuff, different day. And you do repeat, and you go right back where, you know... So we have to...

DS: I think the value of honesty and the loss of honesty from the polygamous comings and goings... Even the Manifesto was a damned lie. They didn't stop practicing polygamy until a later letter from Joseph F. Smith finally discontinuing it.

Unknown: In 1897?

DS: When they finally excommunicated two members of the Quorum of the Twelve for practicing plural marriage, their excommunication was not based on the Manifesto. It was based on the letter from Joseph F. Smith discontinuing it. And he did that because of what happened back in Washington. I mean, he was accused under oath of hiding the practice.

(It was the 1905 letter that he wrote.)

Unknown: Oh.

DS: Yeah, so from 1890 'til 1905—for 15 years, a decade and a half—the church was lying again. They called it: Beating the devil at his own game. "The devil's a liar; we'll beat him at his game; we'll lie, too." You can't do that! You can't even play that game. If you do, you know, you ARE the devil. You just are.

Unknown: Safe travels, guys.

Unknown: Thank you.

MF: In D&C 76, it starts listing the end. It starts with lying, and it ends with lying. So lying is in there twice.

WH: So, I have a thought on that question. I felt really strongly that that needed to be the theme of this talk: false spirits. And I felt very strongly it needed to be said for this group, not just people here, but anybody who will listen to it.

So we may have done away with hierarchy. Yay. We're not gonna struggle with aspiring to a calling.

We may have done away with money. Yay. We're not gonna have those issues.

We have not dealt with WHY we have those issues, no matter what organization we belong to.

So when I stand before the judgment bar of God and He says to me, "How did you overcome your aspiring?" and I say, "Oh, I went, and I got involved in a group that didn't have a hierarchy." And He's gonna say, "Well, couldn't you have overcome it when you weren't involved in a group?" Like, how hard is that to overcome it if I'm in a group that doesn't even give that to me as an issue? Right?

So it all goes back to: We do have jarrings; we do have contention; we do have envy; we do have strife; and we do have lustful and covetous desires in each one of us. So it takes... What Stephanie was trying to get to was it takes a lot of self awareness, and that's what Paul's mentioning when he sat and self-reflected and asked God to help him with something. So, the...

I have never had a prayer answered more quickly in my life than when I kneel down and say, "What's wrong with me?" And it's immediate. It's like immediate, right? God's like, "Well finally! Hey, you need to work on this."

So yes, we have those things among us. Yes, we listen to false spirits. They are at work whenever God begins a work. And it's in our Glossary of Terms. (Anything smart I had to say today comes almost exclusively from the Glossary of Terms. So if you read my paper and all the footnotes, you're gonna realize I really just quoted Denver without saying, "Denver said.") So yes, we have all those, and we've got to... What will make us different than the thousands of years of history before us—because God tries to save His children as often as He can—what will make us different is if we can overcome pride and arrogance enough to really honestly self-reflect and ask and compare take the time to say, "We have got so many diversions today that are diversions." That is a false spirit.

So we may have woken up to the false tradition of our fathers. Yay for us. Are we really any better? Am I really a better person? Am I really anymore able to be successful in a community called Zion? Or am I just dragging with me a lot of social and personality and characteristics that are gonna, like, cause it to fail? So for me, writing this talk was a opportunity to self-reflect and really ask myself... I don't ever like to give talks where I

think I have it all figured out. I much prefer to give a talk that is for me. And if anybody else benefits, that's awesome.

So I know I have had enemies. I know things have happened in this movement that have made me feel left out and my feelings hurt. That is a symptom of envy. I know that I have been contentious. I know that I have had jarrings with people. And for those things, I have been really ashamed when I have stopped and really looked in the mirror. So I'm here to say that I know I still am influenced by false spirits. I sure hope nobody else is. And I love being around a lot of you because you're so inspiring to me.

But I do think that Stephanie, her mission... If you guys haven't started listening to her podcast, you really need to. It is free therapy every week, but it is so much deeper than that because she is mindfully (and with the Spirit) teaching us what we skills and techniques and things we can do so that we can hopefully become people that our neighbors won't want to kick out.

BB: See, and that's where...

TL: Amen.

BB: Amen. What we just did, too, was... We talked about this pattern in the "Civilization," in the Grand Junction conference years ago: confession. We don't confess in particular sins; we confess our character issues, our struggles, our "I gossip too much," "I don't pay attention to what I should with my kids," "I'm worried too much about what other people think"— that's being willing to... You take away the power of the accuser when you acknowledge your own weakness, you know. And we don't know how to do that, because we get too graphic, and "Oh my gosh, I don't want to hear that," you know, or we, yeah, we confess stuff that's like just surface, and we're doing it because to be heard. So anyway...

But the wisdom thing. So, today we had tons of knowledge. Tomorrow, we need wisdom how to apply, how to go/where do we go from now? You know, it's like that's what we lack. In Aravada, Denver... The first part of the talk was knowledge; the second part was the wisdom talk. So we lack wisdom—how to apply, how to live with each other, and how to interact.

So tomorrow... The whole program got blown up. It's like... Or it's probably getting blown up. And so I would invite everybody coming tomorrow... We're gonna have the sacrament. But as far as the rest of the program, it may be under flux. We know Denver's not gonna be there. The later program that Laura and I were thinking of doing, the intent was to have all of us learn from each other. "What did we learn? What has the Lord taught us about?" Trusting and "Hearing and Trusting the Lord in the Storm." We were gonna have a discussion because we wanted everybody to have a chance to, if they wanted, you know... How do we learn to talk succinctly like I'm doin'... I'm not doing it good right now. But how can we get to the point and share the light that the Lord gives us and stop talking? So anyway...

So tomorrow I invite everybody to come and pray for us as not just as the committee but that we, as a people, can know what to do tomorrow to bring the most spirit into us personally. And... 'Cuz I walked away today being convinced I needed to change. I was taking the same inventory. I looked around... I saw relationships I haven't always... I felt to repent after hearing today's talk.. So anyway, so I invite you guys to come tomorrow, knowing that we're needing inspiration how to fill these things, what to change, whatever, and I think you're all a part of it. Everybody here is a part of it, whether it's... Whatever you feel led to do. So anyway, thank you.

Unknown: Thank you, Brian.

CS: Hey, what's Stephanie's podcast?

WH: It's called "In Sanity, A piece of mind."

And if you understand—I mean, like, since they're gone, I can speak a little more openly —like honestly, my question is if the Lord wants to speak tomorrow, why didn't He change the flight to Monday instead of tomorrow? I mean, why is His mouthpiece gone? Just sayin', like, I don't know. It makes me a little nervous.

Unknown: Relying on him too much.

WH: No, see, we have that... We have the misunderstanding of what that of what Joseph meant. He was talking... When he gave that statement, "You're relying on the Prophet too much," he was saying it to the women who were giving in to the seductions of Brigham and Heber and John C. Bennett because they would say, "Well, Joseph said it's okay."

"Oh, okay. Joseph said it's okay. All right, I can have sex with you, and we're not married."

And then he took the women out and he said, "Learn the commandments, and learn to think for yourself." Joseph does such a good job being humble and meek and letting the men, in particular... Brigham got into trouble because Brigham thought he was better and smarter and more awesome than Joseph. You don't get that way if you have a guy who's always a strongman. So we got to be really careful that we balance that—because the problem the Saints really had was a whole lot of men who thought they knew better than Joseph. And so, once they let that arrogance and pride start... Like even Oliver Cowdery—his issue with "I want to translate with you because I'm smarter than you, and I have an education," it wasn't because he wanted to serve the Lord. It's because he thought he was better than Joseph and could do a better job.

TL: And then the Whitmer brothers thought that they could replace Joseph, and they were the next in line...

WH: Yeah, yeah.

TL: ...because they could do a better job than he was doing. But I agree. I mean, Denver does speak for the Lord, and...

WH: So that's my first thought, and I'm nervous. So we will definitely be praying.

And then my other thought is if you understand Stephanie's role, if you understand what a son of God or an exalted man has an elect lady with him (and she's he's knowledge, and she's wisdom), then that is why I suggest we listen to her podcast—because she is acting in her role to help us learn a lot of stuff to heal from the scars. I mean, like the Answer to Prayer for Covenant talks about, we've all been scarred. We have. We've all had difficult things in our lives (sans the church) just being children and people and whatever. Like, we've... A lot of people have suffered some really horrific things. And so, I think a lot of healing needs to happen...

TL: Yeah, dealing with trauma, boundaries, communication skills, letting go of the passive- aggressive tendencies, I mean, she covered so much stuff.

WH: Oh yeah, she is just, like, amazing. Yeah, yeah. So, for sure, I would listen to that. And try to actually become that. That's harder. Listening is a little easier. It's actually the implementing, right?

MF: Are all of them, like... The older ones? You can hear the older ones?

WH: Mmhmm.

MF: Okay.

WH: She's been going for about a year, so I think she has...

TL: Yeah, over a year.

WH: ...I don't know how many shows. She does...

TL: One a week, every Monday, she has a new podcast.

CS: "61" is what I saw when I looked it up.

Unknown: What's her podcast on?

WH: So, she's a clinical psychologist...

AL: What platform?

Unknown: That was a poor question, let me rephrase. Where is it? Where is the stream at?

TL: Like if you have an Apple, you can go to the podcast app.

Unknown: If you don't...

Unknown: Perhaps Spotify?

TL: Spotify, Google Podcasts...

WH: "In Sanity, A piece of mind"

[crosstalk]

Unknown: I just asked her where would be a good place to start some of this. That was kind of... I felt like there was a lot. And she wrote down a few websites for me to go to. I could share them.

WH: Yeah, that would be great.

Unknown: They weren't necessarily her stuff, but they were some other stuff that she says would be a good place to start. So I mean, I don't know if anybody would like me to share that with you...

WH: I think that would be great, like, maybe they could put together a resource page for their conference website page. That would be awesome.

Unknown: I can put that down if you guys want.

WH: I mean, we're all broken, right?.

Unknown: I've been wondering the same stuff.

TL: She's very talented.

WH: She is. She can drill into an issue really fast.

BB: It seems like she brought up... We spend a lot of time on all this history stuff, it was like, I'm more interested in how do we learn today how to deal with each other and how to deal with these pragmatic things because her podcasts are not like deep doctrine. It's pragmatic stuff about how to deal with each other.

TL: It's living here in this Telesial world and all the baggage we've gotten and how we just don't know how to have relationships or deal with our own trauma or anything like that. We all need help with that.

BB: Here's an exercise. Think of the person... Think of one person that you can't stand right now. And it's about you. Okay, it's like, whoever that is, you're that person. There's something about you that you cannot accept in yourself, and it's... But you can see it in them; it's easy. But turn that mirror around, and why does that bother you about them? That's one way...

TL: So, I used to have a really hard time wanting to ever get counseling or hear from someone all of these earthly techniques to fix myself. I'm like, the Lord can just fix it all. And I was very much in that mindset until just recently. I've dealt with a chronic illness for a long time, and I've just been finally open to anything that might help me get better. And I realized, okay, I have some trauma stored in my body that I need to release so I can heal physically. And I've cried out to the Lord. And He's directed me to some people who can help me, and so I feel like He is absolutely involved in the whole process. But some of these human angels have been able to help, too. So...

RL: Robert, what did you want to ask?

Robert Hone: Well, I remember at one point in time, Stephanie was talking on her podcast about a values-based activity that they'd done in their family. I don't know if any of you listened to that particular podcast. I think it was on the new year or something like that. I'm kind of curious what that was. I wanted to ask them that before she left. I don't know if anybody has talked to them extensively enough to know what that was? And I guess my second thing was...

RL: Can you speak up a little bit, Robert? We can't hear you.

RH: Sorry, it's a problem I have. I have to be a lot louder than I think I am. And so, the other question was, like, I think a lot of my sources of conflict usually come with that cognitive dissonance of, "Okay, there's this commandment over here, and there's this one over here. And in this particular situation, which one takes precedence?" Right? So like, she talks about being direct and talking to people about commandments that they're breaking and things like that but and how to confront these situations. And sometimes I run into issues dealing with those because there's other commandments that kind of seem to conflict, like: How do you approach a situation without being contentious, while at the same time saying, "Hey look, this is a bad direction for you to go." Does that make sense? Am I like off on tangents?

CS: No, like how do you confront them without... But we're also commanded to be persuasive...

RH: Right.

CS: ...and long-suffering. And so, it's like how do you approach someone in both confrontation (which is seen as aggression) but also in a place of love for them that they just don't ball up and get defensive about? How can you deliver that message without walls just shooting up?

RH: Yeah. Yeah. So, I don't know. Those are just some things that I've run into that I'm not particularly good at. I became an engineer for a reason. It wasn't because I'm a people person.

Yeah, so those are the two things that kind of came up when Stephanie was talking.

2022.04.03 Easter Fireside
"Stand Independent" Fireside Series
Denver and Stephanie Snuffer
April 3, 2022

Denver Snuffer: ...I had just turned 12 at the start of the month, and...

Three out of four of my grandparents had died before I was born. The only living grandparent that I had when I was born was still around when I was 12. And she wouldn't die for many years.

I had not seen or heard of anyone in my family or in my immediate circle of friends who died. The only real death that had intruded into my awareness was President John Kennedy, and that seemed fabulously theatrical, distant, and more like theater than reality. But in August of 1965, we moved from elementary schools to the junior high school; there were East Elementary (where I went to school), and there was North Elementary, and there was West Elementary. And there were kids in the town that (and the surrounding area) that you never met, because if they didn't go to your elementary school, you wouldn't cross their paths. But when they combined into the junior high school, kids from all over came. And there was one kid in particular that I became pretty good friends with in fairly short order. Among other things, we shared a study hall, and he was an absolute cut-up. He was capable of extraordinarily effective mischief. He knew how to make a pencil stick to the ceiling of the study hall. And he knew how to time things when the teacher's back was turned. And he and I became really quite good friends for as short a time period as we had from August 'til October. I think I liked him more than anyone else that was in my immediate circle of friends.

And on Friday, September 29th, all the buses lined up; this kid lived way out of town in a little place called Bruneau. He was bused in from Bruneau so he had a long bus ride to get home. And as he was getting ready to get on the buses, I was hanging out with them until the buses were to depart. My last words to him (which were intended to be funny) was, "Don't go and get yourself killed this weekend." And so my buddy, Waldo—Waldo Shetler—got on the bus and took off.

On Saturday, he was killed. And on Monday, we heard the story that down in Bruneau, he was riding his bike, and a hay truck hit him and killed him. That was the first time that death entered into my consciousness. And I don't recall at that moment being as sad as I was shocked, surprised, troubled, trying to figure out what this new reality meant. But because Waldo Shetler was the first person in my life who died, the first person of any proximity, I've thought about him every time death gets close again.

I've known a few people who were resigned to dying—they were in hospice; they had a terminal illness; they had a terminal problem that they knew they were not going to survive. And I've told quite a number of people in that position, "Hey, when you get to the other side, will you let Waldo Shetler know his buddy Denver still remembers him and thinks about him? And someday I'll come look him up personally, but you tell him I said hello." So I don't know how many messages Waldo's received over the years since

he died. He was about seven months older than me, and he turned 12 much earlier in the school... Well, actually, he turned 12 before the school year began. But he's buried in Bruneau at the Bruneau Cemetery. And I've never made it back there to visit the grave of Waldo, but I think I'd like to do that—because what he represents in my consciousness is the introduction of death into this life, awareness of it at a personal level.

Well, Easter's coming up on Sunday the 17th of this month. And when Steve asked us to talk, one of the things that came first in the conversation was we oughta talk about Easter, say something about Easter, so that it doesn't come and go without notice. There's a passage—it's early in the Book of Mormon; in our Scriptures, it's Second Nephi chapter 11, verse 8—where, recording about their religion and how they practiced it, they write, We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies that our children may know to what source they may look for the remission of their sins.

You know, if you're talking, and you're rejoicing, and you're preaching, and you're prophesying... For those who are living, the remission of sins is the great thing that we can experience and long to have and want to receive an inheritance of. But in the bigger picture, it's the resurrection on Easter morning that is the great triumph because it breaks that enemy that God introduced at the time of the fall that will ultimately cost every one of us our lives. John's prophecy about the judgment and the end of times (when we finally get down to the very end) reflects this. He writes this in Revelation chapter 8, verse 8: And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. "Wipe away all [the] tears from their eyes...there shall be no more death." I mean, death has taken quite a number of people; in fact, of late, it's taken a number of people that I know and have been friends with, and I'm sorry to see them part. And the first great thing that gets wiped away is death—and then our sorrows and our crying and our pain. But that loss of life—that ending that cuts off your association for a temporary time—always leaves us, I think, in a position of thinking back about losses and of our own death—because it's inevitable; it's coming; it's unavoidable; and in some respects, depending upon the condition that you wind up in, it's a release (and a welcome one at that).

Well, Christ's accomplishment, His great achievement, began in Gethsemane and culminated with the resurrection. What I find interesting is that when the Lord has taken the time to talk about His experience, what He talks about is not the experience on the cross, and He doesn't talk about the crucifixion. When He spoke (in modern revelation) about what it was that He had accomplished, the place where He goes to is Gethsemane.

In the T&C (T&C 1—it's the Joseph Smith History) in Joseph Smith History 17, at paragraph 5, he says,

Repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger that your sufferings be sore.

What I find interesting is that the way in which He's going to smite us, He defines as by "the rod of my mouth," meaning that the words He speaks are what will cause us this pain and the suffering.

Your sufferings be sore, how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I God, have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain and to bleed at every pore and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father and I partook, and finished my preparations unto the children of man. Wherefore I command you again to repent, lest I humble you by my almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree, you've tasted, at the time I withdrew my spirit.

See, the place in which He suffered body and spirit and would that He "might not drink the bitter cup and shrink" was in the garden. And so, He doesn't mention the crucifixion; He focuses upon the suffering that went on in Gethsemane—which also was covered, yet again, in the revelations that have come in this continuance of the Restoration, and that's in T&C section 161, which starts out describing:

...a view of the Lord kneeling in prayer...in a dark place. The air was heavy and overcast with [shadow]. The man beheld the Lord praying in Gethsemene on the night of His betrayal and before His crucifixion.

All the Lord had previously done in His mortal ministry by healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, curing the leper, and ministering relief to others as he taught was but a prelude to what the Lord was now to do on this dark, oppressive night. (T&C 161:1-2)

And then it describes how the Lord, in prayer, began vicariously suffering. And He goes through these waves of torment, which was the Lord kneeling in prayer, exposed to the guilt, the shame, the recriminations, the difficulties, the pains of both offending God and your fellow man AND being offended by your fellow man, and the torment of the mind and the spirit and the soul in trying to overcome and reconcile yourself back into the presence of God the Father; shedding all of what you feel when you are smitten by the rod of the mouth of that pure being who is God the Father, and the recognition that you are out of adjustment/you are out of sync with the Almighty; you are not good and pure and holy, and you are in the presence of a good and a just and a Holy Being.

The Gospel reflects that an angel came strengthening Him—which is not altogether an accurate description of what went on. He... The Father's presence never left the Son throughout all His sufferings. And indeed, part of the Son's sufferings was caused by the necessity to reconcile peacefully His experience of this unclean, unworthy state (with the feelings of shame and guilt that are caused by not being reconciled with God), and then overcoming that and being able to reconcile Himself again with the Father and coming to a place of peace and harmony and at-one-ness with the Father that this awful experience had disrupted. It shattered the harmony that existed between the Father and

the Son that had existed throughout His entire ministry, and it put the Son into the same position as the worst of the sinners who had jarringly disassociated themselves unworthily with the Father. And now here He is—feeling all of that—but being in the presence of the Father, as if He were advanced to the moment of the final judgment and coming before the bar of a perfect and pure God—but doing so unprepared, unworthy, unreconciled, unrepentant, and filled with guilt and shame. And all of that was put upon Him so that He could reconcile Himself to the Father, reconcile Himself and overcome the feelings of guilt and remorse of sin.

The Lord is ever willing to forgive us. But once we are forgiven, then the obligation is imposed upon us to forsake our sins and then go on as worthy as we would be had we not sinned in the first place. We have to leave that behind us. He readily forgives. But once forgiven, we're supposed to not only confess but to forsake our sins. And the forsaking of the sin and the leaving of the temptation behind becomes an enormous challenge for us—and it was the challenge that He faced in Gethsemane. And it's the place He goes to—now that He's gotten through the entirety of this Atonement, and He's worked it all through. He doesn't go to the cross; He doesn't go to somewhere else. He goes to this moment—this profound, jarring disassociation that existed between Him and the Father that He had to find a way to overcome and to reconcile in order to be, once again, in harmony with Him—and He facilitates our ability to do exactly the same thing by taking upon Him (vicariously, through that suffering/through that price that He paid) the ownership and forgiveness for everything so that He can forgive.

But forgiving is the limit of what He can do. He can't make us better. He finished His preparations. And then, having finished His preparations, He says, "Therefore I command you to repent. I don't want you to go through what I went through. I'll forgive you, but I command you: Repent, confess them, forsake them, leave them behind you, and become something bigger, better, more reconciled to God through the love that you ought to have in your heart," for the fact that He has been willing to re-accept you, He has been willing to comfort you, take you in and embrace you as a member of His family, able to stand clean before Him because you've abandoned what it was that separated you.

If you read through that section 161 material (which I'm not going to do; I've done it just recently, reading an excerpt in one of the conferences recently), you'll find that the Lord overcame the separation that drove Him away from the presence of the Father—because of guilt and because of shame, because of this intense feeling of unworthy betrayal—He overcomes that through love. He overcomes that through finding His way back to the harmony that preceded all of this. So, I'm not gonna read 161 any further, but I would commend it to you.

What I find interesting is that we have discussions that brush up against what the Lord had done (in Alma and in Isaiah and other places) that talk about how He goes through what He went through in order to understand and gain the knowledge necessary in order to succor us and to reconcile us. So, He's not coming to minister as the forgiving Savior, ignorant of what it takes in order to overcome sin. He comes fully understanding the nature of what it is that makes us recoil from the presence of God. He gets it. He's

been there. He's been through that. And when He looks upon us, He can look upon us with compassion and understanding because by His knowledge, He can justify us by leading us from this state of disharmony (and this state of opposition, shame, and guilt) back into a state of cleanliness and the feeling of reconciliation with God.

So, as we approach the Easter season, it all begins after He has implemented the sacrament, and He's gone up to Gethsemane, and He's gone through this experience. He then gets arrested in the garden, and the incident gets described, perhaps most interestingly and most revealingly, in John's account:

They come. They're armed. They have spears. They have their armed people ready to inflict violence should the necessity present itself. And Christ asks them whom they seek? And they tell him that they're looking for this Jesus. And He says, "I am He." And the account is that they stumbled backwards and fell down. It's almost a comic moment in the account because here you have a personage who is unarmed and subject to arrest, and people with both the authority to come and take and arrest Him and the arms with which to accomplish it even if He should oppose them. And He identifies Himself as the one they come... "I am He," and they step back on one another's feet and trip and fall backwards. That little moment right there tells you something. Our Lord, after having gone through what He went/engaged in what He suffered was so intimidating a presence that it made the men who came to arrest Him cower in His presence. They were physically intimidated by what it was that His countenance portrayed. (That countenance would be one of the reasons why, once they'd subdued Him, they took some delight in abusing Him.) It's...

It really hearkens back to an analogous, earlier circumstance when there was a messianic (semi-messianic) figure in the form of Samson, who the Philistines could never defeat. He crushed them; he killed them; he subjected them; he defeated them; he alone... I mean, "heaps upon heaps with the jawbone of an ass, I've killed a thousand." He was able to overcome them. But when they finally got him to break the last thread of the covenant that he had been strengthened by (and not until he had broken the last thread of the Nazarite Covenant by allowing the secret out and the hair to be cut) and they took him prisoner was he finally defeated. And what did they do? I mean, they took great delight in doing to this clearly superior individual the kinds of things that humiliate him to make them feel better about the crushing defeats he had administered to them over time. They blinded him. They tied him to a millstone. They drove him like a dumb ass. They mocked him. They spit at him. They did all they could. But they made the mistake of allowing the hair to grow out and for him, in his penitent state, to draw upon the covenantal status that had put him in that position at the beginning. And one of his last acts was then to bring down the temple that they brought him to (to mock him) by pulling down the main support beams and crushing them.

Well, that vengeance, that fury, that desire to abuse—to take what is clearly the superior and to subject him to the inferior—was what, after the surrender, the Lord was put through for some period of time, and then he was lashed, and then he was presented, after having been sufficiently humiliated, as one of two candidates for release. But they said, "Give us Barabbas, the other one who claims to be the son of God. Give us

[indecipherable]; give us the scapegoat, and let's kill the other one." And so, once again, the ceremonies under the Law of Moses come back to reflect the reality of the end of what the Lord was going to be put through.

There are prophecies about what He would endure. There are descriptions that are given of what He went through and why. But when we finally get to the point that He's about to surrender His life, we get one of the most extensive and remarkable prophecies in all of Scripture in the 22nd Psalm, which the Lord (after all He had been through while still alive) began to sing while He was on the cross:

My God, [my God,] why have you forsaken me? My God, hear the words of my roaring. You are far from helping me. Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but you answer not, and in the night season, [am I] not silent. But you are holy that inhabit the Heavens. You are worthy of the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in you. They trusted and you did deliver them. They cried unto you and were delivered. They trusted in you and were not confounded.

But I am a worm, and loved of no man, a reproach of man and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing [that] he delighted in him.

But you are he that took me out of the womb. You did make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon you from the womb. You were my God from my mother's breasts.

Be not far from me — for trouble is near — for there is none to help. ...They gaped upon me with their mouths like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my inward parts. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaves to my jaws, and you have brought me into the dust of death. For dogs...encompassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tally all my bones. They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture. ...be not far from me, O Lord. O my strength, hasten to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword.

...I will declare your name unto [the] brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I praise you. You that fear the Lord, praise him; all you, the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all you, the seed of Israel. For he is not [departed] nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. Neither has he hidden his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of you in the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear him. (Psalms 22:1-5 RE)

...and so on. This is the hymn that the Lord went to in the final moments of the last breaths that He was able to take on the cross. And then, having achieved exactly what He intended to achieve and reaffirming that what He was going through was, indeed, exactly what needed to be accomplished in order to fulfill the purposes of God, He then announced with a loud voice (some of the Gospel writers say He shouted with a loud

voice), and then He gave up the ghost. But one of the Gospel writers tells us what it was He shouted, and it was, "It is finished!" which was a shout of triumph, not of defeat. And so, He sings a psalm that tells everyone exactly what is going on is what the Messiah was expected to go through, and then He shouts out a triumph call, and He gives up the ghost.

Those that were there on that day, looking upon the scene... First of all, if you understood the words of the psalm, if you've memorized the words of the hymn (which most Jews would have done), would know that He was confronting their rejection of Him as the Messiah right up to the very end. And those that heard Him shout out the victory and give up the ghost would have undoubtedly wondered, "How is it? How is this possible? How was that a triumph?" What was it that He was achieving in the moment that He ends the life here and moves on to whatever it is that comes next—some of them thinking that is nothing, and some of them thinking that is Elysian Fields, and some of them thinking that's just a slumber that will await later resurrection. But whatever it was, the Lord (in the minds of those that heard) was announcing His triumph, that He was moving on there.

And we have other news from other sources—including Peter's Epistles where he talks about the Lord then going into the world of spirits to declare a message among the dead —about the possibility now of changing their lot and improving their condition. And He spent (as they reconcile time, according to the Jews in that day) three days and three nights in the tomb. And then on the first day of the week as it was then reckoned—it was actually the seventh day, but we were off by a day ever since the fall of Adam because the day of rest was disrupted by the fall—but on the first day of the week according to what they reckoned at that point (the actual intended day of rest according to the creation that was disrupted by the fall), the Lord came forth out of the tomb and was resurrected while it was still dark. We have an account of that also in that section 161 about how once He had come out of the grave...

When I saw His resurrection, I was surprised to see it was still dark. When Mary realized it was Jesus, she embraced Him joyfully. She did not timidly reach out her hand, but she readily greeted Him with open arms, and He, in turn, embraced her. It is difficult to describe what I saw of the incident, apart from saying the Lord was triumphant, exultant, overjoyed at His return from the grave! She shared His joy. I was shown the scene and do not have words to adequately communicate how complete the feelings of joy and gratitude were which were felt by our Lord [on] that morning. As dark and terrible were the sufferings through which He passed, the magnitude of which is impossible for man to put into words, these feelings of triumph were, on the other hand, of equal magnitude in their joy and gratitude. I do not think it possible for a mortal to feel the fullness of either. And, having felt some of what He shares with His witnesses, I know words are inadequate to capture His feelings on the morning of His resurrection. He had the deep satisfaction of having accomplished the most difficult assignment given by the Father, knowing it was a benefit to all of His Father's children, and it had been done perfectly.

Mary and Christ embraced. There was nothing timid about the warm encounter she had with Him. Then He said to her, "Hold me not" because he had to ascend, return and report to His Father. (T&C 161:29-30)

...and so on. You really don't get Easter and understand what Easter represents until we have begun in Gethsemane and ended at the resurrection and the joy that was experienced there. It's as if the Atonement takes the scale of negativity and the scale of positivity and it drives the needle as far down as it is possible to drive the needle down to one extremity at the end of the worst, most awful, most dreadful possibility that exists in the entire universe—and then takes that same needle and drives it on the scale upward to the point that it exceeds joy so great that when men are exposed to a little of it, they are overcome, and their physical body faints from the exultation of what it was that the Lord experienced.

Easter represents all of that. Easter represents the great and the dreadful, the magnificent and the awful, the most terrible, the most wonderful; it represents it all. And our Lord—after having gone through all of that—continues to bear testimony to us in the Restoration Scriptures to say, "Here's, now, what I've done. I've accomplished all my preparations, and I've made it possible now for you."

I command you to repent — repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore — how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, ...to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit — and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink — Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (JSH 17:5, emphasis added)

That's all He could do. That's all He has done. That's the great accomplishment that He has obtained for us. He finished His preparations unto the children of men; it's all been prepared. So now that it's all been prepared and He's told us, I've given you... It's all ready to go. Wherefore, now—as a result of this preparation, as a consequence of everything I just told you:

Wherefore, I command you again to repent lest I humble you by my almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken. (Ibid.)

See, He wants us to be freed from the valley of the shadow of death through which we will pass. And He promises us that no matter how bitter death may be, He's gonna wipe away every tear, and He's gonna defeat the grave. But that can't make us individually worthy. The only way that we can become individually worthy is if we do as He instructs us to do, acknowledge our own many shortcomings, and then turn around to face God and leave behind us all the things that are unworthy, unacceptable, disobedient; all of our jarrings; all of our contentions; all of our pride; all of our efforts to raise ourselves at the expense of others; all of our ambition, our desire for control and compulsion and

dominion, our desire to be profiting at the expense of others. In many respects, it requires Zion for us to fully repent, and yet Zion requires us to be something very different than what we are because we don't treat one another the way that equality imposes upon us. We do cheer against one another and look to get ahead and then to leave others behind. We do falsely assume ourselves to be something bigger and greater and more holy than we are when, in fact, if we are serviceable to the Lord and we're able to move something along in His era and it turns out to be something great, that isn't us. We don't have anything of which to boast. None of us ever have; none of us ever will—no matter how great a thing the Lord may cause to happen through the service that He asks you to provide. In the end, you probably don't do as good a job of doing what He's commanded as He could do it Himself. And yet, if it's serviceable, and it works, and it accomplishes something good, then the gratitude and the praise and the rejoicing of all that belongs to God, not to us. I think we've accomplished many, many remarkable, wonderful things. But that's not us. We've been led along by a merciful, kind, guiding light that has made the task doable by the light that He has provided to us, and we have nothing of which to boast for ourselves.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

(I took my half, and now it's your half.)

— — —

Stephanie Snuffer: Okay, I am gonna take the same topic and just go a little different direction, and I should probably be brief.

I have the opportunity to spend a lot of time trying to figure out how and why people operate the way they do in the world and with each other and in relationships with each other. And I can consume a lot of information that gives a lot of different perspective. And what that does is sometimes it just confuses, and sometimes the stuff aligns, and sometimes it overlaps. And sometimes it just leaves me still pondering.

But in light of Easter coming and in light of... It's not really even Easter-related, for me; it's just been application-related. And that is the Atonement. So without belaboring the Scriptures or how the Atonement is described or explained in the Scriptures, I'm gonna leave that all to you. And you can go back and read different things and engage in that however you want to.

But the fact of the matter is that there were Heavenly Parents who sacrificed their Son so that He could come down here and take on all of those burdens. And if you read the account in T&C 1 and if you read the account in T&C 161, it's a monumental endeavor that is designed for application and use in this world by us. So, if you look around today (turn the news on; don't turn the news on), you're probably pretty aware there's some horrible things happening around the world, and they're being done to people by people, which is easy to ignore if you just stand back and say, "Oh, that's what's going on." If you engage in those thoughts for any length of time, it is almost paralyzing to believe that human beings can behave this way to and against and with other human beings.

And I would suggest that the worst atrocities that you can conceive of (as you observe what is going on in this world) started with somebody having a thought: one thought, and then more thoughts, and then (potentially) conversations, and then behaviors. The dictators of the world do not get there at birth. They don't... They're not born that way. So my thought is that, as human beings, we need to tend to our thoughts because our thoughts become our words, and our words become our actions. And I can't think of a single day in the last six months that I probably haven't had a thought that resulted in a behavior or a word or an action that did not offend or hurt somebody I care about—because I'm just weak. We're weak. We're down here in our humanity, and we are fallen beings, and we make these kinds of mistakes every day. And I would suggest that the Atonement is or should be more activated in people's lives at the very basic of our interactions.

So when you read in T&C 1 about Christ's words being what condemns you, then your interactions with other people... When you have negative interactions with someone you care about (or someone you don't care about), what you should draw on in order to control your thoughts so your thoughts don't become behaviors that turn into atrocities... I don't believe that's where we're headed, but we can commit all kinds of harm when we get defensive, when we feel compelled to justify our position, when we are hurt, when we are afraid, when somebody challenges us, when our insecurities come flaring up—and we behave badly. And sometimes we can repair that quickly, where there is "no harm, no foul." Other times we have hurt or offended to the extent that repair seems almost impossible.

I would like to suggest that the voice and the feeling that pierce us in those moments is that voice in T&C 1 that condemns us with His words—and that we don't spend much time being angry at the person who offended us, and we don't spend much time berating ourselves for the mistakes that we've made; but we let Christ, through the Atonement, correct us, chastise us, and move us forward to better interactions so that we don't ultimately create something unfit for a Zion.

Christ did all the work. T&C 161 is pretty explicit in the many horrible, horrific experiences that He went through in order to take on our sins. And I have to believe that there is something that is universally available to all mankind—regardless of culture, ethnicity, or gender—which can elevate us to the point of being in relationships that are not toxic, that are not prideful, that are not defensive or punitive or patronizing, that are not superior or inferior, but that are unified by the gift of the Atonement that has been given to all mankind, if they would but utilize in prayer and humility...and that's all.

Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

— — —

DS: Okay, well there's one thing I want to look at real quick. [indecipherable] There they are. Okay... [chuckling] Huh. Okay, well, I've looked at the messages and don't see anything there to comment on. We said that we weren't going to answer any questions, but if someone has an interesting question they want to type into that comments board, it's eight o'clock; we could take a few minutes and do that since we do have time. Does

anyone have anything that they want to type into the messages and see if we can make...

Oh, "What'd you refer to in T&C 1?"

SS: I don't know. Whatever Denver was reading...

DS: That was 17... Here, I'll find it real quick.

SS: T&C 1. 17— Joseph Smith History...

DS: 17, verse or paragraph 5.

SS: Paragraph 5. Will you read it?

DS: Oh, it's that statement about "...how hard to bear you know not. I've suffered these things for all of you that you might not suffer if you would repent. If they will not repent, you must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, the greatest of all, to suffer and to bleed at every pore and would that I might not partake. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father."

[reading from the comment board] Uhhh... "Confession robs the accusers, power to accuse..." Yeah, that's a good point. Wow, that went by fast but... [indecipherable]

Yeah, I don't think details on confession are necessary. I think the character flaw is really what we need to confront.

Yeah. [reading] Yeah.

SS: Okay. Try and make 'em relevant to the actual topic we're discussing 'cuz these others are just big and not gonna be answered.

DS: There are a lot of things about which... There are a lot of things that are interesting and curious but don't... They don't make us better people. Our biggest problem is that, as people, we're not what we ought to be in order to live in peace with one another.

SS: Maybe I won't answer that. I can't tell...

DS: "Speaking of your comments of what Christ did in the garden, would it be accurate to say that by descending below all things, there was a dissolution of Himself as He infused Himself into all things, thus connecting Himself to all things to enable thus to draw all things to Him, like a quantum entanglement of cosmic proportions?"

Well, that's an interesting way to put it, and I don't see anything wrong with any description that will give you an understanding that the Lord comprehended it all. He says in the book of Abraham, "I am more intelligent than they all." The reason He is more intelligent is because His experience has exposed Him to a greater variety of contradictions (as Joseph Smith put it) than the contradictions that you and I have to face. We get to face them within a limited range; He experienced them off the scale to both ends, and therefore, He did descend below it all in order to ascend above it all and

to comprehend it all. And therefore, in Him is the fullness of understanding of all things. We don't come to Him with shame and embarrassment or weaknesses and He look at us and say, "Wow, I've never heard of that before" or "Ooh, you're icky." He's been there; He's done that. There is nothing about the trouble that we face that He hasn't also previously faced in a way that comprehends it.

[reading] ...are we still...

Oh, yeah, we're better than we were. We're... We ARE better than we were.

SS: Okay. Alright, the question is a personal question. The question is not an objective question to a group: "Are we still absolutely failing in our relationships with each other? Or is some time and experience allowing even small changes to take place?"

The answer: Yes—he's right. There are small changes taking place. But to ask that question to somebody else who is not YOU... I mean, if everybody attended to their own relationships and their own interactions with different people and their own experiences in communities and fellowships and could answer that question positively of themselves, then you would know. So asking an overarching question is fine, but that's for you all to decide in your own relationships and own experiences.

DS: [reading] Yeah...

SS: If it's not on topic, don't answer it.

DS: Yeah, but I want... I think it might fit in here—not directly, but sideways—and fit in in a way that will help solve a number of the issues.

I want to be clear about what I'm going to refer to as "spiritual ambition" or the desire to excel and achieve something spiritually. I learned about the concept of the Second Comforter many, many, many years before anything like that was experienced. And I sought for that blessing in prayer, in study, in petitions; I wanted to achieve that. And it never happened for over two and a half decades. It didn't happen. And I finally came to the point that I realized that it just may never happen. Maybe I was just not the right person. Maybe this was something that would happen in the last moments of my life if it happened at all. Maybe this is not the way to go about living my life.

And so, I rethought what I was doing, what the religion meant to me, what the faith meant, and I began to—instead of seeking to get more (gimme, gimme)—instead, I turned my focus otherwise and began to think about all of the great things that I HAD received, all of the wonderful things that I DID understand, all of the grace that God had shown me that had taken me from being, essentially, a rudderless young man who had no direction in life, drinking and indulging in fairly pitiful ways of wasting my time. The gospel had taken and changed me into someone that had direction, that I had the Scriptures, that they meant a lot to me—I had studied them; I had taught them; I had gained profound insight—and my attitude changed.

And over time, instead of demanding for more, I simply became content and grateful for what I had. And the more gratitude I showed to God for what it was that I had been

given, the more grateful I became and the more aware I became of the fact that I had received extraordinary, great blessings from God. And I had had an angel minister to me on more than one occasion. I mean, is that not enough? Is knowing that my standing before God is consistent with obedience to His commandments not enough?

I came to the point that I became deeply and abidingly grateful, and I did not seek for more. Instead, I rejoiced in what I had—and it was sincere; it was authentic. I was a grateful soul. And if nothing ever more had come to me, I would still—right this day—be rejoicing and grateful and happy and CONTENT with what it was the Lord had given me.

I had not asked the Lord or imposed upon the Lord for some great blessing for years—many years—when the Lord came to me. He didn't come because I was pressing for it. In fact, when I pressed for it, it didn't happen. But when I became content, when I became grateful, when I began to acknowledge the goodness of God to me in my state and my standing and my station, when I was content with that and grateful, then the Lord interrupted things and changed things completely.

And so, if I were to commend one thought to people, it would be: Set aside all of your desires to control Heaven, set aside all your ambition to get God to surrender to your will, and willingly accept God's will for you, and be grateful for it—because of all people, we have more to rejoice and be grateful for than most people who have ever lived on this planet.

SS: That's a good point because there's a lot of... I don't think the word would be "ingratitude," but there is a lot of want.

DS: Yeah.

SS: And it seems like there's a lot that just should settle down and distill.

DS: Well, we've now been here long enough that I think we've taken enough people's time away from things. Thank you for inviting us. And thank those who have listened. And we'll turn the time back over to Steve and Linda.

— — —

Linda VanLeer: Thank you, Denver, and Stephanie, very much. We appreciate you taking the time to be with us and those... Both of your words. Thank you.

Again, all these are recorded and can be viewed on standindependent.com. So those who know of people who were not able to get in, let them know that they can listen to the recording.

Is there anyone who would like to volunteer for a closing prayer? (I don't know, how do you do that with them muted, hon?)

Steve VanLeer: If you'd like to volunteer, just unmute yourself, and pray for us, if you would. Let's not have an uncomfortable long lag.

Brian Bowler: I can if you want.

Dearest Father, we're so grateful for this time to gather together and to listen and to be able to ponder again the resurrection, both the Gethsemane and the ultimate victory. We pray for understanding of this, and pray that we can individually seek you and come to know you and hear your voice and trust your voice.

We pray that, also, for to be able to understand how to let things be, to be content, and to look at our own ambitions and to trust in you and your grace and your plan—as you said, to wait upon you and to trust in you. And we pray that we can have that in greater proportions, individually, and to, again, to trust this plan that you have for us. We pray for this gratitude, too, that we need and simply to, again, wait upon you.

We ask a blessing upon all the efforts, individually, and those that are striving to repent and to work on their own character and to be peaceful one with another and to hold each other precious in our hearts, that we value each other; and even when we disagree, that we can learn to peacefully disagree and to honor each other's place in their path in this life.

We love you and thank you and pray that we can keep our eyes on you and work on our own patience.

And we say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2022.05.15 Seminary Graduation Remarks - Stephanie

Stephanie Snuffer

Centerville, UT

May 15, 2022

Stephanie Snuffer: Good morning. Okay, I'm working on the assumption that you will participate. Okay, so when I stand here and expect answers, I'll just stand here till I get some answers. All right? So I'm gonna start with a couple of ideas.

I have come to my own personal conclusion through prayer/meditation/answers that the highest form of godliness on the earth is our experience in relationships and our experience in working those relationships out. Because as I try and envision what the promised blessings are in the Hereafter, I have a really hard time doing that because I'm here, and I'm pretty dang happy here. I have a pretty good life. I like my family; we work hard to be, you know, good to one another. That doesn't mean there's not a lot of crap going on, but I'm pretty dang happy here. So when I read scriptural promises of something "better," I cannot conceive of what that is because my tiny human brain is incapable of conceiving what that is.

So as I'm trying to figure this out through prayer (and whatever), I'm thinking, "Okay, it's probably..." And I feel like I got an answer, but I'll leave it all up to you—doesn't matter to me—I feel like the answer that I got was relationships and the work of relationships (okay?), which is pretty dang hard.

Okay, so, family being the first and most important relationship, which includes your intimate family and then your extended family. And then it goes out into society, community, friends, whatever, however you identify relationships is fine. But let's say the pinnacle relationship is family. All right, so being in a family is great. But that doesn't mean your family relationships are great. That does not mean your relationships with your parents are great. That doesn't mean your relationships with your siblings are great. (It doesn't mean they're not, but it doesn't mean they are.)

So I have two... I work with a couple of different family dynamics. I have one client who is part of a intact family: siblings, parents, you know, whatever. And this particular person feels like in order to get love from his family, he has to be dissatisfied with himself—okay?—because if he's satisfied with himself, then his parents are worried about him because they're not sharing the same values and stuff. So does that sound like a particularly godly family relationship? No, not really; not really. Okay, I work with another sort of dynamic where four people come in every week, and they pretty much fight themselves silly. Okay, like, I help moderate; I quiet this person down, I let this person talk. I, you know... We talk, we work out... I teach them skills, they learn new family rules, you know? Does that sound like an ideal family relationship? No. The difference is one family relationship is working on the family relationship together. One experience is working just as an individual trying to manage their own personal experiences in this family. Okay? Lots of work to still be done if our highest the highest connection we can have to godliness is within our relationships. There's a lot of work to be done in both of these cases. Okay?

So, a few things that people really hate. Mortal human beings really hate vulnerability. They hate self-reflection. They hate accountability. They hate introspection and self-awareness. And we want... We would rather ask ourselves, "Why?" than "What?"—meaning, "Why is this happening to me?" "Why is she mean to me?" "Why do they not like me?" "Why am I so miserable?" instead of saying, "What am I doing to create the circumstances where I feel like crap?" "What am I doing that I cannot get along with my mother?" "What am I doing that I am constantly fighting with my brother?" ...friends, aunts, uncles (I don't care—we all have people). Okay? Human beings hate vulnerability. They hate self-reflection. They hate accountability. They hate introspection and self-awareness. And we REALLY hate agency. We HATE having to choose for ourselves how to be. We would rather someone tell us—'cuz that's so much easier! Okay?

So, with that in mind, I'm gonna read a couple Scriptures. Well, I'm not gonna read the Scripture specifically, but I'm gonna talk about the concepts. So, in Moroni 7:9, he talks about... Ahhhhh, what does he talk about, everybody? Charity! Moroni 7:9 (put on my silly glasses because I cannot read), and it says,

And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the holy ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must need have charity. For if he have not charity, he is nothing; wherefore, he must need have charity. And charity suffereth long, and [it] is kind, and [it] envieth not, and [it] is not puffed up, [it] seeketh not her own, [it] is not easily provoked, [it] think[s] no evil, and [it does not rejoice] in iniquity...[it] rejoice[s] in the truth, [it] bear[s] all things, [and believes] all things, [it] hope[s] all things, [and it] endureth all things. [So] wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, [because] charity never faileth...

Obviously, I'm not reading this word for word; I'm dramatizing it. Pretty good, huh?

Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. For all things must fail, but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endure[s] for ever. And whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them. (Moroni 7:9, emphasis added)

Okay, so I'm gonna leave that there, and then I'm gonna go to First Corinthians. I believe it's 1:53; I took my marker out, so... First Corinthians—and yes, I'm driving in the car on the way up here, picking apart my stuck-together Scripture pages, because I'm LISTENING to them; I'm not reading them. So all of my pages are still stuck together. 52; let's start with 52; oh, no—let's start with 51. First Corinthians 1:51.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and...angels, and have not charity, I have become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.

Charity suffers long and is kind. [It] envies not. [It] vaunts not itself, [it] is not puffed up, [it] does not behave itself unseemly, [it] seeks not her own, [it] is not easily provoked,

thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth, [it] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, [and] endures all things.

And then the very first sentence in First Corinthians 1:53 is:

Charity never fails. (1 Corinthians 1:51-53)

Okay, let's just put all that aside. Just leave it there for a minute.

Okay, so how much time do you all spend studying the gospel or your Scriptures in any given week?

Speaker 1: Ten minutes a day.

SS: "Ten minutes a day." Okay. Ten minutes a day. So ten minutes a day, 70 minutes a week, maybe? Is that...? Did I do my math correctly? Okay. Anybody else? The answer can be none. I don't care. A lot. Not a lot. [audience answer] "30 minutes a week?" Okay. [audience answer] "40 minutes a week?" Okay. Well, I'm not asking... These aren't guesses—these are literally how much time do you guys spend in your Scriptures or the gospel each week?

Speaker 2: Ten to twenty minutes in the morning.

SS: "Ten to twenty minutes every morning." Okay, so that's like 140 minutes a week. Okay. Roughly two hours. All right. Cool. Like, for me, like, none—like however long it takes me to drive to work and listen to my Scriptures. I don't know.

Okay, how much time... Okay, so when you're doing that, how do you believe your investment in the gospel or the Scriptures impacts your daily life?

Speaker 3: When I start out reading the Scriptures, the whole entire day just feels lighter and easier.

SS: Okay, so it doesn't really matter how much time you do it, just if you've started your day with that settled-down space of gospel study, you feel like your day is better. Great.

Speaker 3: Start or end.

SS: Okay, either one. All right. Okay, start or end was that you? Okay? Go ahead.

Speaker 2: I feel closer to God whenever I read.

SS: Okay, "closer to God whenever you read." Can you tell me why?

Speaker 2: Just because I'm in the Scriptures reading His words.

SS: Okay, "in the Scriptures reading His words." Doesn't really matter what the words are, just feels...? Okay, great. Anybody else?

Speaker 5: I'm reading the Bible right now, and so I have a lot of questions... why would that happen? [indecipherable] ...talking to God about it. I'm just very confused.

SS: Okay, so your investment in the Scriptures and gospel creates lots of questions, and you go to God to get those questions answered. Perfect, great. Anybody else?

Speaker 6: I read at night so it gives me something to look forward to.

SS: Nice. Okay, all right. So kind of the gift you give to yourself at the end of the day. Great. Fantastic. Okay.

All right. How much time do you all spend with people who disagree with you? Or who you don't get along with? In a day.

Speaker 3: Eight hours a day.

SS: "Eight hours a day" when you're at work—people who don't like you, don't agree with you, you don't like them, whatever. Great, fantastic. Anybody else?

Unknown: Three to five hours every day...

SS: A day? Fantastic! This is awesome!

Unknown: All day every day.

SS: Nice! "All day every day." Is it the gentleman you're clinging to or is that someone else? Okay, great. Okay, all right. Come on, keep going. This is... [audience answer] "Two to three hours a day?" Okay. With someone who doesn't...who you don't really like, doesn't agree with you? Okay.

How much actual conflict is there? Or is there just this underlying, "Hey, you know, we're on different..." you know?

Speaker 5: I avoid it.

SS: What? "You avoid it." Good. Good. Yeah. Perfect.

Unknown: None.

SS: No conflict. Just an understanding. Okay. All right. Come on, guys. Throw out the conflict.

Speaker 3: 50/50.

SS: "50/50," okay. Yeah?

Unknown: Whenever we're at home together.

SS: "Whenever you're at home together," yes.

Speaker 3: Light debates.

SS: Okay, you like debates?

Speaker 3: LIGHT debates.

SS: Oh, light debates. Okay.

Speaker 3: When it gets too deep in doctrine, it kinda breaks apart.

SS: Okay. Okay, great. All right. Your answers are changing (sort of) my approach, but I mean, that's fine. It's just it's gonna go a little bit a different direction. Okay. All right. So how many of you... Okay, so I may have made...

How relevant do you feel like the Scriptures are to your everyday life? Like legitimately relevant?

Unknown: Very close.

SS: You think the Scriptures are very closely relevant to your daily life. Do tell.

Unknown: Uh, I guess... I'm in Mosiah [indecipherable] ...kingdom, trying to teach people. It's like, I go to work every morning, "Oh, I'm Mormon." I was going on my mission. "Do you want to talk about Scriptures?" And he was like, "No." [indecipherable]

SS: Okay, yeah. Perfect. Anybody else?

Speaker 4: I try to read it like you're the character, like you're in that situation. You can see a lot of similarities. I feel like it's very relevant, especially when you put yourself into their situation.

SS: Okay, give me an example. (Hang on; just hold that thought.) Give me an example. Because I am NOT Lehi's wife, Sariah. I'm just not. Okay, go ahead.

Speaker 4: I don't know, like Jared and the brother of Jared, when he didn't know he was a prophet, he still did stuff.

SS: Okay.

Speaker 4: Yeah, we're doing stuff and we don't see that, or we don't...

SS: Perfect, great.

Speaker 3: When I feel like when I read the Scriptures, I start noticing the things that I read in my everyday life a lot more. Such as like when you read about the dove, you start noticing doves. When you start reading about charity, then you start noticing charity in your everyday life.

SS: Okay, great.

Speaker 5: Sometimes I find it hard to relate it because we live in such a different time that the struggles are different, but I think the themes are similar, but it's kind of hard to relate when we're driving to work, and they spent six weeks traveling to a different city, you know?

SS: Yeah, right. Or you know, however long in boats with no light or whatever. Exactly. Okay, anybody else? I feel like I'm in school, like, the good kids... Like there are like

four kids who have all the answers. Speak up! I'm a mean teacher. I call on people who keep their eyes down and their heads... You know that no eye contact thing? That doesn't work for me. So everybody stare, so I don't choose you. Okay? All right.

Um, well, since you guys aren't providing me with exactly what I need, I'm gonna have to offer it up myself. I find... Okay, I've spent the last several years sort of pursuing education in a different path. What... And I've mentioned this before, but everything that I have read, everything that I've learned, all of my textbooks, everything that I've invested in SCREAMS gospel principles to me, okay? But it doesn't scream them by, like, in reading the Scriptures. It's just totally... It's a total different... It's a completely different language.

In my world, the only thing I can say is mental health or the pursuit of mental wellness (which includes relationships and personal accountability and motivation and all of those kinds of things) is just another language that the gospel is spoken in. Okay? But it's useful for people who don't believe in a God or to who don't believe in church or religion or something like that. It's just a secular language to teach people gospel principles. And for the most part, they really get down to the nitty-gritty of your daily life. Okay? So, we are gonna... I'm gonna take a minute... I probably jumped ahead. I'm gonna take a minute, and we're gonna talk just briefly about... Was it tzedakah, (as in "Neil")?

Denver Snuffer: Yes.

SS: Okay. So, the Hebrew word for charity is tzedakah. And it has... Okay, I have this... Oh, go ahead...

[Audience member asking how to spell tzedakah]

Oh, T-Z-E-D-A-K-A-H.

DS: That spelling is the phonetic way of rendering a Hebrew word. There's actually a Hebrew letter that is that TZ.

SS: Yeah. Yeah. It's, I mean, I could of... I just chose... I'm gonna do charity and love both in the Hebrew, okay? So, and it came off a... You know, I mean, it just... I just Googled it. It just came off a "Judaism 101" board. Okay? So, I'm not trying to be particularly... This is just... I want to throw something out there. Yeah.

Unknown: I heard you really well for the first time when you spelled the Hebrew word.

SS: Oh, okay. You want me to do this? Oh, fantastic. That's okay. Okay.

So, all right. The idea of charity being something that you, you know, like giving your excess to somebody else, you know, helping, giving, whatever—I want to just sort of not flip it, but I want to add to it.

So, traditional Jews give at least 10% of their income to charity. And the... Okay, hang on. I want to find a... Tzedakah is the Hebrew word for the acts that we call "charity" in English: giving aid, assistance, and money to the poor and needy or to other worthy

causes. However, the nature of tzedakah is very different from the idea of charity. The word "charity" suggests benevolence and generosity; a magnanimous act by somebody who has more to somebody who has less. It is derived from the Hebrew root word Tzadei-Dalet-Qof (you could probably do that better than I could, Denver), meaning righteousness, justice, or fairness. So in the Jewish tradition, giving to the poor is not viewed as generous, magnanimous, or something that you're doing to be benevolent; it is an act of justice and righteousness. Therefore, it is a duty. It is a duty. You are doing it because it is your godly obligation. Okay? Now, if you want to talk about giving stuff away, that's fine. That's, you know, it's like give 10% of tithing, etc. But take it out of stuff and think about it in terms of relationships and what you give in relationships—and it is your duty. (I can't control this [the mic], the way this thing works.) It is your duty to give to someone who needs from you, okay?

All right, then I'm gonna go to love. (Same... It's a different website, but it's the same idea. It's just a Jewish...) Understanding the concepts of love... Understanding the concepts that are invested in words helps us in our lives. As an interesting example, the word "love," which is thrown about so freely in English, has a special meaning in Hebrew: ahava, which is made up of three basic letters. The three letters are broken down into two parts (which is written here in front of me). The meaning of the two-letter base is "to give." Love, to give. The letter "aleph," which precedes these two letters, comes to modify the meaning of the base word give: I give. So if we just settle right there with charity and love—okay?—how much of your day (Scripture, engagement with people, gospel study, whatever it is you do) do you feel like you are actively participating in charity and love? Intentionally participating, making it an act or acts or investment that you set aside time for?

Speaker 6: Sometimes. Not like every day, but when I remember to, like, actively think about it, like what can I do for someone else, like everyone else (even if they don't know it) for God?

SS: Yeah. Yeah. Anybody else?

Speaker 7: I remember a lot better the times that I don't feel charity or love or that I don't show it. I don't know, that's what I remember to [indecipherable], I guess.

SS: Yeah. So tell me about that.

Speaker 7: Umm, I don't know. Experience is, like, it works. Sometimes I'll think something about somebody; they act in a certain way, and I react in a way that isn't necessarily [indecipherable], I'm not showing that, and I think, "Crap." Again, I just got to rewire that brain because I screwed up again. And so, I don't know, it's hard.

SS: Yeah, I'm gonna... "Screwed up"—no, not so much; just acted very human, right? Yeah. Okay. So when you want to go out and learn about a gospel topic, where do you go? [audience answer] The Scriptures. All right. When you want to learn about a relationship topic, where do you go?

Unknown: The Scriptures.

SS: Really? Yeah, that's great. What do you learn about relationships in the Scriptures?

Unknown: You can see in the Scriptures that parts that there's love and chastity.

SS: Yeah. Yeah. Anybody else?

Unknown: I go to my parents.

SS: You go to your parents, okay.

Unknown: Friends.

SS: Friends. And how... What are we learning from parents and friends about relationships?

Speaker 1: What not to do.

SS: "What not to do." Here's the thing. You can't... (You can, but you can't.) You can't just sit around and say, "It'll all work out." You can't. Because if you pray and get a confirmation that I am right (that the highest way to connect with Heaven on Earth is in the work of relationships), then you have to work on relationships. And you can't just say, "Oh, it's okay. I don't need to do anything different because it's not BAD." Well, not being bad is very different than being good. Not being bad and complacency within that relationship tells me that we're scared; we don't want to be vulnerable; we don't want to ask for our needs to be met; we don't want to meet someone halfway; we feel like we don't we feel like we're not good enough; we feel like it's too hard.

You know, I have this, I just kind of have this thing at my house: One of my kids will come, and they'll tell me something that one of their siblings did to upset them, and I say, "Did you talk to them?" And they say, "It's not that big a deal." And I say, "You told ME. It's got to be a big enough deal that you told me." Because there's something going on there that is making the relationship less than ideal.

So I would contend that there are principles in the Scriptures that are fantastic—okay? — universal, certainly the basis upon which we want to live our lives. And I think studying the Scriptures and the gospel is an absolute imperative. It is a necessity. It is how we... It's starting out our day; it brings us closer to God; it increases opportunity for question because you're reading, and you're, like, "I totally don't get this. This doesn't make any sense to me." And I would suggest that to the extent that it is possible, you go directly to God instead of to somebody else who might be able to give you an answer— but it will be their answer. And even if it is a right answer, it will still be their answer. Okay? And I think that is absolutely important.

But I don't think there's anything in the Scriptures that tells us how Lehi and Sarah managed their little conflict when she was crabbing up a storm about him sending out the boys to go find the plates, and he's going, "Sweetheart, I have to do this," and she's going, "You are crazy! They are gonna get killed," you know, and there's this relationship conflict that never gets addressed. Because what? We think: "They're scriptural," so somehow they don't have problems? Nephi and his brothers HATED one another. They

were murderous, fratricidal... Joseph's brothers threw him in a pit (to be charitable!!), then decided that it was better if they just sell him to the passing caravan. Okay? These people have horrible relationships. I know there's context. I know there's things I don't understand. I get it. I can't know all of the pieces. But my brain works from a relational standpoint. Okay?

What kind of gods and goddesses, priests and priestesses, Mothers and Fathers in Heaven do we attain unto if we're not willing to do the work of relationships down here? How do you picture your heavenly parents? Are they like your parents? Wait, what? Are you kidding me? If my kids hold ME up as their model as what their heavenly parents are, that's kind of scary.

[audience comment about the microphone]

Oh, my gosh. Okay.

Any answers? What... I mean, do we think about that? Do we have any idea what it takes to be the kind of person in a relationship who attains unto godhood? It doesn't just happen, people. There has to be some work. And the work is in your relationships. To the extent that the Scriptures help you help inform you of how to become a better person, they are of immeasurable value. To the extent that the Scriptures are a way that you avoid being in relationships, to the extent that you use the gospel and study of the gospel as a way to tell yourself that "you're doing okay" but your relationships suck—not so good. There has to be work done here.

When was the last time anybody learned anything about motivation from the Scriptures? (Oh, you should all raise your hand. There's plenty of motivation in the Scriptures—plenty of it.) Okay? When was the last time you learned about accountability in the Scriptures? Again, plenty of it. Okay? When was the last time you learned about empathy in the Scriptures? Again. Perspective-taking? Yeah, it's all in there. But it's all in there as a story and words on the page. It's not necessarily being applied to your daily life. Okay?

So I would suggest that the fact that you go to the Scriptures to find answers to the gospel questions is a model you should follow to go somewhere else—and it can be an Internet search; it can be a book; it can be a magazine—to find out how to communicate better with the people in your life. You know there's actual real ways to communicate, and it's not okay just to say, "Oh, it'll be fine." You know there are actual ways to listen—right?—that actually improve the way you communicate and, therefore, improve your relationships. All of this stuff is available, but it's not available in its best applicable form in the Scriptures—those are "big picture" ideas; they need to be brought out, and then you need to say, "Hmm, how do I apply charity?"

Okay, that's the question I want an answer to, "How do you apply charity in your real-world life—separate and apart from giving stuff to people." I can tell you how I do it. I have multiple bags of DI stuff sitting in my hallway upstairs. That's how I do it. I carry money around with me so I can give it to strangers on the street. Easy peasy. Super easy. That does not challenge me one bit.

Unknown: Like, not snapping back at people, like, at work or like, don't turn around and walk away, mumbling [indecipherable], like, get angry at him and stuff.

SS: Exactly. Exactly.

Unknown: Taking the time to understand their perspective...

SS: "Taking the time to understand their perspective."

Speaker 3: Even if it's just the time that I spend with someone because you can give time just as much as you can give anything else.

SS: Yes, exactly.

Speaker 7: Measuring your words, and thinking about what you're saying before...

SS: Yeah. Yeah. What else?

Unknown: I even think if you're just thinking about someone and you reach out to them and let them know that, like, you care.

SS: Yeah, exactly. Okay, I'm gonna wind down.

How many in here fight with your parents? [hands go up] (I don't think that's enough, but okay. That's fine.)

How many in here fight with your siblings? Oh, more! Wowzers!

How many in here have actual unresolved issues with people you actually love? Whoa. Yeah, we do!

How many of you are avoiding unresolved issues with people you love? Whoo! Yeah. Okay?

Yeah, that's what we do. Do you know why we do that? Because we hate vulnerability. We hate self-reflection. We hate authenticity. We hate being accountable. We hate it. It hurts. It's so painful.

(What are you doing???)

Things have to be balanced. There are multiple ways to attain...

(What are you doing?? [laughing] I'm done.)

DS: I'm sitting behind you.

SS: There... We have a... There's a lot of work to do. There's a lot of work to do in understanding gospel principles. There's a lot of work to do in studying your Scriptures. If studying Scriptures is not your jam, no big deal—there's a lot of work in relationships; there's a lot of work in just trying to come to a place where you can say, "Who am I? And how am I in relationships? And how can I use the gospel? How can I use the

Scriptures? How can I use other resources? How can I use other people to fill in the gaps that the Scriptures do not provide me?"

We have an ongoing conversation where all the gospel knowledge in the world (this is not me; this is Paul)... I don't care if you can move mountains. I don't care if you can speak with tongues. I don't care. God doesn't care. Paul didn't care. If you don't have charity and love—which is WORK—you are nothing.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2022.05.15 Seminary Graduation Remarks - Denver

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
Centerville, UT
May 15, 2022

I was thinking about MY parenting: A voice comes from the kitchen that says, "Reagan's trying to kill me," and I yell, "Reagan, don't kill Carson." It's pretty charitable. It's pretty good. That's kind of the way that whole thing works, with me anyway.

Nature is full of symbols with meaning.

(Yeah, yeah, okay. It's like you have to eat a snowcone in order to use this microphone. Hello, hello.)

[crosstalk about the microphone]

(Yeah, okay. Just yell. [To the microphone:] You see what you can pick up because I'm gonna abandon you... No use for you.)

Nature is full of symbols. The most obvious, frequent, and repetitive symbol that you can find everywhere is the difference between the light and the darkness. When the sun is up, you can see stuff. When the sun is not up and the moon is not up, you can't see stuff. If you go into a room and there's no outside window, or it's dark at nighttime and there's no light, you can hurt yourself in the dark. Light and darkness are everywhere—testifying to you about the difference between truth and error, comprehension and confusion, what's right and what's wrong, what's true and what's error; it's just THE biggest symbol of all in nature.

Right now, it doesn't matter where you go or what you look at, every single institution in this world is in the process of losing light, losing grip on true principles, and sliding into increasing error, confusion, disorder, disorganization—and it doesn't matter if the institution you're looking at happens to be businesses or governments or churches or civic organizations. It doesn't matter what it is. Right now there are unrelenting voices advocating the cause of confusion, unrelenting voices advocating for destruction, decay, and overthrow—everywhere.

One of the places that should have been safe from this nonsense—this crusade to overthrow everything—has penetrated into the public school system, advocating sexual confusion so that: You might be a boy, or you might not be a boy; you might be a girl, or you might not be a girl. But for heaven's sakes, the one thing they want to advocate now is the overthrow of the family—because the one thing which sexual confusion will result in is the destruction of a happy relationship that produces a stable family inside of which children are produced and raised with an understanding of the difference between godliness and ungodliness, truth and error. Don't let yourself get sucked into that effort that is deliberately aimed to try and achieve a specific result. The specific result is the destruction of the family. And you have been targeted in order to achieve that result. It exists everywhere. You're either a boy, or you're a girl—and your ultimate destiny is to

be either a father or a mother. Don't ever lose sight of that. That is what God ordained in the beginning.

One of the things that has puzzled me and caused me to study long and hard in the Scriptures is the question of:

- WHY...when God says, "How oft would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not,"
- WHY...with God trying to gather people together and protect them (like a hen would protect her chicks),
- WHY...when the purpose behind the gospel is Zion—and there have been multiple opportunities in which God has interjected Himself into contact with us to try and bring that result about,
- WHY have we only seen Zion on two occasions? One was at the time of Enoch, and Melchizedek brought a city about that was also taken up into Heaven. (However, in truth, Melchizedek secured that covenant before the flood, and so he's really a subset of the city of Enoch—because rather than get caught up into Heaven before the flood, with a covenant He remained behind. But he gathered a city, and the city included those that were not antediluvians. And so you can say that it was twice.)

But God intended to establish Zion every time He interferes with, speaks to, interrupts, and creates a new dispensation of the gospel. Why doesn't it happen? Why is it that Zion fails? (Zion "flees," but more often than not, Zion fails.) Why didn't we have Zion at the time of Jesus Christ? Why didn't we see Zion at the time of Joseph Smith?

Well, one of the things that struck me about that first group of generations in which they did have Zion was the account of how things were organized.

(Boy, there's some important things in this material that I don't want to just gloss over in pursuit of the point that I want to make.) Here's an interesting little thing about the record:

Adam does not record his own baptism. Adam is focused on something altogether more cosmic than that, so he passes over the events that involve his baptism. It's actually generations later (when Enoch is speaking in vision and recounting things that had happened generations earlier) that Enoch records the account of Father Adam's baptism—which tells you that sometimes as you go through the record, things are non-chronological. You have... If you... If chronology really matters to you, you've got to go back and straighten all that out—because the record is gonna preserve the important data points in the experiences of the people involved but not necessarily preserve them in exactly the way in which they unfolded. Okay?

So, going back to the time of Adam and Adam's record:

The gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice...

Okay, those two things go hand-in-hand: angels get sent forth to prepare people, and then after they are adequately prepared, God's own voice begins to speak to them. Angels do a preliminary work. This is discussed in Alma later about how the work of the angels is to prepare people in order to receive something further. But the first step, in order to have faith, is to have the ministering of angels (which occurred in the case of Adam in the record that Adam is giving us). "...and by his own voice," meaning that then God comes into contact with him,

...and by the gift of the holy ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by a holy ordinance, and the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth that it should be in [all] the world until the end thereof. And thus it was. Amen...

So at the time of Adam, he gets preached to him the gospel, which at the time that this is taking place, Adam's mind (in making this record) is so caught up with other things, he doesn't even bother mentioning that he got baptized; Enoch will fill that in later. But I guarantee you that at this point, with this ministration taking place at the time of Adam, that he was baptized. But what he got was confirmed unto him by an holy ordinance, which is just mentioned lightly and skipped over. I've connected that holy ordinance in Genesis 3:13 with a line that I've drawn down into the next thing, which is verse 14. And I've drawn a line between "by a holy ordinance" and "this same priesthood"—because there's something going on here.

By them [and] their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled. Now this same Priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also. (Genesis 3:13-14 RE)

Something went on to confirm upon Adam, through a holy ordinance, something that will later be referred to as "this holy priesthood," which is going to show up again at the end of the world. Okay? So the very first Zion begins with Adam, and then I write down the list of the names: Adam, and then Seth, and then Enos, and then Cainan, and then Mahalaleel, then Jared, then Enoch, Methuselah, and then it'll go to Noah. But those names are mentioned in Genesis chapter three. And what you have in that list of names is a series of father, son, grandson, great-grandson—and you've got one in each generation.

So the original organization of the very first Zion was familial, meaning it was a family. It was patriarchal, meaning it descended from father to son to grandson. And it was dynastic, meaning that it stayed inside one family (father-son) line. That's how the original worked. There are a lot of advantages to that because in that setting, what you've got is an intimate connection between the people. You've got a family unit, which can be one of the greatest sources of solidarity and connection—but it can also be one of the worst sources of contention and animosity. So you've got your pluses, and you got your minuses.

So, when you read about the very first one, one of the first things that comes to mind is, "Oh, what we might need if we're ever gonna achieve Zion is a holy family." What we need is, like, how about if the Lord establishes a name to be held in faithful remembrance from generation to generation upon whom a patriarchal position is conferred, and we know the identity of that fellow—and we learn in January of 1841, the Lord attempted to do something like that by conferring upon Hyrum the office of Priesthood and Patriarch to be held in faithful remembrance, which kinda sorta happened until the conflict between Spencer W. Kimball and Eldred G. Smith resulted in the elimination of the office of Presiding Patriarch to the Church, and Eldred G. Smith was made Emeritus, and then (as David Christenson interviewed Eldred G. Smith), he did not confer anything upon his son. And the LDS Church altogether abandoned the office and the ordination that had begun with Hyrum and had been passed down to LDS Church Patriarchs until the time of Eldred G. Smith. And with his death...2014? With his death in 2014 came an end to that abortive effort to try and create an orderly manner in which it would be possible to establish Zion—'cuz the one thing that's apparent is the only time we've ever had it, we had it as a consequence of this kind of a relationship.

So, you guys have been studying Ether, the book of Ether. I go to the book of Ether, and I say, Aha, here we have, at the very beginning of the book of Ether, you got the brother of Jared; you've got the Lord coming to appear to the brother of Jared; and you've got, once again, an opportunity in which the Lord is saying, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings." And so, we now have—potentially—a new dynasty in which we can achieve Zion. But if you've read the book of Ether...

Well, let me just read a little bit of how that dynastic, patriarchal establishment worked. You can go to Ether chapter 3, beginning at verse 11. And this is some of the goings-on between the potential patriarchal leaders that could take them into Zion.

And it came to pass that Noah rebelled against Shule the king, and...his father Corihor, and drew away Corihor his brother, and also all his brethren, and many of the people. And he gave battle unto Shule the king, in which he did obtain the land of their first inheritance; and he became...king over that part of the land. And it came to pass that he gave battle again unto Shule the king; and he took Shule the king, and carried him away captive into Moron. And it came to pass [that] as he was about to put him to death, the sons of Shule crept into the house of Noah by night and slew him, and broke down the door of the prison, and brought out their father, and placed him upon his throne in his own kingdom. (Emphasis added)

And that didn't sound like Zion. It's patriarchal. It's dynastic. It's familial. It's treacherous. It's ugly. It involves continual killing and violence, ambition. And as you read the account in Ether, generation after generation, until finally, they arrive at the point that they completely destroy themselves in a genocidal warfare. And that ain't Zion.

Section 139 of the Teachings and Commandments is a part of the letter that Joseph wrote while he was captive in Liberty Jail, and he's talking about, at this point, the abuses—not the abuses that the government was imposing on him, not the imprisonment and the guards and all the rest of that, the governor disobeying the

Constitution, the outrages of what was going on in the society at large—he's writing about the church. It would be the fault of aspiring men inside the church that put him into prison, that even surrendered him into custody. When he got taken into custody, he was surprised and didn't know; that was why he walked out of Far West unarmed. He thought he was going out to negotiate, but treacherous men inside the church conspired to deceive him and lead him out to be surrendered. And he was taken captive, and he was put in prison. And all of that stuff that was going on both inside the government of the state of Missouri and, more importantly, inside the church, weighed on the mind of Joseph when he wrote these words, and they are only about religious abuse. They're only about betrayal and treachery by your fellow believer. Look at section 139, beginning with paragraph 5.

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and...the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of man in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. ...ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, ...to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that [it's] the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul. (T&C 139:5-6, emphasis added)

Joseph was not concerned about the government and the soldiers and the court system that unjustly held him in prison. He was concerned about the fact that the religion that was being restored was being corrupted. The religion that he was trying to establish—that would bring about Zion—had turned into a bunch of aspiring, manipulative, dangerous men who thought they had a little authority, and therefore, with that authority, they could abuse, exercise control, compulsion, and dominion, and get other people to follow what they insisted be done, abrogating the agency which men are all too eager to surrender to the hands of those that want to abuse them. They willingly permit the abuse.

So, "Joseph, the Lord was willing to gather them like a hen would gather the chicks under their wings, and they would not. And Joseph, you're sitting in Liberty Jail. You know they won't. You've got a church that's been corrupted. When you get out, you can go to Nauvoo and try to elevate the people and preach—but it's gonna repeat itself. And

ultimately, in Nauvoo, you're gonna get killed by the same inside conspirators occupying positions of authority inside the organization. The same thing is gonna happen again."

But Joseph did something really interesting towards the end. It didn't get preserved much—except as a kind of confused footnote that only lingered until the time of Wilford Woodruff, and then it just got thrown on the trash heap. And today, it's occasionally visited by Mormon scholars in BYU Studies and other places—Mormon Dialogue—usually dealt with in a way that makes kind of fun of the whole thing, like, "How weird was this?" You can even find an allusion to it in *Rough Stone Rolling*, where Bushman talked about how Joseph's ambition was "familial plentitude in the eternities." That was how Bushman described it. Joseph was doing things not because he was a (as Bushman would put it) some kind of lothario (meaning a womanizer, someone that was always looking to seduce women). Bushman said that wasn't what Joseph was doing there at the end. He wasn't a lothario; he was looking to try to achieve familial plentitude in the eternities by sealings, which later in the vernacular that got adopted by the Brigham Young-led group in Utah meant marriage, which meant polygamy, which meant all kinds of corrupt teachings based upon that. And that's another day and another story.

Joseph was trying to use the authority that had been given to him at the end not to reinforce the church. He essentially walked away from the church. He rode across the Mississippi River on June 23rd in a skiff, sent for his horse so that he could just leave. He was headed west; he was gonna go somewhere else and start over. And he was gonna do that in a whole different capacity. The new capacity (and one which he began mentioning for the first time in October of 1843) was to create a family by adoption. Okay?

In the first generations that brought us Zion, it was familial, patriarchal, and dynastic. And it worked because of the righteousness of the men involved. But in the hands of the unrighteous, a familial, patriarchal, dynastic system for organizing people can create hell on earth and ultimately end in genocide. But with the cautions that are given to us by Joseph and the experience that he had (first, in Missouri, and later, soberly assessing the people around him in Nauvoo), he created something that potentially allows for the organization of a righteous society that is familial, that is patriarchal, but that is non-dynastic—not confined to a single line of men but encompasses any righteous man by adoption and by sealing into an imitation of that order that existed in the beginning.

Now, I have used, for convenience sake, the word "man" and "patriarchal" and "he." But if you go back and read the talk that I gave about our Divine Parents, there is no such thing as a patriarch without an associated matriarch. And if you study that further, what you will learn is it's not the man who even chooses the next in authority, the next one upon whom status is conferred. That's entrusted exclusively into the hands of the matriarch. It is the Mother who ordains that succession.

Well, in that T&C 139, there's a comment that Joseph makes in passing. This is in paragraph 12 of 139: There are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers. He

doesn't elaborate on that. Take the comments that I've given today, go to that paragraph 12 of 139, and look at that aside comment that there are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers, and let that sink deep in your mind to consider what that might include.

Then there's a...about the only talk that Joseph Smith ever had written out in advance, which oughta tell you how important this talk is—there's a talk that Joseph gave that appears as section 140 of the Teachings and Commandments that I want to read from beginning in paragraph 5, and then I'll conclude.

Now, the purpose in himself, in the winding up scene of the last dispensation, is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. Hebrews 1st chapter, 14th verse: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be [the] heirs of salvation? These angels are under the direction of Michael, or Adam, who acts under the direction of Christ.

From the above quotation we learn that Paul perfectly understood the purpose of God in relation to his connection with man and that glorious and perfect Order which he established in himself, whereby he sent forth power, revelations, and glory. God will not acknowledge that which He has not called, ordained, and chosen.

...This then is the nature of the Priesthood: every man holding the presidency of his dispensation and one man holding the presidency of them all, even Adam.

...The ordinances must be kept in the very [same] way God has appointed, otherwise their Priesthood will prove a cursing instead of a blessing. (T&C 140:5-12, emphasis added)

You see, in the beginning, all things were confirmed unto Adam by an holy ordinance, and the gospel preached. Adam had to receive that fullness of understanding before he went out to preach the gospel because there were things about the pattern which don't emerge into clarity until Adam understood all things. And that same priesthood which was in the beginning is to return again at the end of the world, also. And that same clarity that was entrusted into the hands of Adam will again be restored upon the earth with the same clarity to allow for a connection—by Adam's permission, it will be restored, under the direction of Christ who presides over it all, for the purpose of having the end agree with and fit together with the beginning, in which all things get combined together.

And so, at the very moment when the greatest effort to bring darkness and confusion into the lives of all men and children, there will break forth a light—clearer, brighter,

comprehending more, revealing more, and establishing again that same gospel and priesthood which was in the beginning. It is going to return. The world is not worthy of it. Therefore, it necessarily must be housed inside sacred space belonging to God in the form of a temple, which is the reason why (in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant) the Lord makes mention of a coming command to build a temple.

God's purposes will not fail. His effort is equally relenting with the effort of the adversary to bring about darkness. And I don't care if it appears as though darkness covers the whole face of the earth, and there's but one spotlight in one small corner. That will be enough to begin the overthrow of the kingdom of this world and the powers of darkness that rule here. It will be the beachhead from which our Lord will launch a victory that will be total, that will encompass the whole Earth. And from that tiny beginning, it will spread until Zion fills the whole of North and South America, as Joseph Smith described it. He didn't live to get there. He didn't have the right people listening and giving heed and diligence to the things that were taught. How oft will God gather together people like a hen gathering chicks under her wings? Apparently, He will keep doing it and keep doing it until, finally, some group of people decide that they will rise up. Hopefully, that will include some of you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2022.07.08 Mormon Book Reviews

“Where an Evangelical Encounters the Restoration”
Interview between Steven Pynnaker and Denver Snuffer
July 8, 2022

Steven Pynnaker: Welcome to Mormon Book Reviews: “Where an Evangelical Encounters the Restoration.” I'm your host, Steven Pynnaker, and I'm very excited to have this guest on. I tell you, folks, I was, uhh... You know, I've relayed the story to people how/when I was having lunch with John Dehlin, I... He had already invited me onto the program, and I said, you know, “The Lord showed me that I was gonna be on your program, John.” And John Dehlin goes to me, and he says, “Well if Heavenly Father said you're comin' on my program, you're definitely comin' on my program!” Well, I'll tell you, folks, the Lord also showed me that Denver Snuffer was gonna be on my program, so I am very excited about having Denver.

Denver, welcome to the program.

Denver Snuffer: Well, thanks. Good to be here.

SP: Thank you, sir.

DS: Well, I'm not sure it's “good” to be here. It's tolerable to be here.

SP: That works for me.

DS: I don't like to do interviews. Yeah.

SP: I know, and I appreciate you coming on—because it is a real privilege for you to come on.

One quick thing, folks, the merch store is open: mormonbookreviews.com. You can buy phone cases, you can buy hats, you can buy buttons, you name it. It's on... We're constantly adding stuff to the store, so I want to appreciate the... Hoodies, you name it. So go to mormonbookreviews.com.

I also want to thank my supporters on both Patreon and PayPal. If you wish to financially support the channel, there will be a link in the description.

So Denver, “Where an Evangelical Encounters the Restoration” is my tagline, and of course, you have an evangelical background (if you consider Baptist “evangelical,” which I do). And I thought we would start with “Before you encounter the Restoration.” I want you to tell a little bit about your childhood and your engagement being raised in a Baptist church. And just talk a little bit about that, and I'll ask you some questions about that, as well.

DS: Yeah, my mother was fairly devout as a Baptist, invited the minister over for Sunday dinners, and you know, took us to church every Sunday. It was rare that we weren't in church every Sunday. She had this box of New Testament verses called “Our Daily Bread,” and every morning at breakfast, she would pull out the front card and read us a

verse from the New Testament and then put it in the back so that you circulated through the box of New Testament quotes over the course of a year. And I never was offended at that. I was intrigued by it. I kind of enjoyed it. There was a... You know, the Billy Graham revivals that were on the TV, we watched. There was a revival, as I recollect (I was pretty young), but there was a revival somewhere near the place I was growing up at the time. And we attended one of those. There was always this... I think it's referred to as the "altar call"...

SP: Yup.

DS: ...where you can come up and make some confession and be baptized. When I was nine years old, we were living in Germany; my father was in the military. And I remember, at age nine, wanting to actually respond to that altar call. And the minister did not think I was old enough yet to be baptized (which is kind of ironic because, in the LDS tradition, people are baptized at age eight). Well, being turned down at age nine, thereafter I had a conviction about the authenticity of the New Testament/the legitimacy of Christ as a Savior, but I had a DECREASING confidence that the Baptists had it right. My father was a believer in God and an active Mason, but he did not go to church with us on Sunday (except maybe Easter, maybe Christmas). But he had a belief in God, and he was aloof from denominationalism. And it may be that some of my skepticism about the Baptists having it right was due to my father's neglect of attending church. But the ministers came over, ate dinner; they were welcome. My dad was always cordial with them. And he was someone that did read the Bible. But I never did join a church or get baptized until...when I was 19, and I joined the LDS Church.

SP: So I'm just really curious, did you ever recite the Sinner's Prayer within the context of becoming a Born-again Christian as a child?

DS: Yes. That was done on more than one occasion. And, you know, the Billy Graham revivals asked not that you recited, but that you essentially agree with the content. And you know, to myself—listening and watching and observing—internally, I was "Christian" in the sense of having a conviction about the legitimacy of Christ as Savior. It just was not enough to provoke me to join in some institutional confession or public institutional confession.

When I was a teenager, some of my buddies went up and answered the altar call. But, you know, I was acquainted with how they lived their lives. And so it didn't persuade me that that had the desired effect of transforming my teenage buddies from what they were BEFORE answering the altar call to what they were after, because I could detect no discernible difference in behavior. And that, too, probably added to my doubts about the utility or value of the institutional commitment.

SP: Okay! Now, this is the '70s, and this is, of course, at the height of the Jesus Movement, the born-again stuff. I mean, even back then, people didn't even know what a Born-again Christian was until, like, Jimmy Carter became President. Then people started talking about it. But you had this born-again movement that was a lot of revivals taking place. My father was involved with the Full Gospel Business Men's Association, which basically took Pentecostalism into the mainstream of all the Protestant

denominations, including Catholicism. So it was really an exciting time to be a Christian at this time. It sounds to me like you primarily got Baptist stuff; were you also influenced by any of the charismatic and Pentecostal stuff that was going on during this time, as well?

DS: Well, yeah, there were... It was hard not to encounter that sort of stuff because you're right: Culturally, the excesses of the 1960s led to a kind of Christian reactionaryism in the 1970s. And then as...

I was in the military, myself. I... My father was in the Army, and then later in the Army Air Corps, and then later in the Air Force (when they separated it). And I became a member of the Air Force, as well. The Air Force had educational opportunities on base—and I got residency, matriculated into a college while I was on active duty, and I satisfied everything that I needed (except for one semester of credit) while I was still there in Texas at a private Methodist college. And the Methodist college required that you have both an Old Testament and a New Testament course as part of their undergraduate general education requirements.

Well, I'd left Texas before I had finished the religion training, and I went to Provo, where I was hoping to go to law school at the new J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. And I finished that last semester at BYU and mailed the transcript back to McMurry University in Texas. I asked them if I could take an Old Testament and a New Testament class from Brigham Young University to satisfy the religion requirement. And they said not “No,” but “Hell no” (although I don't think they used the word “hell”). But they made it abundantly clear that whatever theological nonsense they were teaching as New and Old Testament curriculum at Brigham Young University, it would certainly not pass muster at a Methodist school. So I had to take their Old and New Testament courses, but I did it by correspondence. So I had the material, and I had to go through the material, and I had to pass it off and complete it.

And I... It was surprising to me, particularly the Old Testament material, where they essentially bought into... I wouldn't have known how to describe it at the time, but now I do understand: They had bought into the German School of Textual Criticism. They described the convergence over time in the Jewish community of the J source, the P source, the E source, the D source—and how there were all these competing sources of material that got amalgamated into a single text, but that by careful study, you could parse it apart. You could find the Jehovistic [Yahwist] source. You could find the Elohist source. You could find the Priestly source and the Deuteronomist sources and tie them all together. You know, I understand this German school, the Higher Criticism approach, but the more I reflect on that as a scholarly method for parsing apart the Bible, the more unreasonable it seems to me because... I understand the possibility of losing parts of the text. But a wholesale adaptation or change or alteration, I don't think would be possible.

Back before there was widespread competency and literacy, the way that people preserved a tradition was orally. And we think that oral preservation of biblical texts would be well nigh impossible. But right now, today, I would guess that if I played for you

the entire library of Beatles' songs, that you could sing along, word for word, with dozens (perhaps hundreds) of their lyrics. And whoever your band was when you were growing up—you know, Led Zeppelin or Creedence Clearwater or Jefferson Airplane (or Jefferson Starship, later still)—if their song comes on, you have at your command a vast library of lyrics. And all that is, is just your recreational time, usually driving around in a car listening to music. Well, their television/their movies/their entertainment was based upon these texts that they would recite. To be able to come along and introduce into memorized texts a whole new verse in “Here Comes the Sun” or a whole new set of lyrics for “Come Together” would be glaring; it would just stand out. You would know that someone was altering what Lennon and McCartney or what George Harrison wrote. And those are things we don't take particularly seriously. They're simply recreational.

So, I do think that there was more integrity and continuity and difficulty in making the kind of approach that Higher Criticism suggests was “the manner in which the text got assembled” than what Higher Criticism would urge as their scholarly endeavor. I think it's useful to try and detect where some traditions derive from. But I think the traditions follow; they didn't lead. I think the parsing apart was done because people have certain preferences. I mean, their... Evangelicals love the text in the letter to the Romans by Paul because it was that text that allowed Martin Luther to see—you know, clearance to allow him to depart from—the priestly control and to obtain salvation by the confession of faith, divorced from a magisterium of priestly authority, and doing something by grace that you're saved. And so Evangelicals seize upon that.

But you know, much of what I have come to understand about religion generally (and Christianity specifically) has been a moving target/a motion picture in which, over time, things look different. Today's Evangelical community, for example, would not even be regarded as Christian for the first 950 years of Christianity. And if you go back to the first century of Christianity, it was a cacophony of Matthean Christians and Johannine Christians and Petrine Christians who disagreed. And then you've got your Gnostics that came along and urged something that was later regarded as heretical.

As Christians, if we're being candid, if we're being honest with one another, the reason why Christianity took on a stable form in the era of Constantine was because the Roman emperor had the ability by force of arms to stabilize both the canon of Scripture and the form that Christianity would take. And it's not because an argument got won; it's because by force of arms and by burning texts that differed from the official canon...

SP: Right.

DS: ...much like the criticism that Christians today level at Islam and the way in which the Koran became a singular text, as opposed to having multiple versions by burning and by killing. Christianity shares that same kind of tortured history—which is one of the reasons why, in my view, Christians should study Mormon history.

SP: Yes.

DS: Mormon history is—in real-time—undergoing those same schismatic, breaking-apart, conflicts, accusations. And in much of what the largest denomination of

Mormonism (which is the one that I joined—the LDS version), it was established, in part, by violence—the same kind of violence we see in the early Christian/in the early Islam era—by Brigham Young while they were in isolation in the territory of Deseret (which became the territory of Utah, which became later still the state of Utah) in which the Home Missionary Program and the questions that they asked were designed to ferret out heresy and to determine who was a candidate for blood atonement (or killing) to “save their souls!” And it was another attempt to—by force of arms—establish an orthodoxy. So, the study of Christianity, the study of Evangelical movement, the study of Catholicism, and the study of Mormonism, it's a fascinating endeavor. And nothing is ever as simple as this is right; this is wrong; this is truly what happened. Because there are a lot more moving parts to the whole of this than...

SP: ...than people realize. Yes.

DS: Yeah.

SP: And I agree with that. As a matter of fact, when I was on Mormon Stories, I made a similar parallel that the early... You can almost parallel, just have a parallel between early Christian history and early Mormon history. I say the first decade of Mormonism is like the first century and vice... You know, so from 1820 to 1830, and then 18... You know, you can almost divvy it up. But a decade... The first decade is like the first century and henceforth.

I want to get back a little bit to your time as engaging Evangelicalism in Christianity in the '70s. And that is, there were a couple of things that were happening in the 1970s. First of all, the all-time selling book during the 1970s was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*—sold more books than any other book in the '70s. And there were two groups that were making claims that in 1975 the world was gonna come to an end: the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Worldwide Church of God. So, at this time in the 1970s, it was also a very apocalyptic end-time things. As a matter of fact, I remember seeing my mom/my parents had food storage, like, you know, like ready to go, you know, from the '70s, because they thought the end was coming. I just want you to maybe comment on that period, the apocalyptic period that was the '70s, how it was felt like, “These are the end days!” and a lot of major groups thought this, and most evangelical Christians were just buying a TON of *The Late Great Planet Earth* (and as a matter of fact, there were a lot of non-Christians that were buying that book).

DS: Right, right. That was the predecessor really to the *Left Behind* series. I mean, *Left Behind* was an expansion on *Late Great Planet Earth*. And yeah, I did read that. And...

Apocalypticism is useful because it motivates—and nothing gets people to donate more, attend church more, clean their act up more, and take seriously the choices that they make in life more than Apocalypticism. However, one of the things that I notice is that when that becomes the overwhelming concern, there is a tendency to sell short your preparation for the future, your education, your career, your buying a home, your saving. If it's all gonna go up in ashes here within the next year or two, then why do you need anything more than a travel trailer and a pickup truck—because you're gonna have to move to get away from the firestorm anyway.

You know, the Apocalypticism affected me. It... You know, I read the book! I considered that a peril! And clearly, if you accept the statements that Christ makes in the 24th chapter of Matthew and much of the Book of Revelation's imagery, you know, there is going to come a time of some considerable distress. But that time of considerable distress appears to be broken up into a single generation and (even further still) into periods of three-and-a-half and three-and-a-half years (or a total of seven). And when that clock starts counting and when that generation is born is dependent upon the accomplishment of a number of signs that God is in charge of. And I think we are better off living our lives as if we're going to die in an old folk's home somewhere at the end of a fully well-lived life, rather than relying upon the Lord to come and interrupt everything to give us the chance to get out of here and escape before life reaches its full measure.

Understand, too, that in the '70s, we still had the threat of East/West thermonuclear war, the threats from the Pentagon and from Russia (and the Kremlin). The Vietnam War had just wrapped up. There were tensions in the Middle East; we had the Yom Kippur War. We had tensions in Israel (and of course, many of the prophecies talk about how the "valley of decision" is located right there), and with the tensions building up and with the division of interest between the East and the West (the East favoring the Muslim/Arab communities; the West supporting Israel more fully back then), it looked like a conflagration was imminent. And into that, you know, The Late Great Planet Earth comes and tells its tale. And it got all of us concerned! It got ME concerned—but I noted the reaction of people in their lives to that. And I was still intent on finishing an undergraduate degree, finishing a law degree, preparing for life; I was still intent on trying to prepare for life. And so, the emotional enthusiasm that those kinds of focuses drained from you, in my view at the time, didn't have a positive effect.

I think it's useful to prepare to die. I think it's useful to prepare to face the Maker. But I don't think it's useful to give up your life in exchange for a hurried preparation for God to come wipe the slate clean and, you know, catch you up into the clouds of glory and then wipe the Earth clean and come plant you in a place of peace for a thousand years. I think those kinds of thoughts and imagery: you know, useful to be hopeful about someday but very inhibiting in terms of living and preparing and going about your daily life. It doesn't help your children prepare for life; it doesn't help you be a better father. It doesn't help you be a better husband to look forward to God destroying everything next week—because sometimes you need to undertake a home repair job that'll take more than the next week. And you're better off living your life that way. But yeah, it influenced me.

SP: That's very interesting. And this is where I kind of want to get to maybe your some of the spiritual stuff that you've engaged in. And it's really interesting, 'cuz you were baptized in the fall of 1973, and a few months later, in 1974, you had your first encounter with an angel. You describe that you were caught up and came to a transparent walled room, from which you could see the blue curvature of the Earth below. And you met a man who was old, as tall as you were are, with a beard, a full head of hair that was long but not quite to his shoulders, and who spoke to you non-vocally. After receiving a brief message about the timing of your upcoming ministry, you asked nothing further and were compelled to depart, and you left the scene (see

“BFHG, Part 3,” www.denversnuffer.com, August 22, 2012). You tell this to downplay your own preparedness and show how foolish you were to not asking a follow-up question. But why did you get the privilege of entertaining an angel not even one year from your baptism, while the recent converts and most longtime members are, by and large, limited to receiving barely discernible promptings from the Holy Spirit? In other words, what made you so unique that, I mean, to be a recent convert and have this encounter? I mean, does it...? Just tell me what do you feel was prepared you? I mean, in one sense, you had this divine encounter. What... How did this happen?

DS: You know, the Mormon missionaries brought that pamphlet, the Joseph Smith story. (I think they still print that.) It's by and large the Joseph Smith History portion of the Pearl of Great Price that the LDS Church publishes. The story that the missionaries told me was about Joseph Smith going out and praying and encountering the Father and the Son in a vision. And then some years later, after he felt that he didn't know what his standing and state was before God, he prayed, and then an angel comes and visits him. (And then the gold plates and all the rest of what happens proceeds from there.) That introduction suggested to me that if Joseph Smith was encountering God and if the missionaries were coming and bearing their testimony that this stuff was true, that it was the—I thought—it was the common experience of people who accepted God moving anew and visiting with and calling a prophet and giving us new Scripture, that if you were Mormon, one of the things that Mormonism represented was this opening of the heavens. And I assumed—wrongly, as it turns out—but I assumed that if you were Mormon, that you ought to expect...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...angels. And so, to me, the encounter with an angel... It wasn't surprising; it was ratifying. It wasn't unexpected; it was confirmatory that, in fact, God is now moving and that these things have and do and will take place. I...

In the Scriptures, there are passages where, in describing the event, it says that “I was caught up to an exceedingly high mountain.” That language is actually a euphemism, because the encounter that I had, if I were going to describe that original encounter, the words I would use is, “I was caught up to an exceedingly high mountain,” not because I was on a mountain (because it was somewhere a bit higher than that), but because that is the recitation/the scriptural descriptor that gets used in order to talk about how such an encounter takes place. And to be caught up and to be in the presence of, you know, a man dressed in white who had a very specific message... I mean, I can quote it still! It was not audible, but it was clearly communicated and in language I understand. “On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin. And so you must prepare.” That seemed like... I mean, this person was as somber and as serious and grave a personage as you would ever encounter on the Federal Bench. It was a person who was clearly entrusted to deliver a message, and the message was spoken with some considerable sobriety and clarity. And you know, I don't think that I felt intimidated. But what I did feel was a sense of the legitimacy of this person and the inadequacy of myself, the bonafides of this personage and the ill-preparedness of myself. And it puzzled me at the moment, but it puzzled me a great deal more as I thought about it. I

mean, that just sounded like something that was not to be questioned but to be accepted. So I accepted it. But the whole of the incident to me at the time seemed like, "That's normal!" I mean, if you're Mormon, that's the way that this religion... This is how the New Testament began. This is what was encountered when Zachariah went into the temple, and he prayed on behalf of Israel, and Gabriel emerges from the veil on the right side of the altar, and announces that he's Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God (Luke 1:4 RE). It was a source of truth and light and unquestionable authority. And so, I accepted it.

SP: Wow!

DS: But the more time went on them, the more questions it raised.

SP: Sure! It was a very peculiar thing, and you would soon realize it because it wasn't something that was normal.

Just a few things: Would you describe it as a dream? An out-of-body experience? When you say "caught up," where were you before and after it happened? And if, like, somebody was with you... You said "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell," if somebody was with you (like a roommate or someone next to you), would they see you get caught up?

DS: I doubt it. It was extraordinarily physical, tangible. But I doubt that they would have observed anything had they been there. I was...

SP: So it was physical, but you would... Could you say it was kind of an out-of-body experience?

DS: I... Yes, I can say that if I had to guess, it was likely that I was out of the body, but it did not at all seem so. I had the same tangibility: The thing on which I stood was as solid as a tile floor in a military barracks; the walls (although they were transparent) were as physical as a sheetrock wall. Everything about it was tangible and physical in that sense, but whether in the body or out of the body, I'm... I absolutely could not tell. But I believe it was out of the body. And when the incident ended and I was dismissed, I returned.

SP: Wow.

DS: I recall a return. And then I was still awake and still as tangible as I had been before, but I didn't feel any, like, transition out of the body I occupy and transition back into the body I occupy. It felt exactly the same throughout. And afterwards... I was in a military barracks at the time that this occurred. I was still in the military barracks when it ended. And I was left, you know, puzzling over it and assuming that this was normal.

SP: So were you praying at the time? Were you looking for this? Were you expecting it? Or did it just all of a sudden happen?

DS: It happened without me trying to provoke it. It happened as if it were on someone else's scheduled timetable and not on my own. But I have to admit, I had been... When

I joined the LDS Church and I got baptized, I had been very serious about the religion. I got the conviction that what the missionaries were telling me was true and that I ought to respond to it, but I was somewhat skeptical of my capacity to be a good Mormon. I did go ahead, I did get baptized, and I did get an outpouring of the Spirit that occurred subsequent to the baptism—and I did find within myself a spiritual strength that I didn't feel like I had before entering the waters of baptism and accepting and [indecipherable]...

SP: I'm just curious: Did you speak in tongues, by chance?

DS: I was able to prophesy...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...but I don't... No, not tongues, but I was... I did prophesy.

SP: Okay. Okay, interesting.

DS: So yeah, it was a whole different life from the one I'd had before. It was as if someone had turned a light switch on. And now I understood things that I couldn't have... And the Scriptures, which had been relatively boring before then, came alive. There were things in the biblical texts that I found understandable for the first time—and fascinating, wonderful, encouraging. And before that, the Scriptures had been, you know, Our Daily Bread—if you can get through one verse and think about it, you've done a good thing. Now I was reading multiple chapters and enjoying them.

SP: Okay, so you started feasting on the word; you started devouring it and loving it and getting better understanding. That's really interesting to me, and that... Those kind of things resonate with me. You know, I come from a charismatic background. And I... There's a... One of the things I find interesting about you and your movement (you know, I know it's "loosely based") is that you speak a lot of the same language that a Born-again Christian charismatic would resonate with. And so I feel like when I talk to people from your group, I feel like I'm...that we speak the same language.

DS: Yeah.

SP: And I guess... I wanna be respectful of your time. So, I kind of want us... First of all, I wanted to kind of establish the early days of you/your ministry/your experiences with Evangelicals; it's very fascinating to me. I kind of... I just want...

So, of course, you go to law school, you have your law practice, and you're basically living a conventional LDS life—you would probably say, right? Okay. And then around the 2000s, you start publishing stuff—and it's really some interesting books that you start publishing—and then you start with lectures. Maybe just talk about what caused you to start engaging the Restoration differently than you had before and really, really starting to put stuff out and put yourself out there.

DS: Umm, the... There's a backdrop that you probably need to understand...

SP: Sure.

DS: ...in order to see what happened and why. When I became a Latter-day Saint, the top of the Latter-day Saint hierarchy was populated by scriptioners and preachers whose focus was upon parsing Scripture and parsing LDS history—and I mean:

Boyd Packer had been a seminary instructor before he became a general authority and an apostle;

Bruce R. McConkie had been a lawyer, but he had also undertaken to write multiple volumes of New Testament commentary, an ambitious book called *Mormon Doctrine*, multiple volumes preserving his father-in-law's ministerial content (much of which was parsing Scripture);

Marion G. Romney, who was the scriptioner who rarely gave a sermon that wasn't Scripture-based;

Mark E. Peterson, who wrote a series of books on the Patriarchal Fathers and explaining them.

DOCTRINE was the substance of general authority talks, general conference talks, books that were coming out. Over time that changed. One of the things that radically... And many people (even Latter-day Saints) wouldn't necessarily understand what I'm about to say, but it's nevertheless the case:

A man got called into the general authority ranks—Gordon B. Hinckley—who started the Public Relations Office of the LDS Church (who eventually rose to become the President of the LDS Church) who implemented a different way of approaching things. He, as a public relations official, had kept up on what businesses had discovered were useful in managing a multi-national corporate entity, including “opinion poll” taking, “focus group” testing, and using the tools of advertising in order to shape the message of what it was that you're going to deliver. And so, Mormonism shifted from being doctrinally-based to being, essentially, sales-based and advertising-based and public relations-based—and the transition necessitated a different kind of leader to be called. And so the ranks that the highest level of the hierarchy in the LDS Church today reflects that different set of priorities. You have business instructors that college business instructors that are members, bankers, car salesmen who are engaged in marketing. You've got... When Gordon B. Hinckley died and Thomas S. Monson took over, at the press conference (when he was being interviewed as the newly-called President of the LDS Church), Thomas Monson made the remark that “You should not expect any big changes; it'll be steady as you go,” which was, in reality, it was his way of saying, “We have an infrastructure. The infrastructure got built by Gordon B. Hinckley. He did it from the 1930s until the year 2000, working in the hierarchy of the LDS Church. And that infrastructure's there, and I'm gonna rely on it, and so it's going to be steady as you go. Don't expect any big changes. I'm gonna continue this process.”

For me, individually, I could not have explained it to you in the way that I just did, but I FELT it. I could sense that the church was drifting.

SP: Okay, and roughly, what year was this?

DS: Late '70s/early '80s and into the '90s.

SP: Okay.

DS: And one of the things that had most appealed to me as a convert to this religious movement (the Restoration, Mormonism, the Latter-day Saint Church) was the... The encounter of Joseph Smith in the grove with a visionary encounter with the Father and the Son is the commencement of the whole of it. And that was based upon some verses that you find in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John, and it's where Christ, preliminary to going to be crucified... Now, He's telling His apostles about what's going to happen. And the record of that gospel says that the apostles couldn't get their hands around this. He's telling them things, they're going to record it in their gospel (John, in particular), but they weren't understanding it as Christ is conveying this to them. But he says, "I'm gonna go away, but don't worry. I won't leave you comfortless. I will send the Comforter, AND...." He goes on to say that "...I will come to you." So there's a Comforter (the Holy Ghost) that He's going to send. And then He says that He—the Lord—will also come to them (this will be post-crucifixion). And then He goes on to say that when He comes to them, He's going to prepare them so that He—Christ—and the Father can take up their abode with them. So John records that. (By the time he records his gospel, he does have his hands around all this, and he is explaining something that is a fundamental part of his gospel and, I think, the message of Christianity.)

But that promise and that message largely lay fallow in the Christian community but was realized in the experience of Joseph Smith. And to me, that was bedrock; that was foundational; that was the message of the gospel. And I could see that message everywhere in the Book of Mormon where, in the first book, you begin with Nephi in a struggle to try and get his hands around and believe what his father is testifying to after his father had had this heavenly encounter. And then Nephi, similarly, walks that path and has an encounter with the divine, and then he becomes a prophet. And then the next writer in the Book of Mormon, Jacob, does exactly the same thing. And I'm seeing that it is embedded not only into the story of Joseph Smith but into the text of the Book of Mormon itself. And so I believed this stuff, I wanted this stuff, and I prayed for this stuff.

But I have to candidly admit that I had been a member of the LDS movement for decades and I had sought for and asked for these things, and while I had had profound spiritual experiences and encounters beyond the veil, I had not encountered the Lord coming to comfort me; I had certainly not encountered the Lord and His Father taking up their abode with me. And as a consequence of that, I knew my journey had not completed; so I asked for that.

You've had people on... I listened to one interview where a fellow was talking about Masonry and Mormonism and some of the similarities, and he talked about some of the list of things that you can find in an LDS temple endowment and what you find in the Masonic tradition. So without elaborating where it would be inappropriate to do so, I took that "true order of prayer" idea, I dressed in the robes, I gave the signs and the

tokens, I made the recitation for the true order of prayer, and I prayed (in my house, alone, with a makeshift altar using an ottoman), and literally asked, you know, that I'd be able to converse with the Lord and enter into His presence, just as the temple ceremony suggests, and you know, wrapped that up and waited expectantly. And after some period of tiring on my knees, I got up and put all my temple clothing away and put them back in the closet, went on with life. Puzzled over that for some time and ultimately concluded that, for whatever reason, that just was not in the cards. And so I began to reflect upon all that I HAD received. And I realized that I was really kind of ungrateful. I was one of those people that was wanting more instead of being thankful for what I'd been given.

SP: Okay.

DS: And I HAD been given much. And so my attitude changed from disappointment and frustration to gratitude and acknowledgment that if nothing else ever happened, that I had been given enough and that I had an assurance that the Lord knew who I was and that He had committed to me an opportunity that was phenomenal. I had taught gospel doctrine and priesthood for nearly three decades. I had learned and studied and grown and been faithful. And I just gave up on that and instead focused on my gratitude to God for all that had been given. And unexpectedly and without me doing (as far as I could tell)...

SP: So now, this is February 13, 2003?

DS: Yes.

SP: Okay. So do you...

DS: Without doing anything to provoke it...

SP: Well, can I just... I want to ask you, and I want you to talk about it, it says (in the 2006 book you wrote, *The Second Comforter*), you wrote that "when your faith [is] in His ordinances is secure enough that seeing Him will produce no further conviction of His word, no greater confidence in Him and no additional confirmation than what you have already, you are prepared to receive Him" (*The Second Comforter*, Chapter 12: In the Ordinances Thereof, p. 266). And that's... You feel that was what was preparatory to having your face-to-face encounter with Jesus.

DS: Yes, I think that is exactly what's required. Because if what you're doing is trying to find the Lord to have faith in Him, I think you've got a struggle ahead of you before you're ever gonna get there. I had within me a conviction of the truthfulness of the whole of this, that the Scriptures coming alive had done something within me; the effort to obey the Lord had done something within me. I had had personal difficulties in life; I'd had tragedies in life—none of them had made me doubt and all of them had made me draw closer to and rely upon the Lord more. And I had the conviction that, without any question, He is real, His work is real, He is actually doing something to prepare the Earth for His return. That isn't limited to a handful of really faithful Mormons. That stirring is going on everywhere in the world, and people are feeling it. It's an awakening that

touches many people AND agitates many people; the tares and the wheat are separating from one another. And wheat—whether you find them in the Evangelical community or in Catholicism or in Islam—there are wheat growing everywhere, and there are tares everywhere, and the tares are becoming more militant and less caring and less godly. So, I knew that God existed, and I knew that He had taken note of me, and I did not need to feel the prints in His hands (like Thomas did) in order to say, “Our Lord has risen.”

SP: Oh! Okay, so I just have to ask you, so would you describe this as a visitation or a visionary experience? When you say that you didn't HAVE to touch his palms, DID you? Did you... Were you afforded the opportunity to actually touch and feel the Savior like He would have had done in Third Nephi?

DS: Yeah, yes. And the answer is the initial encounter had as its very specific purpose... Umm, again, this is probably somewhat at odds with what I was saying before—but it was apocalyptic. The first encounter was what I would call right squarely in the tradition of Apocalypticism. And its purpose was to orient me for purposes that would later unfold. But it was abundantly clear to me... (And the encounter is now, actually, it's been canonized in a set of Scripture we call the Teachings and Commandments.) It has... That was the first encounter, but there have been others, and the others have been tutorial. The purpose has not been to reassure me; the purpose has been to educate me.

SP: Okay, so I'm really curious—because it's almost like you have a reverse encounter that people don't normally have with Jesus. In other words, you almost had like an encounter with Jesus of the book of Revelation—right?...

DS: Yes.

SP: ...at the first encounter, and then your further encounters are almost like you're being taught by the Savior, like He would have been doing His earthly ministry.

DS: Right.

SP: And so, you have this opportunity to engage in conversation with Him. Do you... Are there times when He gives you a hug? Do you hug Him? Do you embrace Him? Do you feel Him? Have you had a chance to feel the prints, His handprints? And how tangential of an experience is this?

DS: Okay. I've told this to a few people; I guess there's no reason not to just tell it and have it out there. Well, the answer is, “Yes” to your questions. But let me talk to you about a singular intimate moment, okay?

Almost everything... While the Lord doesn't convey in communication in a way that vibrates the air, it's a higher form of communication that is abundantly more clear. It conveys thought itself, clarity itself, understanding itself, and it's left to you... You comprehend it, but it's left to you—if you want to—to convert it into English; it's left to you to explain it in words. It is bigger than and more inclusive than the words

themselves. And so, it's not necessarily accurate to say, "Okay, He said this to me." He conveyed this to me, and I'm telling you what it was that got conveyed. So, understand that. And then second of all, there came this moment where, in a series of what I would call educational encounters—I had been tutored; I had been taught; I had been shown; I had experienced; I had witnessed things that helped me get my hands around things—there came this moment when, in the presence of the Lord, He reached out His hand, and He touched my eyes.

SP: Okay!

DS: And when He touched my eyes... There are phrases in the Scriptures that... For example, Lehi says, "He saw and heard much." In the Pearl of Great Price, book of Moses, Moses encounters the Lord, and he describes it as having seen "the ends of the Earth and all the things that went on from the beginning to the end." And it's just a summary statement. Paul describes it as "seeing and hearing unspeakable things." And so, understand that Scriptures bear testimony of such things being shown. They don't give you, necessarily, an adequate preparation so that in encountering it, you can say, "Yeah, yeah, that's exactly what happened!"

What happened: He touches my eyes, and everything (past, present, future) in a—the only word I can think of is—a cacophony. It's just vast, without beginning and end. It is a vast assortment. And it is not arranged chronologically. It is...

The prophecies of Isaiah, as he's parsing through, he will grab an event that occurred before his time, he will prophesy about things occurring in his time, and he will mix in things that will happen in the future in the same verse/in the same paragraph/in the same thought. And so, what Isaiah did—and Nephi copied the Isaiah prophecy and adopted it as his own—what Isaiah and Nephi did was to organize (what they got their hands around) thematically, so that the chronology is not anchored... We live in a linear world; it is unanchored from that. It is past, present, and future amalgamated into a singular statement. And so, the Lord, touching my eyes, this is happening, and to me... I mean, I live the kind of life that every other human lives—it's linear. I used to be 9 years old, and then I was 10; and I used to be 30, and then I'm 31; my life happens chronologically. And when I think about my life, I look back upon my life, and it's always organized linearly and chronologically—and this stuff is not. And I mean, I, literally, I... This sounds so stupid, I literally said to the Lord, "I can't take this in. You have to use words."

SP: Okay.

DS: I mean, it's like I'm talking to a child: "You have to use your words," you know? "I can't take it in." I mean, I'm protesting. "This is too much for a human to try and organize. I cannot take this in. You really have to TALK to me; you have to TELL me. This needs to be, like, the way you've communicated... It needs to go back to that." And the Lord responded to that. I mean, I'm in the midst of having this all unfold, but He still responded to that. And understand: I'm going to take and put into English words the reaction of the Lord to my protest. And if I were putting them into English words—the nearest I can come to what His response was—was, "Yeah, I get that a lot..."

SP: [laughter]

DS: ...like, "You're not the first one..."

SP: Okay...

DS: "You're not the first one to complain about that!"

SP: This is truly fascinating!

DS: Here is what that led me, then, to understand—and I believe this to be very, very important. I believe that when the Lord invests that into someone and exposes them to that, that the person to whom that has been given can either walk away, leave it alone, and say, "That's extraordinary! Someday on the other side of the veil, when I'm not confined to this body of dust, it'll be neat to live in an environment where that is possible." And that's it. But my read of the Scriptures tells me that there HAVE been those—and among them are Isaiah, on the one hand, as a clear example; Ezekiel, John the Revelator, Nephi—there are those who have prayerfully gone back to draw upon that and to try to parse it apart and to try to comprehend and to prayerfully take what had been bestowed and to turn it into something other than a cacophony and to turn it into comprehension. And I believe that when Joseph Smith wrote his letter (when he was in exile in that September 1843 time period)...

[responding to noise in the background] That's my...

SP: [indecipherable]

DS: ...ring-necked parrot whistling in the background.

I believe that when Joseph wrote that letter and described the events of the Restoration and all of the visitations that he had received, he was attempting to convey to us his way of parsing it out and trying to dispense it in a way that allowed others to try and get their hands around [indecipherable]...

SP: Well, this is the thing. I mean, you know, these historical figures that have had these encounters with the divine, and in your kind of relaying what their experiences would be... The difference is I had the opportunity to interview somebody who has had these experiences. I can't go—and maybe YOU can—but I can't talk to them. And I want to know just a few things about this, 'cuz this is one of the top questions people have had is that they want to know a few things.

Well, first of all, I want to know, is this a visitation? Or is this a visionary experience? If I were in the room with you, would I see Jesus? What does Jesus look like? And, you know, those are some basic questions people have that they really want to know.

DS: We haven't talked about the Gethsemane account...

SP: And that's key. That's key.

DS: Yeah, we haven't talked about that. But let me tell you...

Sometimes I think details are better left out than included because, you know, fools mock, but they'll mourn. So I'm still not gonna give altogether a complete...

SP: And you don't have to, but I think it's important that, you know, you've had this privilege to encounter the Savior.

DS: Sure, sure.

SP: And there are so many people out there who love Jesus, and they want to have that encounter with Him. And I just thought this could be an opportunity for it to be an encouraging, edifying word that you give the audience about the Savior. So when I'm asking you questions, it's really genuine because I know a lot of people just want to know. And I know that you have this... If you don't want to just talk about too many details, that's fine. But give us something that the people can kind of, like, "Okay, I get it now!" I... Maybe something you haven't said before, a descript... Some kind of description that you could share with the audience.

DS: Yeah, let me do that because it's probably useful to hear some of this. There was a morning when I woke up at a usual hour (it was a work day for me because I know that later I went to the office, and I worked), and almost always when I have a workday, my kids had a school day. And so, I got up at the usual hour, and it was odd because no one else in the house was awake. And you know, I have nine kids, and at any given moment, most of them are home. I got up. I took a shower. I was alone, despite the fact that the house was occupied. Everyone was asleep. And after I had taken a shower and I was preparing for the day, I encountered the Lord. Everyone in the house was in a deep sleep that was unusual. My belief is that had they been awake, they would have known what was going on.

SP: Okay!

DS: Therefore, they were in a deep sleep. And in that moment, there were things that were unfolded about the Lord and the Lord's sacrifice that literally brought me to tears. I was emotionally drained from the encounter. After it ended and after I had no more presence going on than an empty house with a bunch of people asleep in bed, when it ended, everyone woke up!

SP: Oh!

DS: And everyone went about their daily business. And I could not speak—not because I was deaf or mute; it was because I was so emotional that I had a very hard time saying anything. I was rather thunderstruck by it all. And so while everyone was getting ready and my wife was... I just bid people farewell, and I got in my vehicle and went to the office—and I cried on the way to the office because it had been so troubling. And when I tried to work that day, I didn't... I couldn't get anywhere. Fortunately, it was one of those paperwork days where I could punt, and I came home early. And when I came home, I sat on the fireplace in the far end of this room, and I just wept for a while. And, you know, my wife thought there was something really, really wrong. And when I could compose myself enough, I tried to explain to her some of it. But it was literally DAYS

before I could talk about it in a way that was coherent for her, because it was draining, it was troubling, and it allowed me to understand that what the Lord has done in order to redeem us is... The enormity of that sacrifice defies our ability to even articulate it. And the debt of gratitude that we owe to Him for what He has done is something that, you know, we talk about, we celebrate, and we are grateful for, but when it becomes deeply personal and in the way that He can convey, it's a troubling, troubling thing to us.

SP: Interesting.

DS: We don't deserve what He went through...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...to redeem us, and it's practically incomprehensible for us to get there.

Now, I do want to say something that you haven't asked...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...but thematically it fits right within the line of inquiry that you're asking about. And I assume that this would be very useful for the pure in heart.

I do think that every time I talk about something that is spiritual or that is otherworldly, that there are craven individuals out there who are imitative, who are looking to get attention, and all that they do with it is invent a better bunch of misrepresentations. But I'm gonna go ahead and risk that because, mostly, they're out for their own gain. I think I've made it clear that I get nothing out of anything I'm doing and that everything I do requires me to sacrifice. I don't get compensated, I pay to attend, I pay to transport, I bear my own way in life, and no one... I never solicit for myself. (I do for other causes that help people.) But for myself, if I can't sacrifice, then I won't do it. I don't get gain.

So, having said that, there was an encounter with the Lord... You can find examples of this in Scripture, too. And these are real. You find it with the twelve apostles in the New Testament, you find it with the disciples that Christ called in the Book of Mormon (Third Nephi), where the Lord essentially says (and this is a paraphrase of Scripture to a person who arrives at this specific point in the progress of the Lord's plan of redemption; you arrive at a point where the Lord says, to paraphrase), "Ask of me what you will, and it shall be granted to you." And we have the responses of various apostles.

Now, I got an encounter with the Lord in which that opportunity presented itself, "Ask of me what you will, and it shall be granted to you." And whether this was the best answer or the right answer, it was truly, at that moment, authentically, genuinely MY answer. I said, "I have not come thus far by doing my own will. I ask nothing of you." And I meant it; I felt it. In my heart, that was the most genuine, heartfelt response I'd ever given to any question posed to me at any time.

That was a moment when something very, very startling occurred—because I am standing in the presence of the Lord, the Lord is addressing me, and the two of us are in

this conversation. And I've just told Him, "I want nothing. I haven't come thus far by doing my own will. I'm content." And I meant it. I was genuinely content.

At that moment, it was as if a veil lifted, and now there were numerous others who were there who apparently had been there all along...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...and who had been listening, watching, eavesdropping, participating. And at that moment, it was as if a veil that had been there disappeared. And now there are a number of others who are present. And the reaction... Again, these are communications that come that I have to convert into English. So I'm gonna use English words, that...

SP: I'm just really curious, was Joseph Smith there?

DS: There were a host of others there.

SP: "A host of others." Could you identify them?

DS: I could for you if I needed to. But let's stay with what I'm about to say.

SP: Sure, understood.

DS: Because the reaction that came was genuine approval:

"This is what we've been looking for."

"At last."

"We can use this."

"Now we have found it."

"This will do."

"We approve."

If... I did not understand, first of all, why they were there; second of all, why they had any say in this matter; and thirdly, why they were reacting the way they were. But the overall impression that I had, as I reflect upon it, is that the Lord had one view of what He thought He could achieve using me—despite all my limitations, despite all my inadequacies, He for some reason had some level of confidence in me—but that there were numerous others who were behind the veil who have a stake in their posterity or maybe in the future (I don't know what their investment was or is), but they were there skeptical, and at that moment, the skepticism was at last resolved.

SP: Okay. And this was like a Heavenly Council, wouldn't you say?

DS: That's exactly what it was.

SP: It was a Heavenly Council, wow.

DS: And the reaction was one of approval or... I mean, “This is what we've been looking for. This will work. We can use this. This...” The overall reaction was like minds just got changed...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...like attitudes just got altered; like whereas before, “not so much,” now it's “this is something with which the work that we need to have accomplished can now move forward...”

SP: Now this sounds SO significant, I need to know, what date did this happen?

DS: Uhh, I... Honestly, I haven't talked about it in public, and I haven't written... I... It's all in my journal; I would have to go back and read and research...

SP: I'm just really curious to see, like, was anything else happening in the world events, signs (maybe) that maybe other people were seeing? Yeah, I'd be curious.

DS: That's a great question! Because there are—as it turns out—there are a lot of correlations between things in the world...

SP: Right.

DS: ...and things that I've encountered. But I haven't gone back and tracked that. And now that you've raised that up, I probably will...

SP: Yeah.

DS: ...and I'm probably gonna regret having talked about it.

SP: Oh, no, this is okay. Hey, I just... One thing I wanted to ask you...

[crosstalk]

DS: The answer to one question leads to ten more, and sometimes... There are many, many things that... People who are sincere and attentive and who are familiar with their Bible—I mean, even if all they're familiar with is the Old Testament—if they're familiar with their Bible, if they're familiar with both the Old and the New Testament, and in particular, if they're attentive to the Restoration Scriptures, much of what is sacred and is holy and is found in Scripture is delicious to them, and they prize it, and they value it. They don't mock it. They don't take, you know, “wheels within wheels” of Ezekiel and turn it into a carnival ride and mock and ridicule. The problem with discussing things that are sacred with those for whom little or nothing is sacred...

SP: Yeah.

DS: ...is that they then mock at their own peril.

SP: Right.

DS: You know, Nephi ended his record by saying, “Look, I'm gonna seal up this record with my testimony, and you're gonna be held to account in the day of judgment for how you respond to what I'm writing here because I do this with God's approval.” So when you do or convey information that has as its source God Himself, then the burden shifts from the one who is reporting the news to the one who hears the news, and they become accountable for responding to it.

I know that there are a number of people who are very serious about their evangelical faith and who live good lives who, being warned with a message that is current and modern and being spoken by someone who can say, “I have been in the presence of the Lord,” is off-putting to them. And what arises first is both skepticism and the suspicion that the person is in this and telling this story somehow to aggrandize themselves.

SP: Yeah.

DS: I can tell you that I have never had an encounter with the Lord that did not leave me feeling foolish, feeling inadequate, feeling ill-fitted for the Lord's purposes. I do not think I'm much of anything. In fact, at times I am completely puzzled by why I would be asked to engage in accomplishing anything that is sacred or on the Lord's errand because I am as ordinary... I have said in multiple meetings to multiple audiences that people in the audience have lived better lives than I had. And I meant it. And if I were guessing right now, I would say to YOU that your life is probably lived in as a better example of the Christian ideal than has my life been lived as an example of the Christian ideal. But I take into account (when I say that), the things that I did before I was baptized, the things that I did before I felt myself “born again,” the things that I did when I was, you know, struggling to just be an onlooker in the Baptist faith, trying to do what my mom taught me that I ought to do. Since being baptized, I've tried to live the Christian ideal. But again, there are people whose lives—if you are looking at them top-to-bottom, day in/day out—you would say, “They live a better life than does Denver.” And I readily admit that. I don't think I'm much of anything. But I do think that the encounters I've had are real...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...the Lord is real, and that your confidence ought to be in Him. And even if you think that He makes a bad choice in me, for whatever reason, maybe He does that deliberately because, in His view, we do tend to want more from one another than we're able to give. So look to Him, because He's the giver of every good gift. We aren't much more than the receiver and abuser and unappreciative recipient of the good gifts that He does give. And so, I hesitate in talking about things that are sacred and holy.

SP: Sure. Well, I wanted to ask you this, because I think maybe... A lot of people have had visionary experiences with the Savior. Many artists, under inspiration, have created paintings and artworks. So the question I have for you is: Is there a particular art piece of artwork or a painting of the Savior that you look at and say, “They got it right!”?

DS: Yes, there is one, but I don't want to go there!

SP: Okay.

DS: But you mentioned a lot of people who get inspiration and who have had wonderful encounters. There's a verse in the Book of Mormon that I want to read. And I... This ought to make Mormons more broad-minded than they are. But unfortunately, Mormons aren't.

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore, we see that the Lord doth counsel in his wisdom, according to that which is just and true. (Alma 15:13 RE)

That verse in the Book of Mormon suggests that there are people who are having authentically profound, religiously valid, true encounters across Evangelical/Catholic/Islam/Buddhist/Hindu lines that originate from the Father of Lights, the Giver of good gifts, and they are REAL—and that we should not assume that because we have received some portion of His word that we can chauvinistically say, “Yeah, we own salvation, but others do not.” Everything is going to be brought together in one, at some point. And if you were going to be fair about things, you would say the Western/Christian mind is task-oriented and thing-oriented; and the Eastern/Hindu/Buddhist/Taoist mind is virtue-minded and conceptual, and it's the things of the heart and the spirit and the feeling. And that the coarseness of the West and the spiritualism of the East are really fragments of ONE; they're not whole until you unify them all together in Christ. And that there is a... There was a Savior. He did come. He did sacrifice Himself to fulfill the law that requires justice. He allowed Himself in innocence to be slain as if He were a sinner. That offended the law of justice, and it made possible mercy. And a merciful God (who paid a price that is incomprehensibly large to us) is not going to waste that sacrifice by bestowing it in a stingy way. It's going to be spread as far and as wide—as mercifully—as it is possible for Him to do. And if you get some portion of His word that tells you virtue consists in treating your fellow man as you would like yourself to be treated (which is one of the principles He articulated in the Sermon on the Mount and in the sermon at Bountiful), then you've lived a precept that is high and noble and virtuous.

And one thing that the Apostle Paul mentions in his letter to the Corinthians is being baptized for the dead. And one thing that Joseph Smith taught (and the LDS Church practices in their temples) is being baptized for the dead. If it is true that you live a virtue that reflects Christ's teaching of doing unto others as you would be done by, and you've lived that, and you find that the author of mercy is Jesus Christ and you're willing to accept baptism, then the letter to the Corinthians and the practice of the Mormons allows someone to tie into the baptismal requirement. And so, how broad and how wide and how merciful will a Lord who sacrificed Himself as a lamb without blemish be willing to apply His Atonement in order to save as many as possible? And I think we tend to narrow our focus and to say, “As long as the door to salvation is wide enough for ME to squeeze through, even if it's a tight fit, then I'm perfectly content to squeeze through that door and then shut it behind me and say, ‘Let all the Muslims and let all the Hindus and let all the Catholics and let all... You know, those Evangelicals even bother me because

I'm Mormon. Let them all stay out and go to hell!" But the Lord, I think, has a contrary view and that...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...verse in the Book of Mormon suggests to me that God's Spirit out-pouring and His light is extended as far and as wide as He can reach to every nation, and everyone gets SOME of it.

SP: Okay, this is great. Now, I want to be respectful of your time, and I just want to ask cover a couple of things and then I people have been asking about. And basically, one of the things is that while you have gone out of your way to emphasize the decentralized nature of your movement ("it's not a church"), you offer three elements that effectively define the church: [one,] authority to perform ordinances; [two,] maintenance and distribution of Scripture; and three, community in which to affiliate with other adherents. Can you concede that although your movement is not a church, it does quack like a church?

DS: Not in the sense of any denomination that exists...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...because every organization has boundaries that require you to acknowledge your status "in" or "out" of, to the exclusion of others.

SP: Okay.

DS: And I have said, if a Catholic priest wants to be baptized by us, I would baptize the Catholic priest, and I would be content to allow him to continue...

[crosstalk]

SP: ...as a Catholic priest—but they would need to be baptized into your movement, though.

DS: Yes, they would need to be baptized in order to accept an ordinance. You can be a Methodist and accept baptism. You can be a Baptist. You can be whatever you want to be in addition to accepting this message. It's not jealous in the sense of a church being jealous.

SP: Okay.

DS: It's not structural; there is no hierarchy. The purpose is to lead people to a point of spiritual maturity so that we're not teams divided against one another...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...but we come with open arms, willing to accept any who are willing to acknowledge the Lord and be received by Him.

SP: So this is not an incorporated church. This is not a physical church. This doesn't have the hierarchy. But could you argue that it's spiritually a church?

DS: As the Lord defines a church in the revelation of Joseph Smith, it would fit that definition...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...but as the world defines a church, it doesn't work.

SP: Right.

DS: We gather in fellowships that are informal, and people pay tithes into the fellowship. But the money that gets paid in as tithing then gets turned around and distributed to people who are in need, first of all within that fellowship, and then... I know that there was one particular fellowship that didn't have any needs with the group that they were gathering tithes [with], and they had accumulated a lot of money in the fellowship, and they had learned about someone that who was handicapped and had a pretty significant transportation need and an inability to get anywhere; they used the aggregated tithe money to go out and buy a handicap van to relieve this handicapped person of the inability to get transportation from place to place. And the purpose of the tithing isn't to support a ministry. In fact, if you're gonna be a minister, you're gonna have to sacrifice in order to accomplish it. There's a website, I think it's called bornofwater.com or bornofwater.org. In any way In any event, that website allows people, wherever they are in the world, to request baptism, and someone will—on their own nickel—travel wherever they need to travel to perform the ordinance and then to return. And no one needs to compensate them for the cost of the sacrifice.

SP: Well, it sounds to me like you're a New Testament church.

DS: Pretty much! It's pretty much modeled on the New Testament system in the sense that they were really divergent groups that... I mean...

SP: Yeah...

DS: They were...

SP: ...and they were decentralized.

DS: Yes, yes! And not only decentralized, but they were markedly different from congregation to congregation and place to place. And the twelve apostles were sent out in twelve different directions with twelve different messages that were based upon their experience with the Lord, and they created systems of worship that were reflective. And I say, "twelve," because I include Paul within that and not Judas.

SP: Got it.

So I guess I want to... Again, I don't want to take too much more of your time. But I want to talk a little bit about "end times." On the 10th of September, 2011, the Lord told you

that Your name shall be called David (T&C 162:1). Are you the long-prophesied end-time Davidic servant?

DS: I don't... First of all, I don't know. Second of all, I don't claim that. And thirdly, to me, the name wasn't welcome. I didn't view that as a positive. I viewed that as... I was thinking of King David, the adulterer who killed Uriah. I had taught the Old Testament as a gospel doctrine teacher, and one of my heroes in the Old Testament was Joab. Between Joab (who literally was the only person that scared David; he threatened him if he didn't stop mourning over Absalon, you know, "Clean yourself up! You've got men out there who fought for you and your kingdom. Stop mourning the death of this rebellious son!" Joab, against the orders of David, ran Absalon through with the sword. He was a hero to me, Joab) and then Nathan, the prophet (I named a son of mine "Nathan." Nathan the prophet went into David and told him the story of the poor man with the one ewe lamb and the rich man with his flocks who came and stole his lamb and slew it to make a feast, and David said, "That man shall surely die." And Nathan the prophet says, "Thou art the man. That's you, David." This is a king who has murdered one of the captains of his army being confronted by Nathan the prophet)... David, to me, was the far end of the spectrum. He was not the ideal.

Joab? Gimme that name.

SP: I see.

DS: Nathan? Gimme that name.

David? David, the loathsome, indulgent king who betrayed the trust of his general, who killed to cover his adultery? Not a good name.

So, I have said this, and I mean this, and I think this is the right answer:

Someone is going to accomplish some things on the Lord's errand. The accomplishment of the things that the Lord seeks to have done IS the identifier. Sitting back and claiming that you are something, having accomplished nothing, is not only vain and arrogant and foolish, it's completely unjustified. There's not a person breathing—you and me included—who cannot fail the Lord, who cannot turn in their weakness and in their depravity to doing something that makes them utterly unfit for the work.

I haven't accomplished anything that would justify calling me much more than someone who can testify that the Lord lives, He's gracious, and that He is trustworthy and faithful. If I get some things done someday and it proves to be of value to the Lord and for the salvation of our fellow man, then you can say the Lord used a fool to accomplish some good things.

SP: Okay.

DS: But I haven't done that yet, and someone is going to...

SP: I see.

DS: ...and when they do, it could be anyone. And I will salute whoever gets it done.

SP: So we are... Many people believe we are living in the last days. Within the context of your movement, there is apparently going to possibly, one day, a temple be built. If that happens, does that mean the return of the Savior is imminent?

DS: Assuming that the temple built is populated by men and women of faith, virtue, and cleanliness before the Lord, yes!

SP: Okay. So as an Evangelical, I just want to ask, so should... If that temple gets built, should we be paying close attention to what's happening in the world?

DS: I would say yes. I would say that, all along, there have been some milestones that have been achieved all along the way. And while the Earth has paid very little notice to some of them (and it's clearly not understood, many of them), I've taken note of them, and I've tried to keep a faithful record in a journal. And there have been signs all along the way. Things have corresponded. And yes, I believe if a temple gets built and gets accepted by the Lord (and it has to be accepted by Him in order to be His house), then I would say, "Pay attention to goings-on."

SP: And should we pay attention to the physical, like, location of where it's built?

DS: Probably.

SP: Okay.

DS: Yeah.

SP: I mean, like, would there be significance in the particular place where the Lord would choose, right?

DS: Yeah, I think there's significance to everything the Lord does, yeah, every single thing. I think the exile from the Mississippi river banks out to a barren, salty desert (that is now becoming increasingly more toxic), all of that stuff is deliberate...

SP: Okay.

DS: ...planned, and the Lord speaks... He speaks in everything. All things bear testimony of Him. If you want, perhaps, the most perfect sermon about Jesus Christ, just look at the life of a monarch butterfly.

SP: Okay.

DS: The whole thing, from beginning to end is an allegory of our Lord.

SP: That's really cool. Monarch butterfly...

DS: The pupa...

SP: The King!

DS: ...the chrysalis, to the monarch, to the migration across continents. A butterfly! And I know when it will not snow here when the monarch butterflies return.

SP: Okay, so if you build a temple, do you think you will have an image of a monarch butterfly on the temple?

DS: Boy, I should, shouldn't I?

SP: I think it would be a good idea!

DS: That might be a great idea!

SP: Well, Denver, you know, I had a blast talking with you today. Now, I know you don't normally do interviews, but thank you so much for honoring me and this program for coming on today.

DS: Well, I listened to a few of your interviews and enjoyed them before committing. You talked to a fellow about Mormonism and Masonry. I have a lot I could say about that interview...

SP: Come back on!

DS: ...which I enjoyed, by the way.

SP: What's that?

DS: I thought it was very good. And someday I might just plunge into that area and articulate what it is that I think those similarities might truly mean. But that's another day, another interview...

SP: Yeah!

DS: ...a bigger subject. Anyway, I enjoyed it; relatively painless! But I am gonna go to work now.

SP: All right, sir. Hey, thank you so much again!

Folks, I just want to remind you to: Don't forget to like and subscribe and hit the notification button when a new video comes out. We are available in all the major podcast formats; make sure you give us good ratings there. Mormonbookreviews.com is our merch store. Support us on PayPal and Patreon.

Denver, you have an open invitation to come on the program anytime you want to talk about whatever you want. Thanks for coming on today.

DS: Well, you're welcome. And I do want to point out that I've talked to you about some serious and spiritual things that I have not spoken with some other interviewers about, and that is because of the spirit you bring with you and the propriety and the decorum that you deal with sacred things, which some others are not capable of.

SP: Thank you, Denver. I appreciate that. I appreciate that very much.

Folks, thanks for sharing your time with us today.

2022.08.20 Pure in Heart, Wise, Noble, Virtuous...

Hildale, Utah
August 20, 2022

DENVER: I've got this talk to give [placing a large pile of papers on the podium].

You've been sitting awhile. Why don't you stand up and stretch before I inflict another long-seated session on you? These are better chairs than some that have been used in talks I've given. And I assume if there's a chiropractor present, that they'll make themselves known as the afternoon wears on.

I don't care how long you stay standing; stretch until you feel able to sit again. I'm gonna go ahead and start.

I haven't come here to ask anything from you. I don't want any donation, nor for you to join anything. I just want to talk and hope to say something of interest to you.

For too long those who practice plural marriage have been looked upon as deceived enemies to be shunned. Shunning and excommunicating are how various church institutions prevent discourse and exchanging ideas. It's rooted in fear. And fear is the opposite of faith.

I have faith in Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord, and I don't fear having a dialogue with those who practice plural marriage. I've studied the subject that divides us from one another. I think I have reached a correct conclusion about it.

Whether you believe it was originally begun by Joseph Smith (perhaps as early as the 1830s) or was introduced by Brigham Young in 1852, it began in secret, protected from the expected opposition by lying to the public and denying the truth of it.

Like its beginning, it ended with lying to the public again. The 1890 "Manifesto" was a lie, intended to facilitate statehood for Utah. LDS plural marriages did not really end until April of 1904. The plan was to obtain statehood, become self-governing, and then adopt laws that permitted plural marriage. If pledges were made along the way to obtain statehood that were lies, it was worth the temporary difficulties and compromises. All would be fixed by statehood. The federal government, however, was aware of this intent and would not permit it. Before being granted statehood, the church would need to do more than compromise. They would need to utterly repudiate the practice, hence Official Declaration 1. They would need to "put it behind them." But it was a long time AFTER issuing Official Declaration #1 that the church (the LDS Church) came to the realization that it had to be abandoned.

There are libraries of material written about the beginning, spread, discontinuance, and opposition to this practice by the LDS Church. And there are libraries of material used to justify continuing the practice by various splinter groups after the LDS Church abandoned it. It requires a great deal of study—for me it took decades—to become informed enough to make what I think to be a correct decision about the events.

When I joined the LDS Church in 1973, the missionary who baptized me told me about the LDS General Conference that happened every October and April. I was baptized on September 10, 1973, and I was able to travel from New Hampshire and attend the October 1973 Semi-Annual General Conference of the Church a month after I was baptized. I stayed in Centerville [at] the home of the missionary who baptized me (because he managed to get his mother to invite me to come). Each morning during the conference, we got up for breakfast (which his mother prepared for the family), and when we entered the kitchen, the chairs were all turned away from the table so we could kneel, using the chair for a seat for our folded arms, to pray over both the meal and the coming day. The missionary had a lovely family, and I brought good tidings from them back to him when I returned following the conference.

Years later when I was a student at BYU and the returned missionary was working in Salt Lake City, we would go to lunch together. During one of those lunch discussions, I learned that his mother had become a plural wife while he was on his mission. He was opposed to her doing that but shared with me a selection of materials his mother had studied that led her to accept the principle of plural wives. This began my search into the subject.

At first, I was persuaded that it was a true teaching, restored through Joseph Smith, and would be part of our eternal families. Like many members of the LDS Church, I accepted section 132 as authentic, although the church and the law prohibited its practice. I thought it was important, and my study of it has continued ever since (now nearly five decades later). As recently as 2011, I still thought the practice originated with Joseph Smith and was authentic.

In the last few years, a great deal of new historical material has become publicly available. As a result, I've changed my mind. I no longer believe it to be attributable to Joseph Smith, nor to be an authentic part of the Restoration, nor approved by God. But I assure you, I do understand that Fundamentalists sincerely believe otherwise. I don't question that conviction, and I don't question that you believe it to have come from God through Joseph Smith. I just don't share that conviction. I think you've inherited a tradition from your misled fathers and have, no doubt, entered into the relationship relying on that tradition. But in the Book of Mormon, "traditions" were almost always "false" or wicked.

I doubt you'll change your mind without a great deal of study and effort. That, however, will be up to you. It would be foolish for me to think this talk will accomplish that, and I'm not attempting to do that today. I only hope you'll take advantage of the recently available historical documentation to investigate carefully this issue.

If you reach the same conclusion as I have, then I want to caution you about abandoning your current family. The Scriptures tell us: ...women have claim on their husbands until they are taken, ...All children have claim upon their parents until they are of age... (T&C 79:1; see also D&C 83:2,4). And again, But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, [he's] denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 1:13 RE; see also 1 Timothy 5:8 LE). Therefore, you cannot

abandon the obligation you have toward your wives, nor can you parents neglect your duty to your children.

If you become convinced the practice of plural wives is not of God, then keep your family intact, and teach your children against it. Do not let your posterity continue to believe in a false tradition. It was required for the believing Nephites to teach the Lamanites of the errors of their traditions and to bring them to understand the truth. If you awaken to the error of practicing plural marriage, teach your children against that false tradition while you stay loyal to the obligation you have to your family.

As I studied the issue, it was apparent the chronology of section 132 was not and is not known, other than it was purportedly put into a lost writing for the first time on July 12, 1843. Then, once written, the original was destroyed and only a copy in the handwriting of Joseph Kingsbury (who was not present when the revelation was received) survives as a copy of whatever was first revealed. The first portion of section 132 may have been written as early as 1829 (under the church's theory) and inspired by the material in Jacob chapter 2 in the Book of Mormon. That seems more likely than by the later translation of the Old Testament, as LDS tradition holds. Because the text is very inconsistent in places, I speculated there were potentially five separate portions from different dates, later consolidated into one final document. Based on that assumption, I tried to make sense of the document.

However, because of its internal inconsistencies, I suspected it had been altered between the July 1843 date and the 1852 date when it was published. I assumed the contradictions meant that one or the other—but not both—could be trusted. In an effort to sort out what could be trusted and what was an alteration, I published my attempt to salvage a corrected version. A copy of that failed attempt to edit the text of section 132 is going to be attached to this talk when it's published. (And by the way, I have printed about 25 copies of this talk with the Appendix that I refer to, and I'm gonna leave them here today for anyone that wants a copy. It'll also be made available as a downloadable PDF from my website after today.) Ultimately, it seemed to me that the document could not be fixed; at least not by me.

From 2014 to 2017, a committee worked on restoring the Restoration Scriptures and eliminating errors and improper additions that had crept in. As the effort to restore the Scriptures into the form Joseph Smith intended for them to read, God commanded us to discard section 132, and we received a replacement text by revelation. That replacement text is now in our Scriptures as part of the Teaching and Commandments [in] section 157. (T&C 157:34-43). (These are a copy of the Scriptures I brought with me today.) A copy of that section is in the Appendix of this talk.

I have not been casual about evaluating the marriage practice that the Fundamentalists have embraced. This is a subject I've treated with seriousness and respect. I don't condemn you for believing what I too once believed about this matter. To be clear, however, I do not believe it originated with either God or Joseph Smith. It was a later-introduced error.

Joseph Smith was comforted by the Lord in Liberty Jail by these words:

The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall [hold] you in derision, and hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors. (T&C 139:7; see also D&C 122:1-3)

I believe Joseph Smith was pure in heart, wise, noble, and virtuous, and that's why the Lord could commend his counsel and blessings to those who are similarly pure in heart, wise, noble, and virtuous. It is important, I think, to recognize that part of being wise, noble, and virtuous is to be truthful and honest.

The Book of Mormon warns us about a number of un-virtuous characteristics that define the damned:

...woe unto the deaf that will not hear, for they shall perish. Woe unto the blind that will not see, for they shall perish also. Woe unto the uncircumcised of heart, for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at the last day. Woe unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell. (2 Nephi 6:10 RE, emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 9:31-34 LE)

Churches ask their members to not listen to anyone but them. This is the “deafness” of those who will not hear. Mormon factions ask their members to look away, and refuse to see anything that challenges their teachings. This is the “blindness” the Book of Mormon warns against. I ask you to hear, as I've been willing to hear. I ask you to see, as I've been willing to see. Hearing and seeing have cost me my membership in the LDS Church. If it costs you your membership in your chosen organization, then take comfort in knowing that you're in company with Lehi, Nephi, Abinadi, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni, among many others. You join company with those who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah when He lived in Jerusalem.

Churches use fear to make you deaf, blind, and uncircumcised of heart. They claim to have authority from God, and if you depart from their umbrella of authority, you risk God's anger. They claim you cannot be saved apart from their authority. So, they say, “Be afraid! Be very afraid!” But as Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “Fear not,” because what He offers is much greater than what churches and institutions offer. He intends to save those whose ears hear or, in other words, who are humble enough to allow Him to teach. He intends to save those who open their eyes to see or, in other words, those who are not blinded by the craftiness of religious pretenders. He will save those who can recognize when a witness has been sent by Him, as I have been.

Following Joseph Smith's death, Mormonism splintered into several groups, the most successful branch being led by Brigham Young. Brigham Young's branch is most distinguished from the others by their public adoption of plural wives in 1852. It was by abandoning that practice that resulted in further splintering Mormonism.

When Wilford Woodruff adopted Official Declaration 1, it was to mislead the public. It was not to actually end the practice. The LDS Church just moved plural marriages underground. After the Manifesto, marriages were performed clandestinely (or in Mexico—where they were legal—or on the water between California and Catalina Island, in one instance).

As a consequence of the Reed Smoot Senate Confirmation Hearings and President Joseph F. Smith being called to testify under oath in that proceeding, the underground practice finally had to end. Because he was cornered by questions from the Senators, Joseph F. Smith had to either admit the truth or end the practice. He chose to end it. In March of 1904, he denied under oath such marriages continued. Then in April, he ended it. His letter of April 6, 1904 states:

Inasmuch as there are numerous reports in circulation that plural marriages have been entered into contrary to the official declaration of President Woodruff, of September 26, 1890, commonly called the Manifesto, which was issued by President Woodruff and adopted by the Church at its general conference, October 6, 1890, which forbade any marriage violative of the law of the land; I, Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, hereby affirm and declare that no such marriages have been solemnized with the sanction, consent or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, and...

That's very artful language. It's kind of true 'cuz he would send them off without permission stated verbally. It was artful.

...and I hereby announce that all such marriages are prohibited, and if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize or enter into any such marriage he will be deemed in transgression against the Church and will be liable to be dealt with, according to the rules and regulations thereof, and excommunicated therefrom.

Then Francis Lyman presented a resolution, and the resolution was adopted by unanimous vote of the conference, and so it ended.

It was this "Second Manifesto" that caused the resignation in 1905 of LDS apostle Matthias F. Cowley and the excommunication of apostle John W. Taylor in 1911. Between the first and second Manifestos, LDS authorities sealed plural marriages in secret, while church leaders lied about the continuation of the practice. The official version of LDS events, therefore, establishes that plural marriages began with nine years of church leaders lying about the practice and ended with fourteen years of lying by the church's leadership. It's no wonder that you, like me a few years ago, believe it should continue. So many years of LDS Church lying makes it difficult to find the truth.

The wording of a revelation from God often requires careful, ponderous, and solemn thought to discover its meaning. God's word should not be given only a perfunctory reading. Or as Joseph's letter from Liberty Jail explained it:

...because the things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. (T&C 138:18)

From prison, Joseph wrote about how much more might have been accomplished if believers in the Restoration had taken salvation more seriously. He wrote about the Saints of that day (and composed words that are relevant if not altogether applicable to us today):

How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world, to hold the keys of the mysteries of those things [which] have been kept hid from the foundation until now, of which some have tasted a little, and which many of them are to be poured down from Heaven upon the heads of babes, ...the weak, [the] obscure, [the] despis[ed] ones of this earth. (Ibid. ¶19)

I hope that you are willing to be careful, solemn, and ponderous about the truth. We've all wasted enough time already. I know I have. Please take seriously the words given to you today.

In the years Joseph Smith led the church, he established the offices of elder, priest, teacher, deacon, apostle, high priest, president, seventy, and patriarch. These were organizational offices and not priesthood. There were, in the church during Joseph Smith's lifetime, two forms of priesthood. As the LDS Scriptures explain: There are, in the church, two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical... (D&C 107:1).

There are only two priesthoods in the LDS Church, or at least there were at the time that Joseph Smith stated that. What their condition may be today is another matter that I'm not gonna talk about. But there were only two priesthoods! There weren't 10 or 16! This is a list of church offices:

elder

priest

teacher

deacon

apostle

bishop

high priest

president

seventy

patriarch

Relief Society President

Sunday School President

Elder's Quorum President

Gospel Doctrine Teacher

Young Men's President

Young Women's President

...and so on.

The LDS Church, like your various Fundamentalist factions, are merely organizations and not the priesthood.

Joseph Smith organized offices and gave them authority to preside. However, church leaders in 1838 turned on Joseph. Their positions of authority gave them credibility. When they signed affidavits falsely claiming Joseph was a threat to Missouri non-Mormons, he was imprisoned on charges of treason. Before his imprisonment, Joseph insisted on the church authorities being obeyed. But after reflecting on the abuse of church authority that led to his imprisonment, Joseph removed all authority of the priesthood to control or impose upon others. Here's the new standard to keep in mind when someone claiming authority demands your submission:

Behold there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and that the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it['s] true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or... gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it has withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood or the authority of that man. Behold, ere he is aware he is left...to kick against the pricks, to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God. We['ve] learned by sad experience that it['s] the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, ...by love unfeigned, by kindness, by pure knowledge which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy and without guile. (T&C 139:5-6, emphasis added; see also D&C 121:34-42)

I've given several talks about priesthood and authority claims made by others. Rather than make any claims myself, I only teach truths to allow you to decide the matter unencumbered by any demand that you respect authority or "keys." Gentiles are prone to following claims of authority. As the Lord explained to His apostles,

You know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you. But who[so]ever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And who[so]ever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life, a ransom for many. (Matthew 10:3 RE, emphasis added; Matthew 20:23-28 LE)

If this was good enough for our Lord, then I cannot in good conscience claim more. I am here to be His servant and to minister teachings that come from Him. I do not demand your respect, but I hope to persuade you by the things I know and are able to say. Those who claim to have "keys" are largely ignorant of even the meaning of the term.

The word keys is horribly misunderstood. I have made it a practice to not use the word because of all the foolish and vain ideas that have accumulated around it. Joseph used the term in a variety of ways: for example, to mean authority, or opportunity, and in others it refers to a correct idea. This is the most important meaning [to have a correct idea, as a key concept]. The term in the context of priesthood is completely absent from the Book of Mormon, and that book is the keystone of our religion, containing the fullness of the gospel. The only time the word keys is referenced in the Book of Mormon, it refers to a physical set of keys to unlock a door to the treasury controlled by Laban (1 Nephi 1:18). Although Joseph used the term often and meant many things by it, the challenge is to understand priesthood without being distracted by a poorly defined, and often used term. Mormon institutions now use the term most often to connote their exclusive right, license or control. The LDS Handbook of Instructions states the following, "Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood leaders to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on Earth." This definition is the opposite of the way that scripture directs priesthood be used (see T&C 139:5-7). The LDS Handbook approach turns this scripture upside down and backwards: by virtue of priesthood keys they have the right to direct, control [or] exercise influence over others. Mormon institutions in general all use their preferred meaning of the term keys to denounce anything or anyone they view as a rival. That's nonsense, and I avoid using the term because of [the] widespread abusive practice. (The Holy Order, Oct. 29, 2017, paper p. 1)

A "key" unlocks information or opens your understanding. It is tied to gaining an insight. Today men claiming to hold keys almost always take away light and truth and spread darkness.

The continuation of plural wives is related to claims about “keys” or “holding keys to seal” marriages. No matter which fundamentalist group is involved, the claim to have keys is tied to an incident that purportedly took place the night of September 26-27 of 1886. The incident was reported to Arnold Boss by Lorin C. Woolley 43 years later on September 22, 1929. An extended explanation of why I do not believe the incident happened was published on my website in a series of posts titled: “Sorting Things Out,” which has parts 1 through 5 (published from July 23rd through July 27th of 2012), which are all included in a chapter of the same name in Volume 5, Remembering the Covenant (pp. 1907-1927). I’ve also included those as an appendix to the talk that’s available, and you can read (if you download it or if you get a copy today).

As to the history of plural wives, the libraries of material I referred to earlier deserve very careful inspection. One key to understanding (and I use that word correctly in this context) is to look at what existed as proof on or before June 27th of 1844. If you do that, you have a great deal of evidence that Joseph Smith did not practice, condone, or introduce plural wives. Instead, you have a great deal of public and private declarations that denounce and oppose it.

The only proof that ties Joseph Smith to the introduction of plural wives into the Restoration is a single document. That document was a copy, not an original; and that copy was hidden—if you trust the official story—for at least nine years, eight of those years after the murder of Joseph and Hyrum.

Brian C. Hales is the one who has most researched and written about the record in our day. He published a three-volume discussion of his findings. And he’s sympathetic to plural wives and believes Joseph Smith introduced it. Here’s what Brian Hales found from his extensive research into the subject, after identifying section 132:

Beyond this revelation, no other document exists in which Joseph Smith specifically discusses the principle.

...Establishing the Prophet’s precise instructions is difficult due to a lack of contempora[neous] accounts recording Joseph Smith’s specific teachings on these lofty topics. Furthermore, a challenge arises regarding what sources should be considered as authoritative for defining his theology...

And he says (in a lamentation):

...Unfortunately, no accounts of a public discourse discussing plural marriage have been found. (Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Volume 3: Theology, Brian C. Hales, Greg Koford Books, (Salt Lake City 2013) pp. 3, 69, 70)

That last statement by Hales is absolutely false! Joseph said a lot! Numerous firsthand accounts exist of letters, of publications in the Times and Seasons, of notes from discourses, of letters... Numerous documents exist! It is extraordinarily well-documented! Except they ALL denounce plural wives! And so Hales’s blindspot in what he has written is because he’s rooting for a certain outcome, that is, to vindicate what he believes to be true, namely, having plural wives. If he were being honest about it, he

would say, “There’s an enormous record of information dealing with the subject of plural wives coming out of the mouth of Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Emma Smith. Unfortunately, they all denounce it. They all repudiate it. They all look for who is practicing it.” Joseph Smith brought case after case before the high council in Nauvoo to have tried for their membership those people who were practicing plural wives if he could discover their identities. And when they held a trial and when they found out who had been participating, then they brought in the next participant and so tried to root it out.

These are quotes from the Joseph Smith Papers:

October 5, 1843, Joseph Smith journal entry: “...eve[ning] at home walked up and down st. with scribe.—and gave inst[r]uction to try those who were preaching teaching or preaching the doctrin of plurality of wives. on this Law. Joseph forbids it. and the practice ther[e]of— No man shall have but one wife.”

October 15th, Joseph Smith journal entry: Joseph preaching says, “...stop this spinning street yarn and talking about spiritual wives... I proclaim in the name of the Lord...that I will have nothing but virtue and integrity and uprightness...”

February 1st of 1844 in the Times and Seasons, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, designating themselves as “Presidents of [the] Church” put the following NOTICE in the paper:

As we lately have been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of La[n]peer, State of Michigan. This is to inform him and the Church in general, that [he’s] been cut off from the church, for his iniquity; and [he’s] further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges. (Times & Seasons, Photo Reprint of the Original, (Salt Lake City: 2008), Volume 5, p. 423)

February 15th of 1844 in an article “WHO SHALL BE OUR NEXT PRESIDENT”: After recommending Joseph Smith to be elected, the article states, “Joseph Smith will not ‘marry spiritual wives;’ nor commit any other outrageous act this election to help any party with, you must get some other persons to perform these kind of offences for you...” (ibid p. 441).

March 15th of 1844, Times and Seasons...

Joseph Smith... I’m skipping a bunch.

Joseph Smith advocated for and persuaded the Nauvoo City Council to adopt an ordinance on May 14, 1842, punishing adultery with six months imprisonment: “...for every Act of Adultery, or Fornication, which can be proved, the Parties shall be imprisoned Six Months, and fined, each, ...the Sum of five hundred to fifty thousand Dollars...” Three days after the ordinance passed, John Bennett resigned as Mayor of Nauvoo under the accusations of adultery and fornication.

When John Bennett resigned his membership in the church, he publicly testified,

I publicly avow that any one who has said that I have stated that...Joseph Smith has given me authority to hold illicit intercourse with women is a Liar in the face of God. Those who have said it are damned Liars: they are infernal Liars. He never (either) in public or private gave men any such authority or license, & any who states it is a scoundrel & a Liar. (The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes, John S. Dinger, ed., signature Books, [Salt Lake, 2001], p. 84)

Joseph Smith confronted John Bennett in front of the City Council and asked, "Will you please state definitely whether you know anything against my character either in public or private?" To which Bennett responded, "I do not; in all my intercourse with Gen. Smith, in public and in private, he has been entirely virtuous" (Times and Seasons, Vol. 3, p. 841).

In the aftermath of John Bennett's misconduct, Joseph pursued an effort to track down what had happened in Nauvoo. By May of 1842, the high council met, and:

[A] charge [was] [preferred] against Chauncey L. Higbee by George Miller for unchaste and un-virtuous conduct with the widow [Sarah] Miller, and others...

In the trial,

Three witness[es] testified that he had seduced [several women] and at different times [had] been guilty of unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with them and taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and also taught that Joseph Smith authorised him to practice these things... (The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes, pp. 414-415, all as in original)

On May 25th, the charge was preferred "against Ms. Catherine Warren by George Miller for unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with John C. Bennett and others."

(And it's... You can read this. It's gonna be in the talk.)

At the April 1844 General Conference, Hyrum Smight gave an anti-polygamy talk.

Joseph Smith (in May of 1844) gave a discourse. One of the things that he said in the discourse, which provides you again with a key to know what was going on, Joseph said:

For the last three years I have a record of all my acts and proceedings, for I have kept several good, faithful, and efficient clerks in constant employ: they have accompanied me everywhere, and carefully kept my history, ...they have written down what I have done, where I have been, and what I have said; therefore my enemies cannot charge me with any day, time, or place, but what I have written testimony to prove my actions; and my enemies cannot prove anything against me. ...Matters of fact are as profitable as the Gospel, ...which I can prove. You will then know who are liars, and who speak the truth I want to retain your friendship on holy grounds.

Another indictment has been got up against me. It appears a holy prophet has [risen] up, and [he's] testified against me: the reason is, he is so holy. The Lord knows I do not

care how many churches are in the world. As many as believe me, may. If the doctrine that I preach is true, the tree must be good. I have prophesied things that have come to pass, and can still.

...I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported...I had seven wives. I mean to live and proclaim the truth as long as I can.

This new holy prophet has gone to Carthage and swore that I had told him that I was guilty of adultery. This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this.

William Law testified before forty policemen, and the assembly room full of witnesses, that he testified under oath that he never had heard or seen or knew anything immoral or criminal against me. He testified under oath that he was my friend, and not the 'Brutus.' (Taken from The Words of Joseph Smith, Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook editors, [BYU Press 1980])

And so on.

April 7, 1842.

April 10th of 1842 (This is from April 10th): "I preached in the grove, and pronounced a curse upon all Adulterers and Fornicators, and unvirtuous persons and those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs" (taken from the journal of Wilford Woodruff).

On March 7th through the 20th of 1844 in successive meetings, Joseph Smith read A Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo, which was presented to/adopted by the Relief Society and then presented to and adopted by the conference. And I've got a copy in the Appendix to the talk of A Voice of Innocence.

Emma Smith denied plural wives was taught by Joseph:

At one time my husband [Joseph] came to me and asked me if I had heard certain rumors about spiritual marriages, or anything of the kind; and assured me that if I had, that they were without foundation; [and] there was no such doctrine, and never should be with his knowledge [and] consent. I know that he had no other wife or wives than myself, in any sense, either spiritual or otherwise. ("Last Testimony of Sister Emma," The Saints Herald, October 1, 1879)

Joseph Smith was asked on the 8th of May, 1838: "Do...Mormons believe in having more wives than one?" And his answer was, "No, not at the same time. But they believe, that if their companion dies, they have a right to marry again" (Joseph Smith, TPJS 119, 8 May 1838).

To the extent Joseph exposed his thoughts about sex, they were dominated by sexual purity and self-control. His public and private statements point to a man who prized

chastity, fidelity, and condemned promiscuity. His letters are consistent with his statements.

And there's a series of scriptures that I quote in that.

If you search for a contemporaneous private document or public declaration from Joseph, Hyrum, or Emma Smith supporting plural wives, you'll find none. All of them were consistently publicly opposing the practice. And remember the Book of Mormon warns, Woe unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell. Someone was lying. Therefore, someone will be thrust down to hell.

So we face a decision: We must choose to condemn Joseph, Hyrum, and Emma to hell, or we must condemn those who denounced them as liars. As part of making that choice, recall the words earlier that I quoted, spoken to the imprisoned Joseph Smith:

...fools shall have you in derision, and hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors...

None of us should want to attribute to Joseph Smith lying and serious sexual sins if it is not true. I do not want to call him a liar without sufficient reason. He should be entitled to only be convicted on the same standard we would convict a person of a serious crime. As a lawyer, I know to convict someone of criminality, the burden of proof is "beyond any reasonable doubt." If you have any reasonable doubt, you must not convict. I think a prophet of God is entitled to the same standard of proof. Therefore, if there is reason to doubt, I say we ought to doubt. We should say, "I cannot in good conscience conclude Joseph Smith was an adulterer and a liar"—unless we have proof that removes all reasonable doubts on the subject. If the record is confused enough to tell two opposing stories, leaving us to write what is in our own heart, then I choose to write "innocence" for Joseph on my page.

Both the apologists and critics almost universally today agree with the anti-Mormons about Joseph Smith. They claim Joseph Smith was a liar and deceiver. This judgment has become nearly universal. But the contemporary accounts do not require that conclusion. Quite the contrary, the contemporary records vindicate Joseph as truthful, honest, and moral. One of the things that frustrates me the most are the many accounts from those who claim to be faithful, believing Latter-Day Saints who accept Joseph Smith as the prophet of the Restoration but require Joseph to be dishonest and immoral. They insist Joseph Smith said one thing in public and another thing in private. Because they believe that a prophet of God can do that and get away with it, it has created a malignancy on the LDS version of Mormonism. Even today the leaders of the LDS Church believe God allows them to practice deceit because their version of Joseph Smith justifies it. This hypocrisy is embedded within the Fundamentalist off-shoots from the LDS Church. As one who has come to know God, I do not believe it possible to be a hypocritical liar, deceiving even your own wife (as it is claimed about Joseph), and have God's approval.

As we struggle with making the choice, it becomes clear that the reliability and authenticity of the single document that ties Joseph Smith to introducing plural marriage (Doctrine and Covenants 132) matters a great deal. We do not have an original. The first time the document was made public was in 1852. The text was made public in the handwriting of a practicing polygamist, Joseph Kingsbury. He was never a scribe of Joseph's. He was not trusted to maintain Joseph's journals or history. The original was lost or destroyed, and Kingsbury claimed that he copied it shortly after the original was written.

Kingsbury was one of the witnesses called to testify in the Temple Lot case. Upon taking the stand, he "refused to take the ordinary oath to 'tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'" When later questioned about why he wouldn't take the oath:

I do not swear to that; I affirm to it. To my mind there is a difference between swearing to anything and affirming to it...I generally affirm, and I suppose it is because my understanding is that a man cannot be convicted of perjury on ...affirmation, and he can when he is sworn. (Abstract of Evidence Temple Lot Case U.S.C.C., p. 333)

When asked if Joseph Smith practiced polygamy, he said: "I presume...he did."

James Whitehead was one of Joseph Smith's scribes during the last 2 years of his life [and] was also required to testify under oath. His testimony includes this:

I had a good opportunity of knowing if any such a thing [plural marriage] had been taught by the prophet or anyone else because I was there in his office and with him continually. ...I was well acquainted with his family and with his wife Emma and I never saw anything or heard of any such a thing being taught there in Nauvoo. ...When I lived at Nauvoo, I resided maybe three hundred yards from where Joseph['s]...house was. I saw him there frequently, perhaps not every day but almost every day. ...Joseph Smith had one wife and her name was Emma; I do not know of any other woman who claimed to be the wife of the prophet, there at Nauvoo, nor at any other place. (Abstract of Evidence Temple Lot Case U.S.C.C.)

Wilford Woodruff testified in that same trial. He said testified:

I never saw a copy of it [section 132] or the original during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. I do not think [that] I saw the one that came here to Utah and purported to be a copy of the original.

I do not know whether the church of which I am the President has the purported copy or not. (Abstract of Evidence Temple Lot Case U.S.C.C., p. 308)

Although it was written as part of a humorous account during his travels in the West, Mark Twain made this assertion after his visit to Salt Lake City: "Polygamy is a recent feature in the Mormon religion, and was added by Brigham Young after Joseph Smith's death. Before that, it was regarded as an 'abomination.'"

I assume that if Joseph Smith opposed and denounced plural wives and Brigham Young introduced it, that that would matter to you. It certainly matters to me. Joseph Smith was

not merely a prophet, but a dispensation head who laid a foundation upon which the rest of God's dealings with mankind will be predicated.

What you decide to be true about history is completely dependent upon the sources of information you trust. Almost all of the historical evidence for Joseph Smith introducing plural wives are not only created following Joseph and Hyrum's death but more than a decade after they died.

The seven-volume set written by Arnold Boss, *The History of Plural Marriage Among the Mormon People*, is an attempt to gather comprehensive evidence to support the practice of plural wives. It relies, as it must, on sources that did not exist on or before June 27, 1844. His sources in his extensive investigation are years—sometimes decades—later reflections by those who had begun to practice plural marriage publicly in 1852. Many of those sources did so privately before the public announcement in 1852. Once the practice was publicly taught and defended under Brigham Young, LDS historians have interpreted a great deal about Joseph by relying on Brigham Young and other defenders of plural marriage. To be fair, Joseph should be isolated from this subsequent development when trying to understand what Joseph believed, said, and did.

Here is the problem in the clearest way that I can put it: IF you accept the proof that existed on or before June 27, 1844, there is a single document which may have existed (or may have been created between then and 1852) to tie Joseph Smith to plural wives, but there is an overwhelming number of documents, public talks, scriptures, newspaper articles, church disciplinary proceedings, affidavits, and public acts that clearly show Joseph Smith was opposed to and denounced plural wives. In this version, Joseph was virtuous and truthful.

BUT IF you accept the record of those who practiced plural wivory and accounts they wrote after Joseph and Hyrum's murder, then there is an overwhelming number of documents, talks, remembrances, affidavits, and books that attribute the practice of secretly having plural wives by Joseph Smith while misleading the public with false denials. In this version, Joseph was dishonest with his closest companions (including his wife), a public liar, a criminal under Illinois law, and therefore un-virtuous.

You get to choose. I suggest you choose carefully and consider the Lord's teaching: Judge not unrighteously, that you be not judged, but judge righteous judgment; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again (Matthew 3:40 RE; see also Matthew 7:1-2 LE).

I assume from what I've learned about our Lord's plans, that there will be some living the practice of plural wives who are gathered to Zion. That presents a potential problem between those who are monogamous and those who are polygamous. It will be necessary for those who have plural wives to commit to:

First, abandoning any effort to add another wife.

Second, agree to teach your children that it must end with you and not be continued in the next generation.

I tell you this in advance so you have no doubts about our expectations of you.

Historically, when plural wives have been permitted, it is as if the women were married and the men were perpetually single. Because a man could add another wife, the men retained a “roving eye” to look out for any other woman who aroused his interest. The best example of the unmarried polygamist man was Parley P. Pratt. He took Eleanor McLean as his twelfth plural wife, although she was already married to Hector McLean. Hector was a drunken wife-beater, and Parley was, well, willing to continue to add wives. Hector caught Parley riding alone, shot him, took a knife to him, and left him bleeding on a farm in Kansas [Arkansas]. The farmer reported that after two and a half hours following Hector’s handiwork, Parley died from loss of blood. Brigham Young believed Parley deserved to die for adultery.

There are always going to be tensions that will arise, and people will need to adapt across this barrier. I assume there will be some plural wives who envy women who are monogamous. I assume there will be some men who envy men who have multiple wives. I assume some children will envy those with fewer siblings, and others who envy those with many siblings. And I assume there will be tension between these very different kinds of families. Everyone will have to make some adjustments to peacefully coexist in a community.

I do not belong to any organized church. I am part of a community bound together only by beliefs. To this point, we only practice ordaining to priesthood, baptism by immersion, the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, and laying on hands for blessing and healing. Only men hold priesthood, however, we believe Gifts of the Spirit are not confined to those who are ordained, but that anyone—male and female—can have all the various gifts given to people of faith.

Men are not sustained by men to the priesthood, but instead must be sustained by seven women—and if married, one of those women must be his wife—in order to act as a priest outside his home. If a man holding the priesthood engages in inappropriate behavior, then it is a council of women who conduct discipline. The women’s council is empowered to remove a man’s certificate, which does not remove priesthood; it only prevents the man from ministering outside his home during a period of suspension. This is for the protection of the community of believers so that no harm is done to the community by trusting in a man’s status as priest to drop their guard and become vulnerable to mischief.

We collect tithes, but only on the amount remaining after all your family’s obligations have first been paid. Then what remains—following payment of your obligations—is tithed on 1/10 of what is left. However, tithes are then distributed among the various fellowships based on the needs of the individuals and the families for food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, transportation, and education. No one is paid; no one profits. Only the needs of the poor among us are addressed with tithes.

We plan to build a temple when the Lord commands. A fund for that purpose has been set up, and a group of women control that fund. Anyone can donate to that fund if they choose to do so.

We have an obligation to the descendants of Lehi and have called and set apart individuals for that purpose. We have an obligation to the remnant of the Jews and have been working for more than two years to have the Book of Mormon translated into Old Testament Hebrew. Although there are at least two modern-Hebrew translations, they are not of a quality that reflects the seriousness of the obligation imposed on us. We have some of the best Old Testament Hebrew scholars in the world working with us on the translation, and the project is now entering the final editing stage. It will be expensive to complete and publish, and those who have been supervising the effort wanted me to mention that anyone who is willing to do so can contribute to that effort. Following publication of the Hebrew language version, we have those called by God and set apart to take the message to the remnant of the Jews. There's a website that just got active called hebrewbookofmormon.com that explains the project.

We are not waiting for someone else to do the work required by the Lord. We have and are working to accomplish the work the Lord's given us. As part of that, we've recovered and published a more correct version of the Book of Mormon than has been available before now. We have recovered and corrected revelations given to Joseph Smith. We've recovered and corrected the interpolations made in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments. Additions made by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints were removed, and many corrections Joseph made that had been omitted were added.

The Scripture project was presented to and accepted by the Lord. It was then presented to and accepted by a conference of believers in 2017. They are now available in a high quality, leather-bound version. I brought my copy with me today.

We invite all who are interested to labor alongside us. But we're more concerned with getting work accomplished than in building a hierarchy, or gaining authority over one another. Whatever influence I have in the group of believers I associate with is solely because of my efforts to persuade people. I claim no office and have made no claim to have authority. If what I teach is true, then it should stand on its own.

We're busy, and if you want to labor alongside us, you're welcome to do so. I do not have the time—with all the work left to accomplish—to engage in debate. I try to teach enough to let people decide. I claim to be the Lord's servant and to teach what He directs. You need to decide whether that's true or not.

I can also warn you that all the churches of Mormonism—from the LDS to the Community of Christ to the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and all the offshoots, including the pretenders who now seek to get a following by their pretended enlightenment—all of them are working at cross purposes to what the Lord is doing. If they or you want to please the Lord, you'll assist the labor we're performing. None else—and no one else—are doing the Lord's work, vindicating His covenants, fulfilling His promises, and laboring alongside Him. We have a covenant given from Him

in 2017 that promises us His protecting hand. If you follow Christ as Lord, then you will support our work: for it is His work.

I believe the Restoration has begun anew, and the heavens are open and communicating with us. There are resources available to investigate our claims. If you're interested and want to investigate this further, the following resources are available free online:

restorationarchives.com

scriptures.info

thetemplefund.net

denversnuffer.com

bornofwater.org

learnofchrist.org

recordersclearinghouse.com

Thetentalks.com and

hebrewbookofmormon.com

There are books I've written available through Amazon.com, however, essentially all of the content is available for free through the website restorationarchives.com. Most of the talks I have given are or will be available on Youtube, including this one.

Following my ex-communication from the LDS Church, I delivered a series of ten talks across five states. Those were recorded and can be heard at the thetentalks.com, restorationarchives.com, or on YouTube.

We will build a temple when the Lord commands. We are and will continue to reach out to the remnant of the Lamanites. We will send authorized messengers to the remnant of the Jews. We hope to welcome the Lord at His return.

And I tell you these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

1:08:17

Now, I have a few moments. They've set up a microphone. They said there'd be a Q&A. I'm actually changing their agenda. My father-in-law is in the hospital in Salt Lake, and my wife did not accompany me 'cuz she's up at the hospital. And I need to get back North. So, if anyone has any questions... (And they need to be good questions. I mean, don't ask something inane. We get a lot of that.) But if you've got a good question... Oh! There's a microphone over there! Hey, let's not make Bonnie walk. Just take the... It's a wireless microphone.

Question 1: Thanks. My question goes back to where the council of women...

Denver Snuffer: Yeah, yeah.

Q1: Do those have to be the same women that signed his certificate?

DS: No.

Q1: OK. Thank you.

DS: Don't have to be. They might WANT to be.

I know... "Do you always obey the speed limit?" Oh, no—I rarely do. It's inadvertent. I will follow the speed limit going through and coming down from...

Question 2: I actually don't have a question.

DS: Yeah?

Q2: I was prompted to say this: "In the beginning, the practice of plural wives came into existence by the seed of the disobedient Cain. Could we be under a gross darkness passed down from the beginning? Could we be in an awful state of blindness in many different ways? Who are we to the Lord? Could the adversary have led us all into strange paths, like Father Lehi's vision in the Book of Mormon warned us about? Are these messengers sent to us today sent by the will and power of God to bring about His righteous purposes and lead a people to build his kingdom on Earth again? How are we to know if these things spoken to us today are true? Perhaps we are to do as Joseph did all those years ago. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

Question 3: Hello. I've always been curious why Joseph Smith didn't have children from other wives that we can prove. And so your theory today would support answer that if your theory is correct. But how do you do... You know, like you said, there's libraries about this. I mean, I read a book that was just testimony after testimony of Joseph Smith's plural marriage. And Brian C. Hales [Todd Compton's]... I read a book of his, In Sacred Loneliness, that each chapter is a history of each wife of Joseph Smith's. Some of that is the wife's own language. It just seems like there's some really good proof that he lived plural marriage.

DS: Once the, umm...

Q3: Oh, there's really good proof that Jesus Christ lived plural marriage, too.

DS: Yeah, that once the practice became public, understand that all of those people who migrated following Brigham Young from Nauvoo into the West were isolated from the main body of the United States in a place that became really quite dark. I mean, the idea (and part of the brag) that Satan announces in the LDS temple endowment is that he intended to reign with blood and horror on the Earth. If you study what happened during the period of the Mormon Reformation, they come out West, and things went really bad when they came out West. It is as if, once they got driven out of Nauvoo and a lush, well-watered countryside, that they were driven into a salt-flat cursed land, in

which they suffered privation and, essentially, starvation. Lorenzo Snow writes a story about how he was out digging up Sego lily bulbs to take them back to give to his starving family, and he was so hungry that the first bulb he dug up he ate himself, and it caused him shame that he'd taken care of his own hunger when he was out there digging this stuff up for to feed his family. They took the cattle herd that the church owned (which was the foodstuffs that they were lying up) up to winter in Cache valley, and the herd froze to death from an unusually harsh winter, which only made the problems even worse.

And Brigham Young, in response to all of the privation/all of the suffering/all of the terrible consequences that were going on, blamed the PEOPLE! The Mormon Reformation and all of the re-baptisms that occurred during the Mormon Reformation were done because Brigham Young thought the people were insufficiently attentive and obedient to what the priesthood leaders were telling them to do. Well, it was the priesthood leaders that decided to send the cattle where they would all be killed. It wasn't the... The followers were doing what they were told. Brigham Young did a number of things, backfired, and then he blamed the people for their own errors. So they launched the Mormon Reformation. Everyone's gotta be baptized! And they initiated what's called the "Home Missionary Program." The Home Missionary Program had a list of questions that the Home Missionaries came to ask of the members to determine whether or not they had done something that was worthy of being "blood atoned," meaning you've committed a sin for which God can't forgive you through the atonement of Jesus Christ; your own blood had to be shed in order for you to make it into the kingdom of God. And Brigham Young taught this, as did Jedediah [Jedediah] Grant—the sermon about raining pitchforks' tines down upon the people in order to stir them up to repentance, and the Mormon Reformation included actual invoking of the blood atonement act: killing people to save their souls, according to the doctrine that Brigham Young was propounding.

Utah (Deseret) descended into a very, very dark state. When Johnson's Army came out to the valley and put an end to Brigham Young's control over the people and installed a new governor, more than 3,000 people fled from Utah headed East because they were now safe to leave. They wouldn't be hunted down by hitmen or by some of the others that were sent out by Brigham Young to kill. We don't have a good count on the numbers of those who fled to go West because by that time—with the forty-niners and the gold rush that happened, Sutter's Mill, and all of the California activity—it was safe to go West. And quite a number went West, but we don't have a count on that. How many people were murdered in the name of the religion between the period that they migrated out and the period when Johnson's Army arrived and people fled, we don't know. I mean, they disappeared, they... The stories weren't told. The situation at Mountain Meadows where people were slain for the oath's sake to get to avenge the blood of the martyrs was expanded so that the martyrs weren't Joseph and Hyrum, but it included Parley Pratt. There's irony in that because Brigham Young had denounced Parley as an adulterer who deserved to be killed! But Brigham wasn't one to let irony stop him from launching into a diatribe.

If you think you know Brigham Young, you really need to look at what rolled out about 2008 with the Complete Discourses of Brigham Young because about 3-5% of what Brigham Young said was available before then. And they were able to decipher the shorthand, and now we have a five-volume set, large (8 ½ x11 size) volumes, double columns... So when you open it up, it's like four columns across the open book of smaller print. They were prepared, primarily, for library use. I bought a copy. (I don't think there are any available. There might be; someone might be re-selling. But you can get 'em on a CD-ROM.) You should read the materials.

So, when you say there are libraries of material and affidavits and these sincere, you know, reminiscences by people that were in a position to know, they... The Temple Lot case didn't happen until the end of that century. These people had lived through the terrorism of the territorial Deseret years and Brigham Young's "raining pitchforks' tines down" preaching, and the actual slaying of people, and the practice of plural marriage being announced from the pulpit. And while he doesn't identify who it was—he says it's a "U.S. Senator"—it's pretty obvious that the one who would've been in communication with him would've been Stephen Douglas, who became a U.S. Senator and who had been in the Illinois Legislature at the time that the Nauvoo Charter was passed and who was a friend to the Mormons who had actually presided over one of the trials back in Illinois, became a U.S. Senator. But an unnamed senator, probably Stephen Douglas, gave to Brigham Young the advice that "if plural wives is a fundamental part of your religion, then it will be constitutionally protected under the First Amendment to the Constitution as a religious practice that Congress can make no law respecting or curtailing that religious practice. And so, once it rolled out into the public, it was essential (in order to win the lawsuit) to protect it under the First Amendment that it become a fundamental part of the religion. And so the dialogue that goes on from the 1852 public time period until after the death of Brigham Young in 1877/78, all of that dialogue was ginned up in order to create a historical record that could be taken to and shown to the United States Supreme Court in order to justify the preservation as "constitutionally- protected plural wivery." That didn't work! The Supreme Court in their final decision on the question analogized that to the practice in India of the widow throwing herself onto the funeral-pyre-burning-of-her-dead-husband to kill herself! It... There's some acts of religion that can't be defended under the law, no matter how sincere your belief may be. And so, if it were a fundamental part of the religion, then, if it were truly, really, honestly, sincerely, devoutly a fundamental part of the religion, then there's an easy answer: Pack your crap up and go south to Mexico because it was NOT prohibited there! Or march up to Canada, "Eh, become a Canuck, eh? And so you'd all be talkin' a little strange now, eh?" You'd sound like you're from Fargo.

But look, they didn't do that! They turned on a dime, and then not only did they turn on a dime, but they excommunicated people—including members of the Quorum of the Twelve—for the practice. It's NOT a fundamental part of the religion. And when the chance for the courts to weigh in on the issue of whether it was originally part of what Joseph Smith taught, the court reached pretty much the same conclusion that Brigham Young, (or excuse me) Mark Twain reached, which was that before Brigham Young did that, it was an abomination.

Look, you're going to face an absolutely contradictory story. One of them has to be true, and one of them has to be false. One of them has to be based upon a correct preservation of what was really going on, and one of them has to be based upon a host of lies and liars who had motivations that ranged anywhere from fear born out of the necessity to support the system because there are few people that are in a more vulnerable state, a more desperate state, than a plural wife of a Mormon polygamist in territorial Utah. You think they're going to contradict the official story when they know what's been going on, and they know that lives have been lost for apostasy? I mean, the behavior was extraordinarily analogous to what happens in Islam if you depart from the faith.

Anyway, do you have a question? Oh, you want me to stop?

Question 4: Nope. We want you to just answer... One came in online: "Do all the wives of a man with plural wives have to sign his certificate for him to use his priesthood publicly?"

DS: Since under the law there's only one wife, no—his WIFE, singular. Let's say a man today has plural wives. The law will recognize one (and only one) wife. That's the person who needs to sign the certificate. If the other's object... He has a wife, and the Lord will recognize A wife.

Yeah?

Question 5: I, too, was really taken by Todd Compton's book back in the day. There was 32 wives that came forward with their stories, etc. etc. And yet, I think it's important to talk about the fact that under oath, and when they were brought into court (not all of them), but when that time came (you talk about this fear), only one... Only one held up and actually claimed to have any connubial relations with Joseph, and that was Eliza Partridge—and there were many reasons that have been uncovered that she had that. Could you comment on that?

DS: Yeah, that... Her story fell apart. She told it... She told multiple versions of the story, and it not only fell apart... In an earlier account, she was far less graphic and dramatic. She became more graphic and dramatic as time went on. And much of the testimony she...

She's worthy of an individual study. She really is. Much of her story becomes less and less believable the more you know and the more you study about her.

Now, I've gotta get back up to Salt Lake, but I've brought—I don't know—maybe 25 copies of this. It has some typos in it that I will fix before I put it online, but I'm gonna leave it over there on the counter, and anyone that wants a copy right now can get one. It includes more than I covered today, but I didn't want to talk until six tonight.

Yeah?

Question 6: Just some observations about Sarah Pratt.

DS: Oh, yeah. She's another story.

Q6: ...about her situation... [indecipherable] ...She did not turn on Joseph, to my knowledge... [indecipherable].

DS: I think it... The question is about Sarah Pratt. I think a fair reading of the events is that while Orson was on a mission, she was seduced by John Bennett. When he returned and found out that his wife had been unfaithful to him, Joseph spent a lot of time counseling him, talking with him, dealing with him, and reconciling Sarah and him together. She DID in fact get seduced while her husband was on a mission, but the culprit wasn't Joseph; it was John Bennett. The reconciliation was facilitated by Joseph. That got flipped in the wake of the John Bennett revelations and John Bennett touring the country, giving anti-Mormon lectures and attacking Joseph Smith. The story flipped. And by the time you get to 1852 and the public acknowledgment, it was really convenient at that point and somewhat believable for Brigham Young and the people out in Utah to say, "Yeah, yeah, it DID originate with Joseph Smith," because John Bennett had already plowed that field, had already laid the ground for that.

Well, Sarah Pratt had always been treated well. She was the priority wife. He may have gone out and impregnated the other women, but he came home to her. But what tipped everything was the 18-year-old that he married and the announcement that now he was gonna spend evenings at home with her. She put up with a lot; she'd suffered a lot—all of the wives had; the private diaries of the wives, to the extent they've been made public, make it really clear that there was a public voice that said, "Yes, it's good. We support." And there were private journals that talk about the heartbreak and the heartache and the misery of the arrangement. And what tipped the scale for her was the decision that he made to go spend nights, when all was said and done, with the young wife.

Maybe I'll write something about that at some point. But I think it's a fair reading to conclude she was one of John Bennett's...

Q5: [indecipherable]

DS: Yeah.. At least not with her. I don't think he did it with anyone but Emma. I think she was his singular wife.

Thank you.

2022.09.25 Self Awareness

Stephanie Snuffer

“Stand Independent” General Conference, Layton, UT

September 25, 2022

STEPHANIE: Okay, good afternoon! I'm gonna read a few scriptures. And I didn't make... I don't think I made the transfer from King James to the RE edition. So, For...

Galatians 6:3—For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself (see also Galatians 1:23 RE).

2 Corinthians 13:5—Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (see also 2 Corinthians 1:48 RE).

1 Corinthians 13:12—For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (see also 1 Corinthians 1:53 RE).

Psalms 26:2—Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart (see also Psalms 26:1 RE).

Proverbs 14:8—The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit (see also Proverbs 2:124 RE).

Now, what all of these scriptures have in common is this element of awareness and the importance of knowing yourself. So I'm gonna spend a few minutes and talk about self-awareness. And I'm gonna start by telling you what self-awareness is not. Self-awareness is not self-absorption. It is not any kind of conceit. It is not any kind of excess investment in yourself to elevate yourself or make yourself better than other people. Self-awareness, in its truest form, is an understanding of who you are: your strengths, your weaknesses, your characteristics, the qualities that you have, your emotional states, the things that trigger you or upset you. And it is an understanding of that, and it's an understanding of how you came to be this way. Your history, your family, your context, your experiences in life all impact how you see yourself (or alternatively, how you don't see yourself).

The other part of self-awareness is how your being impacts and influences the people around you. For example, you might be a school teacher who is really, really in tune with how his or her students see you or take you in or understand you. You might be a manager, and you might be really, really conscientious of how you are perceived by your team. You might be a coach, and you might care a lot about how your players see you, whether they respect you, how they respond to you. Those are a little bit easier to invest in because they're not as close relationships as our families and our partners and our spouses. It's harder to be a mother and to care or really want to know how you are perceived by your children—because there's this power structure, and I want to

maintain my power structure, and so it's hard for me to be vulnerable and be willing to ask my kids, maybe, what their opinion is of me. And that's a really important thing to begin to understand. I might be a wife, and I might have a really hard time wanting to know how I am perceived by my husband. How do I fight? How do I communicate? How do I listen? That's hard, because someone's gonna tell me the truth. And then I'm gonna have to do something about it.

The hallmark of a self-aware person... I'll give you this information, and then we'll talk about some other things. Self-aware people recognize that there is a difference between their emotions and their feelings. Emotions are your instinctive reactions to experiences and situations. Your feelings are how you mentally portray that representation of that emotion. The key difference between these two things is that you cannot ex... You can't control your reactions to things, but you can choose how you feel about it. I'm gonna say that again: You can't control your instinctive reaction, but you can control how you feel about it. So most of our difficulties in our contentions or our problems in life is not the issue itself but how we think and feel about the issue. So we have the opportunity to choose how we're gonna feel, and then we choose how we're going to behave based on how we feel. So that's the hallmark of a self-aware person.

Okay...

So, I've done a little bit of research on self-awareness. And there are some funny things. So the research that I was reading, the researcher—her name is Tasha Eurich—she went out, and she found what she thought were self-aware people. And the way she did it was she found someone she found people who thought they were self-aware, and then they had to have someone in their life who could corroborate the truthfulness of that statement. So someone had to agree that they were self-aware. This same person had to believe that they had improved in their self-awareness, and then someone had to agree that they had improved in their self-awareness. If you go out and ask people if they're self-aware (or if they think they're self-aware), 95% of people will tell you they are self-aware. Only about 10-15% of the people actually are. So we live in a world where 85% of the time and 85% of the people: we are lying to ourselves about whether we “get ourselves” and how we are interpreted by the people around us. This is not a small thing. This is a very, very big thing.

Three components of self-awareness include your emotional self-awareness—this means you know what you're feeling and why you are feeling it. So think, for a minute, the last time you were upset about something: could have been at a kid, could have been at a co-worker, whatever. When was the last time you were upset? When was the last time you remember thinking about why you were upset? And I'm certain it was because somebody made you upset, right? Of course, somebody made you upset—or maybe not. If you are emotionally self-aware, you understand the connections between your feelings and then what you say and then how you behave because of that. Again, when we get feeling unpleasant emotions—anger, sadness, frustration—we generally behave from an emotionally dysregulated place. And so we tend to be mean; we tend to be sarcastic; we tend to be defensive; we tend to push people away instead of bring

them closer. If you are emotionally self-aware, you recognize how your feelings impact your success in life or your lack of success in life. You know how to experience your emotions.

Another component is an accurate self-assessment. If you're a self-aware person, you understand pretty clearly your strengths and your limitations. You may know where you are good in relationships; you also know where you struggle. If you have an accurate self-assessment, you tend to learn from your experiences. Everything is an opportunity to change, do something different, stop doing something that was not serving you and start doing something that will make your life better and the life of the people around you better. If you are good at self-assessment, you are open to feedback. Feedback means someone tells you something about yourself, and you take it in, internalize it, and use it to improve yourself. Feedback is a very, very difficult thing for people to take. We don't like feedback, and we certainly don't like asking for feedback. And you cannot be a self-aware person or understand yourself without feedback.

A self-aware person is pretty self-confident. They believe that they are a good person and that they can do good things. They believe that they have value and can add to the world. If you are a self-aware person, you believe you're capable and have many opportunities to be successful. A self-confident, self-aware person has goals, and they want to accomplish things.

~~This~~ These are qualities and characteristics of a person who is self-aware. And unless you are practicing self-awareness, you are not self-aware, because it is not a natural state of the human condition. It is a trait and a skill that needs to be understood, and it needs to be practiced.

We grow up, and we learn all kinds of things: we start as toddlers, learning how to dress ourselves, share, ~~play with~~ play nice with others. We grow up; we learn how to drive. We might balance a checkbook or learn how to log into our Wells Fargo or our America First bank account so that we know how much money we have. We learn to get jobs, go to college—but we very rarely learn how to be good people in a relationship. We just think that we can do and say and be exactly how we are, and the people around us will just tolerate it—because that's what we're supposed to do. And unless someone is willing to look at you and tell you that you are lacking in a skillset or that you have a difficult time with this particular issue, we don't learn these things.

The benefits of self-awareness are pretty far-reaching:

- First and foremost, it increases your ability to have empathy and compassion with other people. Empathy is being able to be with someone else in their emotional states. That's important. That is a connecting, intimate skill that brings people together.
- Your life will be more fulfilled.
- You tend to be more creative.
- You're better at communicating.

- You're less likely to lie, cheat, or steal.
- You are going to be a more effective leader.
- You will take more accountability and greater responsibility for your own life.
- You will stop blaming people for the things that are happening to you.
- If you are self-aware, you are more willing and open to take feedback and criticism with humility and curiosity.

We need this skill. Christ has this skill. We need to be more Christ-like, and we need to learn this.

So I'm gonna go through a list pretty quickly. But I want you to listen carefully because these are signs that you are self-aware:

- You take responsibility for how you respond to things in people rather than trying to change those things in people.
- You do not assume that you are better.
- You are conscious of the fact that how you speak says more about you than what you say.
- You acknowledge and accept other people's feelings, even if you don't understand or agree with them.
- You do not start conversations about politics, religion, or strongly-held beliefs with the intent to prove you are right. You only do this in an effort to better understand another person's perspective.
- You are responsive; you are not reactive.
- You see any kind of discomfort as an opportunity to grow.
- You do not assume that you know how other people perceive you, but you try to remain conscious of social cues to make sure that you are not being ignorant of other people's needs or their level of comfort.
- You do not overshare or speak to others with the intention of getting a response from them.
- You do not insult other people in order to make yourself feel better.
- You accept critical feedback as crucial information you will need to learn and grow, not as a condemnation of your ability or character.
- You are kind to people who do not necessarily deserve it.
- You know it is not your job to determine who is worthy of kindness, but show it, no matter what.
- You are highly introspective. You evaluate your feelings, and you want desperately to grow personally and know that understanding yourself is the key to understanding others.
- You do not expect to feel good all the time. Therefore, you do not extrapolate the meaning of a bad mood or a bad day to be anything other than a moment in time.

Signs that you are not self-aware:

- You get defensive easily.
- You control and are controlling.

- You act passive-aggressively.
- Your behavior changes depending on the scenario.
- You make excuses for your behavior.
- You micromanage.
- You refuse to take feedback or deny that anything anybody says to you has any valid reality.
- ~~You don't like it if you~~ You don't know who you are. You feel like you're not following any real purpose or path in life, and you feel generally unhappy and unfulfilled.

Now, those are pretty general statements about self-awareness, but given the last few years of my life, I can attest that they're pretty accurate, and they're pretty important to pay attention to.

Okay, so that leaves us (briefly) to: How do we do something better? How do we cultivate self-awareness? And what are the barriers that we come across when we are trying to do this?

The first and most important thing you need to do is slow down, stop moving, and be quiet. Your best connection to understanding your self-awareness is through mindful practices, prayer, meditation, and just slowing everything down. Take time to connect with yourself every single day in some sort of quiet, non-active space. Avoid digital distractions (which includes Scriptures, podcasts, any other good thing that you're investing in). Take some time to literally do nothing. Carve out some solitude. Practicing mindfulness, pay attention to your inner state as it arises. Try being mindful when you're walking, when you're eating, when you're listening—just do something that shuts all of the distractions out.

Journal some of your newfound awareness; process your thoughts through writing. Write down how you're feeling. After a terrible argument with a child or a spouse, write down what that was like for you. What did you feel? When did you feel that way? Why did you react that way? What about your own personal experiences or history made you say that to that other person?

Practice listening. We do not listen well in our society. I have had so many experiences... The other day, I asked a direct question to one of my kids, didn't listen to a single thing she said when she answered me—literally immediately—after I asked the question. And I'm like, “Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't even hear you.” So, pay attention to the speaker; observe the emotions and the body language of the speaker. Do not listen with the intent of solving, changing, or offering up your own viewpoint—for the most part, nobody cares; if they do care, they'll ask you. So, no judgment or evaluation.

Gain a different perspective. You can only gain a different perspective if you ask. Ask the people around you to give honest feedback. How do you communicate? How are you when you are upset? How do you react when you're hungry and tired and have had

a bad day at work? Ask those people who love and care about you to tell you these things so that you can increase in this awareness.

Some of the barriers we have to self-awareness are:

- A lack of mindfulness, meaning we never slow down long enough to actually be with ourselves, to understand how we feel, why we're cranky, why we're tired, why we don't like listening to someone when they talk about that particular subject. That's all inside of you. You just have to be quiet and listen for it.
- Our cognitive biases get in the way.
- Our unwillingness to listen to people tell us or criticize us or give us feedback gets in the way.
- Our confirmation bias gets in the way.
- And then we tend to forget to experience ourselves as "Self." That's a hard one to explain. But it just goes back to being quiet and listening to yourself and understanding where you are.

So the reason this is an important topic and the reason this is important to know is because this is a community of people who are engaged in a lot of good work: a lot of good work trying to do a lot of good things, a lot of conversations ~~going about~~ going around about a lot of really difficult subjects. And I'm... My observation—to the extent that I have observed the powers of observation—is that we are lacking in empathy and charity and self-awareness. And we fill ourselves with our Scripture study and our podcast listening and our things, and we go out, and we talk, and we communicate, and we blurt out things—and we are deaf, dumb, and stupid to the fact that if you do not understand yourself or why you react certain ways or why you think certain things, you're going to continue to spin your wheels and spin your wheels in contention and arguments and disagreements, all while patting yourselves on the back because you think because you read your Scriptures that morning, that everything's gonna be fine. And it's not.

To deconstruct the self and to deconstruct the “natural man that is an enemy to God” requires you to do the work of understanding why you are like you are.

- What makes you mad?
- What gets your ire up?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?
- Why does this conversation always bother you?
- Why does this kid always bother you?
- Why do you always get mad at your spouse when he or she does this?

These are important things to understand, and they're important things to take the time it will take to deconstruct all of the mess and all of the angst you've got going around it.

I started out with the Scriptures because this is in the Scriptures. The whole idea of understanding your emotions and your feelings and the way you act in the world is actually part of deconstructing the natural man. If human beings are one of the only mammals (or God's creation) that has feelings that have such a tremendous impact on our ability to be in the world with people, we better pay attention to 'em. And it doesn't matter how old you are; doesn't matter how young you are. There is no time when this is not gonna benefit you. No time. And I think the time to start is now.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

[Transcription v1.1]

2022.09.25 What to Worry About

Denver Snuffer, Jr.

“Stand Independent” General Conference, Layton, UT

September 25, 2022

DENVER: Aloha! To quote a friend from earlier this morning, Ke Akua Ho'omaika'i Oe, which is a Hawaiian blessing of God upon you.

I want to welcome, in particular, those who have been recently baptized and are attending this get-together for the first time. You may have noticed that we tend to have disagreements among one another and hold differing opinions. And that's welcomed. It produces discussions. Discussions can lead to kind of healthy healing and understanding. And one of the reasons why (when the opportunity to speak was presented) I thought it best to have my wife speak first and to speak about the subject that she talked about was because we are an unruly, uncontrolled, free group of people. We have no structure; we have no organization; we have no one in authority—because what ought to control the way in which we treat one another and the way in which we conduct ourselves is obedience to God and God alone.

One of the problems with institutional churches or organizations is that once you have established a mechanism for determining control, then it doesn't matter if the person who obtains the position of control is a good man or a bad man, a wise man or a fool. Once they occupy the position, it is the position that commands the respect. It is the position itself that has the ability to say yes or no and to move things forward in a wise or in a foolish way (which is one of the reasons why institutions that can be corrupted are always corrupted— period). The adversary has learned long ago that there's a limited number of tricks that you pull in order to bring about the corruption of institutions. And so when you ordain a new institution... And it doesn't matter what it is! It can be founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, and it will turn, over time, into Catholicism, in which wealthy and perverse and corrupt men cover their sins and gratify their pride and satisfy their vain ambition because they have the position in which to do it, and they can point back to the founder who is Jesus Christ who gave authority to Peter, and they hold the keys of Peter, and therefore, what they do ought to sway you, ought to control you. Wars get fought; people get executed. And so the adversary rules with blood and horror, all the while the dialogue focuses upon the position of authority and the legitimacy at the beginning of both Jesus Christ and Peter, his apostle. And so, whenever you stray from your obedience and adherence to the rule, you are reminded, “Wait a minute! There is authority, and that authority ought to command respect.”

Aren't these things annoying? [referring to the mic]

Look, we have a restoration that commenced with Joseph Smith, and I doubt anyone would be here today if they didn't think that there was an authentic event that occurred in the life of Joseph Smith, in which the Heavens were opened and a new message was delivered, and through him—by the gift and power of God—came forth a new volume of

Scripture, the Book of Mormon. And we all accept that. But so do millions of other people who are not among us. There are those who have determined that the institution ordained by the Lord through Joseph Smith ought to command your fidelity and your loyalty—no matter what course it takes or how it may stray from or pervert the original teachings that were established—because of the legitimacy of Joseph Smith and the institution that he founded. And so today, the “most successful” of the groups controls over a trillion dollars in resources because people accept the narrative that “once an institution is legitimately founded, it doesn't get corrupted.”

Every institution gets corrupted. We lack an institution. And insofar as I hold any influence, I will oppose the establishment of an institution which legitimizes any person to occupy a role of authority and to exert (by their demand or command or insistence) the obedience of others. It is true that there have been revelations given by the Lord and that I've received some of them, and they've been published. I don't consider myself above any of them. Nor do I consider myself to have a greater understanding than any of you who can read the same document as I can. Once it's been received, I have to study it to understand its contents. I don't come with a ready-made ability to dictate anything to anyone. I am just as subordinate to and dictated to by God as any of you. I hold no position of authority. And among us, any voice that can speak up and testify to truth is welcomed. And anyone that has a truth that they can defend and explain—particularly in expounding the Scriptures and bringing new truth to light—is on an equal footing with every other one of us. It has to be so. You have to be individually responsible for understanding and preserving the truth. It has to be part of you—because if it is part of you (and only you), then you stand independent, and the apostasy or the corruption of another man or woman has no effect upon the persistence and the preservation of the truth—because it is in you. In order to create an apostasy, it requires that every single person must individually become corrupted when we all stand on equal footing before God, accountable for our faith, accountable for the truths that we welcome.

If we establish institutional controls, the adversary knows exactly how to compromise that—because it always happens. The Constitution of the United States was established by enlightened men whom God raised up for the very purpose. There was a system of checks and balances because evil, corrupt, and aspiring men always gravitate to positions of control and authority. It's like that light that draws the mosquitoes at night and then electrocutes them. It draws them in; they can't help themselves. And once there, the corruption that attaches destroys the men and the women.

One of the important checks and balances that got established (and I've given a talk about this down in Utah County years ago called “Constitutional Apostasy”) was a system in which the senators of the various states were not elected directly by the people; they were chosen by the legislatures of the respective states. You didn't get to vote for a senator; you got to vote for the state legislature, and then the state legislature selected and sent someone to the Senate. Can you imagine how differently the migration of power, taxes, and authority would have happened in the United States if the United States Senate was subordinate to the legislators of the various states? None of

what you see going on in the aggregation of federal authority would have been approved in a United States Senate that was subordinate to the various legislatures. And so as soon as you changed (by an amendment to the Constitution) one of the checks and balances that had been set up by the founding fathers, you immediately launched the United States into a different direction, and you have subtracted a terribly meaningful check and balance on federal power and authority.

Small thing, grave consequences, and we're suffering under that even today. These are the kinds of small means that get employed by the adversary to corrupt institutions, to detract from our freedoms, from giving us the opportunity to preserve faith intact, and for being able to preserve truth—small things.

At the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his co-president, Hyrum Smith (whom Joseph had identified as THE possessor of Priesthood and Patriarch, upon whom the keys of the ability to ask and get answers had been conferred) upon their death, immediately a change was made. Whereas before there was never any occasion in which a member of the Quorum of the Twelve got asked to be a member of the First Presidency, upon the death of those two, the only ones that ever thereafter occupied a position in the First Presidency had to also occupy a position in the Quorum of the Twelve. And so the check and the balance of having quorums “equal in authority” got corrupted immediately, and we see the legacy of what happens thereafter.

It's very easy to corrupt men. Vain and ambitious desires, lustful and covetous attitudes, they're resident in every person in embryo, and the adversary knows how to excite that into corruption. When Joseph Smith was confined to Liberty Jail and he had nearly half a year, finally, to be out of the frenzy of the daily life, Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail about destroying the ability of priesthood to claim it occupied positions of authority when he wrote, ...no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood (T&C 139:6).

In the Joseph Smith translation of the book of Genesis describing the power in the gifts that were exercised by Enoch, they were exercised by faith in advance of the time in which he got ordained. All of the powers and the gifts of faith are available to every one of you—men and women—without regard to whether or not you hold priesthood or authority. You want to demonstrate the gifts of the Spirit? You don't have to have ordination in order to do so.

Well, from time to time I look into and read the nonsense that gets written about us. And one of the great curiosities that people have (and it's a matter of conjecture and speculation on—what is that?—Wiki and MormonWiki online when they're trying to describe what it is we're up to and who it is that we are) is conjecture about our numbers. Well, I got news for you: I don't have any idea how many people there are that have been baptized. I've heard that there are a number of people who were recently baptized and some of them will be here today. I understand that baptisms take place with some regularity in very far-flung places. I understand there's a website through which people can request baptism and that there are those who travel in order to

perform the ordinance in far-flung places where there isn't someone already present able to perform the ordinance. But I don't know what the numbers are. Probably the only one who does is Keith Henderson—and I've never asked him, and I don't ask, and he doesn't tell—because he conducts the Recorder's Clearinghouse.

But I happen to know from fairly good authority that there are many people who have been baptized and who are awaiting turning in their paperwork to the Recorder's Clearinghouse until after their retirement from employment by the LDS Church or one of its various institutions—because they're afraid if that were to become an issue for them, they'd lose their employment. And much of the employment that happens in the LDS Church is based upon the possession of a temple recommend, and if they knew that someone had been rebaptized, they would deny him the temple recommend, and that would be that.

So even the Recorder's Clearinghouse numbers, however many that may show, there are others in addition. And I'm just not interested in that because the numbers don't matter. People who are interested in aggregation and numbers and quantities and... They miss the point. They miss the point entirely of what it is that is happening and its importance. The numbers do not matter. It isn't about how many there are. It's about how closely even a few can become to what it is the Lord wants us to become.

Look, there's an incident—it's referred to in the Teachings and Commandments 54, or excuse me, 154 where this incident is reported:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing...

So Adam called them together to give them his last blessing.

And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the Prince, the Archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and [he] said unto him, I have set you to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of you, and you are a prince over them for ever.

And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation, and notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the holy ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the Book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time.

Now this same priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also — or in other words, at the end of the world, the final dispensation will restore again the pattern of the first, or Adam's, dispensation. (T&C 154:19-21, emphasis as in original)

That promise is also something that we find in Genesis chapter three. Let me go to [paragraph] 13:

Thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the holy ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by a holy ordinance, and the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof. And thus it was. Amen.

And Adam listened [un]to the voice of God and called upon his sons to repent. And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son, and he called his name Seth. And Adam glorified the name of God, for he said, God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew. And God revealed himself unto Seth, and he rebelled not, but offered an acceptable sacrifice like unto his brother Abel. And to him also was born a son, and he called his name Enos. And then began these men to call upon the name of the Lord, ...the Lord blessed them. And a book of remembrance was kept, in which was recorded in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration. And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled. Now this same priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also. (Genesis 3:13-14 RE)

So what is it about that priesthood that from these verses we can count on? Well, for one, there is a list of seven high priests who are named (who gathered with Adam in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman) to whom the Lord appeared.

If you go through the chronology in Genesis, what you realize is that the children of Adam and Eve fell almost immediately into apostasy. There were generations born, none of whom accepted the gospel being taught by Father Adam and Mother Eve—generations!—until at last, Eve's optimism was raised because of Cain. And she thought, "Now, at last, finally, we've got someone who will follow and obey the Lord." After generations! And yet, the one whom she had hope in murdered his brother, and so there had to be born yet another descendant to Adam and Eve: Seth, whose name we just encountered.

And so Father Adam and Mother Eve are bearing children for generations. And their posterity are marrying (we're told in Genesis) two-by-two; they marry, and they duplicate the family unit, and they have children. And so generations exist now. (And they lived a long time, and they bore children for generation after generation.) And now we get three years previous to Adam's death (something over 960 years), and you have seven high priests and then a handful that are called "the residue."

This same priesthood, which was in the beginning, is going to return in the end. What the world fails to recognize is that you don't need 16½ million people to accomplish and fulfill the promises and the prophecies. When Jesus Christ came in the meridian of time

and He taught people, the biggest number that is ever mentioned in the New Testament is mentioned in an epistle by the apostle Paul at the time that the Lord ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here looking up? That same Lord shall in like manner return” (see Acts 1:3 RE). Two angels came by and spoke to them that were watching, and Paul enumerates, “How many were there?” Maybe five hundred is what Paul says the Lord Jesus Christ was able to convince to have faith after His resurrection and after He had spent some 40 days as a resurrected personage appearing in and around Jerusalem and ministering to disciples. Five hundred. What difference do the estimates of the numbers of people make? If that same priesthood which was in the beginning shall in the end of the world be also and if our Lord managed only with proof of His resurrection to get 500, what difference do the numbers make? It's not the numbers that matter.

I'll tell you what matters:

And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying, It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he do[th] grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him...

Okay, heed and diligence unto the Lord—that matters.

...therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 9:3 RE)

The Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith right now is bound firmly in the chains of hell everywhere, excepting among this group (and including this group, to the extent that we fail to give heed and diligence to the Lord)! The only thing that matters isn't the numbers. What matters is the heed and the diligence given by some few unto the Lord, so that the mysteries of God may increase in them until they know the mysteries of God in full.

Take a look around at what you see in the various claimants to be inspired leaders of the various denominations that reckoned from Joseph Smith as a founder, and you will see such profound ignorance, such darkness, that the only way to describe it is as the chains of hell. They know nothing concerning the mysteries of God. “We don't know about that. I don't know that we teach that,” to quote Gordon B. Hinckley. They reject and they march away in their pride and their arrogance, all the while claiming that they're possessors of keys—and because they have keys, you better watch out, you better not cry, you better be good, and I'm telling you why. Nelson, the Destroyer.

Therefore, he [and this is talking about God—he] sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold...his glory. And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore, God conversed with men and made known unto them the plan of redemption which had been prepared from the foundation of the world. And this he made known unto them according to their faith, and repentance, and their holy works. (Ibid. ¶7)

That's what matters: faith, repentance, and holy works. Those are the things that bring about the results that God is trying to achieve in restoring things in the last days so that that which was here in the beginning may return again in the last days to the earth. Angels come, and they converse with men. That results in teachings that are inspired and true. That allows people to comprehend a plan for their salvation, which in turn results in them repenting and being able to accomplish holy works.

There are holy works that are being accomplished and have been accomplished among the people that we are part of, that we're privileged to participate in. Among other things, the Scriptures have been recovered in a way that they have not been available to mankind for... Well, ever since the time that the Lord was here in the New Testament (which itself got corrupted shortly thereafter by a great and abominable church). We've recovered Scriptures; we've presented them to the Lord; we've asked that He accept them. The Lord has made some changes to the Scriptures and told us to alter or add things or eliminate things from the text, and then having done so, all of what He said was gathered together and printed in a bound volume of Scriptures. That involved the efforts of many people over several years with a great deal of effort (primarily a research effort). But in the end, it was something that required God's own voice in order to finish the task up. And God determined that He would speak unto us, and we heard and recorded His voice. And we have Scriptures as a consequence of that.

Right now, there is an ongoing effort: I'm privileged to meet with the effort/those involved every week over Zoom, with people from all over the world—scholars and people of unquestioned capacity and ability to take the Book of Mormon and to translate it back into the language that would have been used about 600 years before Christ in the Hebrew tongue of that day. It's an extraordinarily arduous task. And the words that get used have to be attested to by existing Old Testament Hebrew texts. There are several translations of the Book of Mormon (either in whole or in part) into Hebrew, but they use modern-Hebrew language. And there isn't a rabbi who's serious about understanding the words of God who would respect those forms of the translation of the Book of Mormon as something that is authoritative and attested to. That effort has been going on for several years, and it's now in its final editing process. But it will eventually result in the rolling forth of yet another holy work (not being accomplished through institutions that prize their riches and who've entered into treaties in order to secure the ability to build part of a BYU campus extension on the Mount of Olives in Israel; they've signed a treaty with the nation of Israel guaranteeing that they will not proselytize—in absolute contradiction to the obligation imposed upon us in the Book of Mormon to take the message of the Book of Mormon to the remnant of the Jews—because they value their

presence in Israel). And so the work is left to us. And so we've undertaken yet another holy work.

There are other things afoot that will, in due time, roll forth in order to fulfill the promises and the commitments made by God. Because it doesn't matter how few of us there are. What matters is the holiness of the work that we are accomplishing.

There's a scripture that I read a while ago, that is a little more directly related to the subject of this conference than what I've been saying so far. But all things matter. So... It's from Ezekiel; in the Restoration Edition, it's Ezekiel 18:10.

Thus says the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities have become fortified and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that which was desolate. I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.

There's a lot of excitement about the idea that there's global warming going on and that we need to take some fairly dramatic steps to cure a problem. A problem may exist, but all of the solutions only make the problem worse and have nothing to do with actually fixing what's wrong. It's so extraordinarily wrongheaded. It's like, oh, someone has leprosy at a time when we have no cure or treatment for it and telling him, "Quick, quick, go bathe in the city's drinking water, so that, you know, we can solve your leprosy problem." It's a nonsensical solution there.

I would commend you to just go to YouTube, and search videos on YouTube about reclaiming desert land in some of the absolute worst places/most arid places on Earth. They have gone and done things to get nature to respond to cultivation and to plant life. In some cases, it's by running herd animals over the ground, like nature used to do in the Great Plains of the United States, where the grasslands of the United States were far and wide because the grazing herds would come through. They would graze; they wouldn't necessarily digest all of the seeds; it would come out in the waste product of the animals, and their hooves would penetrate the ground to plant the seeds. And the next time it rained, the grass would regrow, and the roots would shoot down, and anytime moisture came through, the plants would attract it and hold it and invest it back into the earth. And extraordinarily arid places have been reclaimed simply by mimicking what nature wants to do.

There's a fellow—he's a religious fellow, and he's created a camp in Texas. He bought a completely arid, dry piece of ground on which he intended to develop a camp, and there was nothing out there but weeds and dirt and, I think, a mesquite tree or two. And he thought, "Well, the way to solve my problem is to drill a well." They began drilling the well, and as it got to the underground caverns in the limestone, the drilling rig would

drop 40 feet in an empty cavern because there was nothing down there. And they drilled on and on, and the solution to the problem never came from drilling wells. The solution to his problem came from planting weeds that grew grasses (what we would consider weeds), grasses that grew high that captured and invested into the soil, and he refilled the aquifer—he refilled those limestone caverns—with water. And on the surface of his property today, he has a lake and a stream that runs off of his property and trees and vegetation, and it looks like Ezekiel described: whereas before it was desolate and barren, afterwards there are literally pools of living water that broke forth on the ground.

Which reminds me of something we have in the Teachings and Commandments in 58, beginning at paragraph three, about the middle:

And he shall utter his voice out of Zion and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people...it should be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, ...it shall be driven back into the north countries and the islands shall become one land, and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people... [He] shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear His voice and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and...ice shall flow down at their presence, and a highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, and in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants, ...the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.

Well, those things occur as a consequence of natural events. And the Earth longs to be able to have those events begin to take place. Look at the words of the covenant that the Lord offered to us:

I, the Lord your God, will be with you and never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The Earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because [of] the fear of the Lord will be with you.

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

...You should be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest. (T&C 158:12-17)

Well, the Earth wants to yield her increase. There's a lamentation recorded by Enoch, right before the flood, where the Earth herself spoke up and lamented the wickedness of men upon her face and wanted to know when the season would finally come that she could rest and that righteousness would return to her face.

There's a saying about how sensitive horses are that they can feel when a fly lands on them. And they can make their skin shake, and they can shoo the fly with their tail because they can feel something as light as the presence of a fly that lands on them. Do you think from the account that is given by Enoch of the Earth's lamentation that the Earth itself is any less sensitive about the wickedness that exists upon her face than a horse is sensitive to the presence of a fly upon her skin? If the Earth senses the presence of righteousness again upon her face, do you think it matters that there's only seven of them? That there's only 500 of them? That there's only a diminutive number? I mean, how many people heard the Lord in any given sermon that He taught, even the Sermon on the Mount? Were there as many people that heard Him on that occasion as are here today? Perhaps not. I mean, they didn't have folding chairs; they didn't have fixed chairs. How many people can you gather without a microphone? Without the ability to project a sound? How many people heard the sound of the Lord? It is perhaps the largest number of people that ever heard Christ speak at the gathering in Bountiful, when approximately 2500 people saw the risen Lord and had Him minister to them. Can you imagine that? That the Lord spent His entire ministry preaching and teaching to a comparatively small group of people that was dwarfed by the number of people he was able to address in the resurrection when He visited in Bountiful?

Well, I would not be troubled about the numbers. I would be troubled about the degree to which we progress and regress. The reason why my wife stood up first to talk to you is because there's a great deal in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and in the most recent instruction that we got that refers us back to the Answer to Prayer for Covenant and the Covenant itself that suggests that we need to figure out how to deal with one another in a meaningful way, how to deal with the fact that we have differences—because we do and we will, and there is always going to be some reason why the particular group of irritants coming from that man or woman is just setting your teeth on edge. It's just always gonna be the case. So why not ask (as Stephanie had suggested) in response to that, not what's up with them? But instead, what's up with ME? Why does that person set me off? Very often, the reason why that person sets you off is because you project onto them the very, very irritating things that you possess or do or exhibit.

We're not supposed to talk about politics, according to my wife, but I'm gonna talk about politics. Right now there's a group/there's a political party in possession of the Presidency, the Senate, the House (everything, probably, except the Supreme Court at the moment). And constantly, there's the drumbeat that says their politically-weak, out-of-office, minority political opponents are fascists! "They're fascists! They're trying to destroy democracy! They're fascists!" And yet, under the umbrella of that particular political view, someone with a gun went to the congressional softball game and shot Congressman Scalise precisely because he opposed his political views. Billions of dollars of damage were done in the name of that political party's desire to see certain political changes take place all across the country. And recently, someone was run over in North Dakota by someone who says that he feared an 18-year-old potential fascist.

Now, I'm not saying that Republicans are good and that Democrats are evil. They're all evil. They're all corrupt. There was a time when the other political party that's currently out of office had the Presidency, had the Senate, had the House of Representatives, and I think they, at that time, even had the Supreme Court. And they didn't solve any of the political problems that existed then because they still exist now—because we're all so stupid that, as long as the political issue gets preserved, they can say, "We stand for this," and you'll donate money to them and say, "Oh, good. I agree with that. They don't want 'this,'" whatever "this" is! I don't care if it's illegal immigration. I don't care if it's women's rights. I don't care if it's abortion. I don't care if it's strong military. I don't care if it's intervening in foreign wars. It doesn't matter what the political issue is. They feed on exciting you into upset and anger so that you'll part with your pocketbook and give them money. Do you really think that what the Republicans have to offer or what the Democrats have to offer are going to make your life better? Do you really think that electing an egomaniacal strongman will fix electing a doubting, doddering old fool? Do you think we fix problems that way?

We fix our own problems by giving heed and diligence to God and by gaining in light and truth and in comprehending the mysteries of God. Like the horse can shrug off the fly, the Earth herself can shrug off the unrighteous in order to protect even a small group of those who are God's (God's=possessive, apostrophe "s," belonging to Him). We need to live our lives individually so that the Earth recognizes us as someone whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains and who are welcomed upon the Earth because we delight her by serving that same God who organized her, who—in response to His voice—organized herself into the planet, and when He spoke, it caused the dry land to appear. She responded to Him. She was created and organized by Him. She was populated with vegetation and animal life...largely by His consort. But this Earth knows the difference between righteousness and wickedness—and it doesn't matter how many or how few. It only matters how much light and truth we have among us.

Don't be hasty to think that you know more than you do. Don't be hasty to reach a conclusion and defend a proposition when... I can't tell you how often I've studied a matter through at some considerable length, carefully parsing the Scriptures to come up with what I believe to be the right answer, and then, having prepared myself to understand the answer, taking my conclusion before the Lord, only to be corrected

because I did not see and I did not understand. We have to be willing to be corrected—not because we stick our nose into one another's business but because we hear light and truth, and we accept it as such. It tastes good; it feels good. But even then, it's possible that what we're tasting, feeling, hearing, and comprehending is only an introduction to the greater truths that come thereafter.

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God...until they know them in full (Alma 9:3 RE). Well, that “until” process can take some time. I would imagine that even if the Heavens were opened to you and you could behold, as Joseph said, for five minutes the opening of the Heavens, that it would yet be many years before what was revealed to you would be comprehended.

When Nephi recorded his initial impressions upon the revelation that he received when he was trying to understand what his father was teaching him, he would later, then, etch those into the large plates of Nephi. And then, decades later, he got the command to create the small plates of Nephi. It's at least three decades—it could be four decades—between when the events occurred with the revelation that Nephi received before they migrated across the Arabian Peninsula and when he etched them into the small plates of Nephi. And when he does that, he says, ...my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard (2 Nephi 3:6 RE). “Pondereth continually.” Four decades! And what tumbles out of that effort are the small plates of Nephi, which were never abridged by Mormon; we get them in an unabridged, unreformed, unprocessed form, directly from the translation of the small plates of Nephi, in order to replace the lost 116 pages. And these are what Nephi says are the sacred teachings. These are the lessons he wants you to learn.

A few days ago when meeting with the translation team (the Hebrew translation team), I explained to them that what Nephi did in his book was to take and substitute Isaiah text as his—Nephi's—testimony about what he—Nephi—saw because he was commanded by the Lord that he shall not write it. But as soon as he's commanded not to write it, he's given the big hint that others have seen and written it. So Nephi, then, given the restriction that he's not supposed to write it, takes and substitutes the language of Isaiah, but it is his—Nephi's—testimony. And as he progresses through his testimony, he then gives a transition chapter and then an interpretive key. In the transition chapter, he stops quoting Isaiah and begins to paraphrase him, and then he gives you an interpretive key saying, “This is what all of that stuff I just gave you means,” because it's a decidedly American-oriented prophecy about Nephi's vision for the Americas. And then he wraps his plates up (his testimony up), and he hands it to his brother, Jacob, who does exactly the same thing as his brother had done. He tells the people, “Come to the temple tomorrow, and I'm gonna give to you a prophecy.” And the people come to the temple tomorrow, and he reads an allegory for Zenos. And after reading it, he says to the people, “I told you I was going to prophesy to you today. And so, here's my prophecy: What I just read you from Zenos, it's all true.” So, you've got Nephi using Isaiah to bear his testimony about the things he's seen and heard. You've got Jacob, who's been in the presence of the Lord, bearing testimony and prophecy by quoting the words of Zenos.

What we don't have available to us are the brass plates on which a more extensive version of the Old Testament had been recorded. We have Mormon abridging content and putting it together through the rest of the Book of Mormon. I would suggest that the pattern that was established by Nephi and followed by Jacob is the pattern that got followed in all of the Book of Mormon and that what we're getting throughout the remainder of the Book of Mormon are extensive passages from the brass plates incorporated into the account, the teachings, and the testimony that has been preserved as the Book of Mormon. I think if we had a copy of the brass plates and we could compare them with the text that Mormon abridged, that we would all be shocked by the amount of content that reckons from the brass plates. I think there is so much of that into the balance of the record that we have in the Book of Mormon that there's practically nothing of value left in those plates that we haven't already got in the Book of Mormon itself.

So why would someone who gazed into Heaven for five minutes spend time teaching using Isaiah or teaching using Zenos or teaching using quotes from Scripture in order to get the message across? Well, if it's been said by someone else in a way that is sufficient to teach the precept, it's rather like what Christ taught about the rich man who dies and goes to Sheol who, lifting up his eyes, being in torment, sees Lazarus, and asks him, "Hey, go deliver a message to my brothers. Warn them about this." And the parable the Lord taught was, "Hey, they've got Moses and the prophets. If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they wouldn't believe, though one should return from the dead," making a prophetic comment about those that were rejecting Himself.

The Scriptures are in front of us. But just like civil violence is described in current political vocabulary as "reasonable dissent" and just like competing viewpoints are denounced and censored on college campuses today because words are called "violence," it is possible for us to take the words of Scripture and to use the words of Scripture in order to justify our own pride and vanity and insecurity, vain ambition, and desire to control and subjugate.

It isn't the words of Scripture that are gonna get us where we need to get. It's gonna require something more and maybe a lot more of what my wife talked about before I got up here than what I'm talking about now that I'm up here. Because we really do need to listen to one another and to hear and to put ourselves into someone else's shoes. And instead of being triggered, ask ourselves, "Why? Why do I want to react in that way? Why do I want to behave in that unbecoming way? Why do I want to attribute ill-motive? Maybe the problem lies within myself, as opposed to within what I'm finding to be so irritating that I can't keep silent anymore! I must speak up..." with little regard to how ugly our reactions are, with little regard to how unbecoming we can be in our self-righteousness.

You know, we do have an obligation to take care of the children. We do have an obligation—like that latest comment from the Lord suggests—to be careful about taking vulnerable people and exposing them to things that are unbecoming. I don't know if you've seen the pictures of that high school shop teacher with the prosthetic boobs that

look like he's gonna lose them in a table saw if he's... I don't know how you can be a shop teacher and be doing that. There's some behavior that is so outrageous and so sexually deviant that, just a little while ago, it would have landed the person in jail. And today it's being defended as an expression of freedom and a desire to overcome the patriarchy. It's just nonsense. There's so much abuse of children going on in the communities of the United States right now that parades itself as a virtue and gets clothed in the language of virtue, that we ought to look at that and think for ourselves that sometimes we too use the language of virtue to describe and conceal what's really going on inside ourselves.

None of us are that good. None of us. But the Lord is forgiving and kind, willing to correct, willing to forgive, and eager for us to catch on to what happens when we give heed and diligence. We can't make someone else give heed. We can't browbeat someone else into diligence. That can't happen! The heed that must be given and the diligence that must be shown is internal to yourself and internal to myself. And I know there are times when I'm anything but giving the kind of heed and diligence that ought to be given, even to a kindly and forgiving Lord.

Well, I'm gonna close, because we're destined to get out of here by two o'clock, and I think there's something like a closing "something or other." And at my wife's insistence, I'm not gonna take questions. She thinks more often than not, I do something foolish when responding spontaneously.

But I don't want to end without saying that the thoughts that have been gathered today I consider to be as important as anything I've ever said and worthy of saying in the name of Jesus Christ, Mahalo.

[Transcription v1.1]

2022.10.22 Unity in Humanity Interfaith Celebration

Online Conference

Denver Snuffer Jr.

October 22, 2022

Jill Van Haren: All right, so our last speaker, I'd like to welcome Denver.

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. He lives in Sandy, Utah. He was admitted to practice law in 1980 in Utah and remains a practicing attorney. He was a convert to the LDS faith in 1973 when he was 19 years old, and he was excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exactly 40 years later for writing a book called *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. During those 40 years, he served on the Stake High Council [and] taught Gospel Doctrine and priesthood classes for 21 years. He's the author of many books, including *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil*. Welcome, Denver.

Denver Snuffer: How are you doing, Jill?

I've been listening to everyone's talk before now, and while I would use a different vocabulary, much of what got said would be something that could be said in my faith, just using a different vocabulary.

There are only a handful of predominant religions in the world. But to a believer, I don't think the numbers matter. The truth—if someone's got what they believe to be truth—is something that people like to hold on, even if there are “few who find it,” to quote Christ. The numbers in various predominant religions run something like this:

- There's a total of 2.38 billion Catholics in the world, or excuse me, Christians in the world, of which 1.3 billion are Catholic, and 1 billion are Protestant.
- There are 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, but surprisingly, 1.5 billion out of that are Sunni, and only 270 million are estimated to be Shia.
- 1.2 billion Hindus,
- 506 million Buddhists,
- 26.4 million Sikhs,
- Mormons slightly outnumber the number of Jews in the world at 16.6 million Mormons (nominally Mormon) and 15.8 million Jews, and
- Daoists there are 8.7 million.

I belong to a small group of people that believe in Mormonism (and Mormonism is expansive in the sense that anyone that believes in the Book of Mormon is regarded as Mormon). But I don't belong to the largest sect of that, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (I did once; Jill mentioned I was excommunicated.) I'm part of a small group—maybe a few thousand people—trying to recapture the original, dramatic, living religion that Joseph Smith taught at the time that Joseph Smith was alive and restoring what's regarded as the “original religion that goes back to the time of Adam.” Part of that religion is belief in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon has a verse in it that says this:

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore, we see that the Lord doth counsel in his wisdom, according to that which is just and true. (Alma 15:13 RE)

From that verse, I take it that no matter where you go, what nation you're involved with, what tongue is spoken, what vocabulary gets applied, that all the religions that there are in the world have some relation to God and that God intended for these diverse belief systems to be out there, and that if you, as part of your belief system, have something that is true and you have an opportunity to offer that to me, that I ought to be willing to accept it, that truth belongs in one aggregated whole and not splintered as it is, but it's up to us to undertake the effort to do that gathering.

There's pressure on every religion to change, and that pressure begins immediately. Before Mohammed was dead, the religion was under pressure to change; after he was dead, there was pressure to change it before it was reduced to writing. By the time it was reduced to writing, there were multiple forms of the Quran. The, umm... Wars were fought, and books were burned in order to bring Islam into a unified, single text. That mirrors what happened in Christianity with the fights that occurred in the second and third century of Christianity in trying to settle on what was the correct bundle of beliefs and warring factions, fighting one another, until finally there became one universal or Catholic Christian faith, and it predominated.

Forces and arguments that apply to religions today suggest that religious beliefs are outdated. There are arguments that they're harmful to the individual, or they're harmful to society, or they're an impediment to the progress of science or humanity. And in recent decades, there's been a precipitous decline in the West of biblical moral values, and that's been mirrored by similar declines in the East. This decline has paralleled the rapid escalation of culture shifts, such as relativism, and materialism, individualism, and secularism. These have caused all religions in general to become increasingly marginalized throughout the world.

Since the Industrial Revolution, social change has been initiated increasingly by the youth. Economic[s] changed the opportunities that children were afforded because of the Industrial Revolution, and that separated children from their parents' professions. Before then, a butcher's children grew up to be a butcher; a carpenter's children grew up to be carpenters; brick masons produced brick masons; and so on. But the revolution allowed new opportunities for the children. And they separated not only from their parents physically but also, increasingly, culturally and religiously.

But it's a biblical curse to be led by children, and since World War II, children have been at the leading edge of social change and religious change. And an observer of the upheaval wrote a song about what was underway in 1963. He wrote it because of what he perceived to be the zeitgeist, the spirit of the times that was then underway. It was written in September and October of 1963:

Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam,

And admit that the waters
Around you have grown,
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone,
For the times they are a-changin'.

And more directly, a verse later:

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout all the land,
And don't criticize
What you can't understand.
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command,
For your old road is rapidly agin'.
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand,
For the times they are a-changin'.

...As the present now
Will later be passed,
The order is rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now will later be last,
For the times they are a-changin'.
(The Times They Are A-Changin' by Bob Dylan)

That was true in the post-World War II baby-boom generation. But modern social media and modern communications and social networks have increasingly skewed the development of social change into the hands of the youth. And not to be left on the side, there are a lot of deliberate forces who have studied social change who interject themselves directly into the process of leading that social change from behind nameless, faceless walls where they interject into the stream ideas that are increasingly amoral, increasingly selfish, self-centered, sexually deviant, destructive of the family, destructive of religious traditions and religious histories that we want to hold on to. As Kevin talked about his return to an earlier form of religion because of his discouragement from what he saw in Christianity, so likewise, the social media change is encouraging everyone to abandon the mores and the anchor that the religious values they were raised with provided to them.

John Lennon wrote a song that was based upon a book that was written by Timothy Leary who paraphrased from the Tibet[an] Book of the Dead. And so, ideas from Buddhism crept into the social change underway in the 1960s in the form of the Buddhist ideas that infected the lyrics of John Lennon. Later, all of the Beatles attended a lecture in August of 1967 by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at the Hilton Hotel in London. Afterwards, they met with him privately; they were favorably impressed, and they went up to Bangor in north Wales for a weekend seminar. While the Beatles were in Wales at

the seminar of the Maharaja, Brian Epstein (the one who had managed the Beatles) died, and the death of the Beatles' manager (coinciding with the transcendental meditation instruction) no doubt had a great deal to do with the Beatles' decision to move to India in February of 1967 [1968] for several months of training. While there, it was one of the most productive songwriting periods of the band, but it ended badly when the Maharishi was accused of inappropriate sexual misconduct. Cultural currents of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism (and in John Lennon's case, Atheism) all merged into the music of the Beatles. And an onslaught of cultural drift from social media giants today is also spreading a new wave of innovation, confusion, irreligion, mixed religion, and we find ourselves in the midst of materialism, hedonism, sexual confusion, and intolerance predominating in the new values that are attempting to replace the old ones that are based on the traditional religions.

Well, this conference is supposed to be comparing notes, so to speak, across religious faiths. All lives are temporary; we learn from the past what the dead leave us in writing, song, architecture, and social structure. But we will soon be joining our dead ancestors. And the question arises: What are we gonna leave to benefit our posterity who will have arrived after us when we've departed from this temporary place? Why would we choose to leave something? What could possibly be the most important thing we can bequeath? I'd suggest that words of truth resonate across every culture, across every religion, across every language. They're not only the most valuable thing that we can leave behind, but they're also the most enduring. Truth outlasts brick and mortar. It endures beyond empires, it moves nations, it gives meaning to life, and it raises our eyesight above the ground and lets us peer into eternity.

Kevin mentioned the star theology of the Blackfeet. Star theology is very much a part of a true religion. Ultimately, we hope to build a temple, and in the temple, I expect there will be a great deal that memorializes in architecture a true star theology.

I want to thank everyone who's participated from their vantage point in giving us what they have given us. I believe that God is knowable. I believe that it's part of the quest of meaning in this life for us to seek to know God and to obtain understanding directly from Him and not derivatively simply from books or from the past—but to let a religion live in us, in which God's presence through us is manifest in the earth by the things we say, the things we do, the things we think.

Now, I was told to leave time for questions. And so I want to do that. But I also want to point out that there's a point in the Old Testament where the patriarchal father over the twelve tribes of Israel is in the process of giving blessings to prophesy what is going to befall his posterity on to the end of time. And his oldest son, Reuben, was given a blessing, which says, Reuben, you, my first born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellence of dignity, and the excellence of power. Unstable as water, you shall not [prosper] (Genesis 49:4 RE). Now, the way I have read that most often in the past is that he's telling him that Reuben and his posterity is gonna be too unstable in their convictions and their way of life to prosper. But recently, I've had a change of mind. And I think what he's saying is, if you are unstable as water, you will not prosper. And I think that admonition/that warning/that counsel to the son, Reuben, is applicable to all of

us. And that when we allow our religious convictions to become unstable, unanchored in the solidity of what is enduring and eternal, then we become incapable of prospering. And so I would end by saying, be true and believing to your faiths, to the traditions you've held that are true; be solid as a rock in resisting the winds of compromise and doubt, because they surely are upon us.

Oh, there's one question I see here (I've called up the questions), asking about what song it was. It's "Tomorrow Never Knows," a song that got its title not from the book but from one of Ringo Starr's malapropisms: "a hard day's night," "eight days a week"... These are just things that Ringo Starr would say. And the title of John Lennon's song was "Tomorrow Never Knows," 'cuz Ringo would utter that. And it's one of the most innovative songs that The Beatles introduced—the last song on the Revolver album—and it would point the way to where that band was headed.

Okay, so here's a question that says, "If Joseph Smith was oriented to the religion of Adam, will it not require us to grow in understanding of what Adam understood?" Yes, absolutely. Without any doubt, it will take a great deal to make the leap across from where we are now into a religion that is far more comprehensive and far more oriented towards nature and eternity. The stars... When you look at the stars, for example, you're literally looking back billions of years (just to the naked eye). And so, being quiet and going out at night and looking up at the star fields is one way to project yourself back into eternity—billions and billions of years—visually, because they are... What you're seeing now is something from the long-distant past. And it's right there available for you to behold and for you to meditate upon. And it's a way to connect you up by being still with a much greater consciousness that fills the immensity of space and originates from God Himself.

So, another question: "How do you suggest someone moves from connecting with God through Scripture to connecting with God directly through experience or spirit?" Every bit of Scripture that you read, every profound idea that you encounter has an affect on you. And if you slow down and you allow it to sink deeply into your heart and your mind, and if you consider it carefully, the idea will eventually occur to you that you're not separated in time and space from that which is timeless and eternal, but that you, too, are part of that.

There's a sermon given by King Benjamin (in the book of Mosiah of the Book of Mormon) in which he points out that God is sustaining you by His power, from moment to moment, by lending you breath so that you might live and move and do according to your own will. What that statement by King Benjamin tells you is that the very breath that you breathe connects you to God because He's lending it to you. Without that connection directly and immediately with God, you wouldn't be able to breathe. Therefore, there's an immediacy and a familiarity between you and God that exists innately. How you connect is to begin to pay attention to that.

And then there's this question, "What is one of the most important truths you ponder throughout the day? Where do you spend your time thinking and pondering?" Well, there's a lot of things that have to be done. There's a lot of things that are currently

underway or that will shortly be underway that require careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts. I contemplate about the potential for failure. I contemplate the potential for my own weakness and my own inability. I contemplate about how odd the responses are by those who are both opposed to and those that are over-eager with what God is up to and doing today—and about how hard it is to cut the middle line and to keep everything in balance so that it proceeds in an orderly and steady and careful fashion. I worry about my own inadequacies and inabilities, and I worry about the people around me. I've pondered about all the illnesses that I have seen, the deaths of friends, the temporary nature of our existence here, and about how we really do need to take carefully and use the time carefully because it is extraordinarily valuable, the time we have here in mortality.

Thank you.

Jill Van Haren: Thank you so much, Denver. Along those same lines, I had a question. Thinking about mortality—and with Gayle referencing, you know, in terms of her understanding of reincarnation and then taking upon a body until we get it right, and then she expounded on what that meant—but I just wonder if you can tell us what your thoughts are on the purpose of coming here into these physical bodies and what we're to be doing with our time that you were just mentioning that's so precious.

Denver Snuffer: Everyone here is to be added upon as a result of what happens to us in mortality. And it doesn't matter if your life is short and brutal or if your life is long. Everyone who comes into a mortal body in this sphere gets added upon. We will depart here, and we will go to a place where there aren't bodies in this form, where we'll be given a chance to think back upon what we experienced. And if it was harsh and brutal and short and mean, that will give us a chance to meditate upon the meaning of those things and why they are negative and why there ought to be something better. If your life is long and successful, you'll have a chance to reflect back upon what good you did, if any. And what more good you could have done, but you failed to do, if you were self-indulgent. We are in the process of gaining understanding, light and truth, and sometimes that comes at the expense of hurting others. And sometimes that comes at the value of helping others. But everything that goes on here will not be forfeited; it will be kept. And we will move from—as the Scriptures put it, “worlds without end”—from sphere to sphere, experience to experience, over whatever time it takes, however many lives it may take, in order to be added on so that we can become like what our Scriptures define as “the prototype of the saved man.” That prototype of the saved man is Jesus Christ because death could not hold Him in the grave. The grave took Him, and He reclaimed His body, and He ascended into Heaven because He is the prototype of the saved man. And eventually, we are to arrive at that same end—but it may take worlds without end. We're here along a long, long path—an eternal path—to gain experience while we are here temporarily and to learn.

Thank you.

Jill Van Haren: Thank you so much for that last question, Denver. Thank you so much for coming.

2022.11.20 Righteousness

Fireside with Q&A Session

Denver Snuffer Jr.

November 20, 2022

So, we're ready? All right, then. I want to thank Dave and Amberli for hosting this and allowing it to take place at their home.

This is about righteousness. And keep in mind that the test of righteousness is the same in every generation—it's invariable; it doesn't change. To define righteousness, therefore, it's useful to go back and to look at the very first generations, because the criteria get established—and get established very early on.

In the Lectures on Faith, there's a series of questions at the end: *How many noted righteous men lived from Adam to Noah?* The answer is, *Nine, which includes Abel, who was slain by his brother.* And then the next question is: *What are their names?* *Abel, Seth, Enos Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech* (LoF 2:72-73). If you add Adam and Noah to that list, then it's not nine; it's eleven. And if you eliminate Seth, or excuse me, Abel (because he died and was replaced by Seth), then you have ten. And there were ten of them that were there at the relevant time. And I'm reading from Teachings and Commandments 154:19:

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

So now we have a list of specific men who are called "righteous," but then we also have the *residue* (that is unnumbered and unnamed) who are also called *righteous*. So, the criteria for "righteousness" begins to take some shape.

I have set you to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of you, and you are a prince over them for ever.

If you go to the Book of Abraham chapter one, verse one and you look at what Abraham desired to be, his desire was to be a "father of many nations." Now, we view "nations" in the geopolitical sense of countries with boundaries. The way in which the word "nations" get used throughout the Old Testament is tribal. There's a nation of Benjamin, and a nation of Joseph, and a nation of Simon, and a nation of Reuben. These are simply divisions of the family. But when the division of the family became large enough, it ceased to be just a man or a family or a tribe; it becomes a nation. Adam was given the promise at the beginning that he would be the father of many nations, and when Abraham was seeking to restore—from apostasy—himself into the Holy Order, the one

thing that he associated that with was the fatherhood and principedom in which he would reign over them for ever.

In the fullest sense, this is talking about the Holy Order, which requires both a patriarch and a matriarch, together, to be part of the organization of righteousness (which is the government of God, which is the kingdom of God). So how is the residue of unnamed and unnumbered people regarded as being *righteous*? Well, Christ explained that and defined how you include others within the status of righteousness (that those who are called to these positions were given) as equals.

This is Christ speaking:

He who receives you, receives me. And he who receives me, receives him who sent me. He that receives a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward. And he that receives a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever shall give [a] drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall by no means lose his reward. (Matthew 5:8 RE)

This has been true since the beginning. It has always been the rule that when you receive and acknowledge a prophet, in the name of a prophet, you receive a prophet's reward.

When God delivers a dispensation of the gospel to the earth, the head of that dispensation is granted the right and privilege of organizing the dispensation. As the head organizes their dispensation according to righteous principles and receives God's approval of the pattern, the dispensation is established and remains in effect until apostasy necessitates another restoration. (T&C 154:1)

That's in the Teachings and Commandments 154:1.

Prior dispensations have been modeled after earlier patterns. And after Abraham, ~~all of the prior~~ all of the post-Abraham dispensations were organized after the pattern of Father Abraham (which is another interesting thing about nomenclature: We refer, invariably, to Adam as "Father Adam," and we refer to Abraham as "Father Abraham" because those two stand preeminent among all of the children of God as fathers from whom subsequent dispensations were descended or reckoned). Abraham's dispensation was patterned after Abraham's [Adam's] because he instituted the family order. However, because he [Abraham] had twelve sons in the third generation—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; its referred to in that manner in Scripture because God covenanted in turn with each of the three of them—and then in Joseph's generation, there were twelve sons. And so Peter, James, and John—and the First Presidency with the President and the two counselors—and the Quorum of the Twelve, both anciently and in later dispensations, all got patterned after the family of Abraham.

(There's plenty of seats...not that we really want you to join us [laughter]—but there you are.)

This is from a new volume of Scripture called the Testimony of St. John, which appears in the Teachings and Commandments as section 171.

*Jesus said, I am here in the world to prove who is **righteous** and who is not. Those who have been **blinded by falsehoods** I can teach them to see, and for those claiming they see clearly, I will leave them **in** their blindness. And some of the leaders who were nearby overheard him say this, and asked him, Are we blind also? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would not have sinned. But because you claim, We see, therefore your sins remain.*

*In the name of Father Ahman I tell you, If you do not enter by the doorway into the protective sheepfold, but climb in [by] any other way, then you are only a thief and a robber. But when you enter at the door and the shepherd lets you enter, then you belong. The shepherd guards the entry, and **his sheep respond to his voice**. He calls his sheep by name and leads them up. He leads his sheep by his example and asks them to follow in his path, and they follow because they **trust his words**. His sheep will not follow another, but will flee from a stranger. They do not recognize the stranger's voice. Jesus told this parable to them, but they could not understand what he meant by the parable.*

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, In the name of Father Ahman I tell you, I am the door of the sheepfold. Every teacher now or before who has not testified of me are only thieves and robbers trying to take my sheep away, but my sheep have refused to heed them. I am the door. Any man that enters the sheepfold through me shall be saved and shall continue to progress and be supported. **The thief only intends to steal, slay, and consume the sheep**. I have come to preserve the lives of my sheep so that they might have abundant life.*

I am the good shepherd, and a good shepherd will sacrifice his own life for the lives of [the] sheep. The true shepherd does not profit from the sheep, regarding them only as property, and cares nothing for the lives of the sheep. The false shepherd runs away when he sees a wolf approaching, letting the wolf destroy and scatter the sheep. I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and they know me. But he who profits from the sheep flees, because he is only self-interested and cares nothing about the sheep. Just as the Father laid down his life for me, he trusts me with the lives of the sheep. I will sacrifice my life for the sheep. (TSJ 7:8-11, emphasis added)

So, when Christ is explaining how His sheep are known or identified, they “respond to **his** voice,” they listen to and they “trust **his** words,” they will not respond to/they will reject the stranger’s voice. And He begins that by saying, “I’m here in the world to prove who is righteous.” And so, if you are going to define righteousness by responding to the Master’s voice and rejecting and not responding to the stranger’s voice, then you need to take considerable heed and extraordinary care in how you distinguish those who come professing to be on an errand from someone else—because almost invariably,

those that follow the true Shepherd, likewise do “not profit from [His] sheep.” They likewise do not regard His sheep “as [merely] property, [caring] nothing for the lives of [His] sheep.” This is a standard or a scale to test or measure whether or not you’re hearing a voice that originates from the Master, the Good Shepherd.

Those who profit from the sheep, very often quite handsomely...

In law school, there was this saying about the two oldest professions are prostitutes and lawyers. But lawyers, back in that sense, were ministers because the canon of law was the Scriptures. And so everyone wanted, you know, a legal ruling on what the Scriptures meant. And therefore, the two oldest professions are prostitutes and the ministry, as it turns out. And ministers almost invariably make a great deal of money profiting from the sheep.

There’s a great variety in both person and personality who are chosen by the Lord to be messengers—to be prophets, if you will. Some of them are likable, and some of them are quite unlikable. They come in every variety.

One of the most dramatic comparisons that happened were the closing out of one dispensation and the opening of another dispensation in the form of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. And people who were able to reject both John and Jesus had their reasons for doing so for each one of them. And Christ made an observation about that. He said,

But unto what shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their friends, and saying, We have piped unto you and you have not danced. We have mourned for you and you have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But I say unto you, Wisdom is justified of her children. (Matthew 6:4 RE)

I don’t care who the messenger has been or will be, there will **always** be a reason to take offense. If even the Son of God gave offense to people, how much more will mere mortal men give to others, even if they happen to be a messenger sent by Him? But I want to remind you of a passage in the Teachings and Commandments 69:26 (which is the same thing as Doctrine and Covenants section 76):

...the glory of the Celestial is one, even as the glory of the Son is one. And the glory of the terrestrial is one, even as the glory of the moon is one. And the glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars are one, for as one star differeth from another star in glory, even so differeth one from another in glory in the telestial world. For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another: some of Christ, ...some of John, ...some of Moses, ...some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch, but [receive] not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenants.

Now, this is followed almost immediately after by describing the people who will inherit this condition, and it says that they will be **thrust down to hell**. They are liars. They are sorcerers. They are adulterers. They are whoremongers. They are people who love and make a lie. All of that is equated to those who “[receive] not...the prophets.” So when the Lord sends a message and it is His voice that is announcing the message—it’s not some mere mortal; it’s not some flawed individual; it’s not someone about whom it is easy to find an accusation... Because all men have fallen short of the glory of God. All men are weak. And there is no one that doesn’t deserve some condemnation or judgment or basis for rejecting them. That’s not the issue. The issue is **what is said**. And what is said must reflect the Master’s voice. If what is said reflects the Master’s voice, then the individual is of no consequence whatever. But rejecting the voice of the Master—no matter who it is that He chooses to send—is a most serious obligation that is essentially the same thing as being a liar, a sorcerer, an adulterer.

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, “John...wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, [and] the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven...” That’s from the *Teachings of the Prophet [Joseph Smith]*, page 276. In the Teachings and Commandments 82:14, it points out that John *was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power: to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power*. John was sent forth in part to be rejected by the Jews so that he could wrest the keys, the kingdom, and the power and the glory from the Jews, and this by the holy anointing and decree of heaven. Because an angel had established it and because the powers of heaven were behind it, the rejection of John was a necessary step to permit one dispensation to close and another to begin. God follows patterns in every age.

Now, we read the New Testament account—which is written from an insider’s viewpoint, contemporaneous with the people that were accomplishing these things—and to us, John’s mission/ministry/authority/legitimacy is unquestionable—because we’re on the inside, and we see it. But if you were there living in that day, *What went ye [forth in] the wilderness...to see? A reed shak[ing in] the wind?* (Luke 7:24 LE). What would you go out there with your expectations? He wore camel’s hair. This was not a man who would fit in well in any of the cities of Galilee or Judea.

Very few of that generation even noticed. I mean, the Scriptures make it sound like he was a big splash—and there probably were those who were devout, believing Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians who went out to be baptized perfunctorily as kind of a, “Hey, let’s get in on this. I mean, they’re practicing baptism anyway. Let’s go get ours from him too,” but whose heart was not in it. Well,

The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son. And when the marriage was ready, he sent forth his servants to call them that were bid to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bid, Behold, I have prepared my oxen, ...my fatlings have been killed, ...my dinner is ready, and all things are prepared; therefore, come unto the marriage. But they made light of the servants and went

their ways — one to his farm, ...another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and treated them spitefully, [who] slew them. But when the king heard that his servants were dead, he was angry. And he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

*Then said he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who were bid were not worthy. Go therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all, as many as they found, **both [good and bad]**, and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he said unto him, Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then [the king said] unto his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take and cast him away into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few [are] chosen; wherefore, all do not have on the wedding garment. (Matthew 10:17-19 RE, emphasis added)

See, the invitation is always extended. And the opportunity always exists to accept the invitation and to say, *Lord, I believe*, but falling short of saying, *Help thou mine unbelief* (Mark 9:24 LE), they aren't helped, and they don't put on the wedding garment. Well, what (in this sense) is the wedding garment? It's not just to *hear* and to *say*, but it's also to *do*, because it's easy to give some lip-service to any noble idea, but it's difficult to then follow through, commit to, and take the steps required if you do believe.

So, going back to the beginning, that first generation,

*And in that day the holy ghost fell upon Adam, which bore record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and for ever, that as you have fallen, you may be redeemed — and all mankind, even as many as choose. And in that day, Adam blessed God, and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying, Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again, in my flesh I shall see God. And Eve his wife heard all these things and was glad, saying, Were it not for our transgression, we should never [have] had seed, and should never ha[ve] known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God gives unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they [this is Adam **and** Eve; this is not merely the man Adam—**they** (she too)...] made all things known unto their sons and...daughters.*

They (Eve too) preached righteousness.

And Satan came among them, saying, I am also a Son of God. And he commanded them, saying, Believe not. And they believed not, and loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish. And the Lord God called upon men by the holy ghost everywhere and

commanded them that they should repent. And as many as believed in the Son... repented of their sins should be saved. And as many as believed not and repented not should be damned. And the words went forth out of the mouth of God in a firm decree, wherefore they must be fulfilled. And Adam ceased not to call upon God, and Eve also his wife. (Genesis 3:4-5 RE, emphasis added)

So, she too—**she too**—ceased not to call upon God.

Now, this may sound like a curious matter, where God has access to mankind, and Satan also has access to mankind. And the narrative reads as if Adam and Eve and their descendants stand in the presence of and have access to God and angels openly and Satan openly, and Satan appears and says, “Don’t believe it,” and he preaches (in their disbelief) things that will make them gratified, carnal, sensual, and devilish.

Well, there was a different order of things long ago and far away, in which the veil that exists predominantly now was easily traversed. It is for the protection of mankind that a veil was installed, so that apparently powerful, spiritual, great beings who are malevolent and evil and corrupting and who urge you to carnality and sensuality, and devilishness don’t get access to you—because there has to be an **equal** opposition in all things. If your mind ascends to the highest heights (as Joseph put it in his letter from Liberty Jail), your mind also must descend into the darkest abyss—because you cannot ascend without exposing yourself to a larger spectrum of opposition, so that you are left in the balance to choose. It is for mankind’s protection and potential salvation that limits are placed upon the adversary and his access to you. And yet there are so many people who are willingly captured by carnality/sensuality/power-over-their-fellow-man that mankind is easily corrupted into seeking for things that titillate the mind, gratify the senses, and suggest overindulgence in any of the bodily weaknesses that we all possess because we’re here in a body of dust [and] are vulnerable to.

And so, “believe [it] not,” and they believed not. So what was the requirement? Believe in the Son and repent of your sins. It’s one thing to say you believe in the Son; it’s another to repent of your sins.

Well, this is the Lord observing the state of affairs when He was here ministering among mankind. It’s something that could have been said equally by Joseph Smith when he was here ministering among us.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. And blessed are you because these things have come unto you that you might understand them. And truly I say [to] you, many righteous prophets have desired to see these days which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear that which you hear, and have not heard. (Matthew 7:3 RE)

In Galatians, the apostle Paul wrote,

Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, know therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture[s], foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,

preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed. So then they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
(Galatians 1:7 RE)

Abraham is the father of the righteous and the prototype of the saved man in his generation because he was able to claw back out of a state of apostasy into a state of faithfulness, communing with God and renewing an order that had fallen into disuse everywhere except for a tiny enclave headed by someone who had been an antediluvian and who had the right (because the right continued right up into the flood) to be translated into Heaven, but he stayed behind to fulfill a mission. But having fulfilled the mission (that is, handing it off to Abraham), Melchizedek then likewise ascended and, with him, his city.

I'm a lawyer, and I've tried a number of cases. And there's a case I tried in Washington, D.C. against members of the (or opposing counsel from) the U.S. Justice Department. And they—not just the Justice Department but opposing lawyers, generally—when they're trying to prove a point, they always look for the “least likely witness to be able to handle the cross-examination,” because what they're interested in is an answer that they can use, and if the answer is in error, it's all the more good because they're seeking a certain outcome. And so, they generally press people who are not in charge of something to give them observations that they can use. And there was a moment when there was a witness on the stand who was working with my client (he was a vice president in their company), and the Justice Department attorney was asking him about something that had gone on during the phase of the job when it was being bid and trying to get him to ~~say some~~ make some observations about the “early on.” And the witness said, “I don't know.” And he was pressed and pressed and harassed. He was an old Marine who had fought on Iwo Jima. And after he had been pressed a number of times, he responded by saying, in effect (it's a pretty close paraphrase, really), “When I landed on the beach, I had five yards that were mine. Those five yards were mine to the center of the island. I didn't give a damn about what was going on ten yards away; I owned five yards. And I fought to the middle of the island. You're asking me shit about stuff that's 50 yards down the beach, and I wasn't there.”

Well, the judge was actually, at the time, he was the Chief Judge of the United States Claims Court. But I'm telling you, no one, including the Chief Judge of the U.S. Claims Court, was going to take umbrage at a Iwo Jima veteran using colorful language under oath in the U.S. Claims Court. The fellow's name was Jim Vallett. He's been dead a number of years now. But you always knew where you stood with Jim Vallett.

A lot of times messengers that are sent by the Lord are just like a marine landing on Iwo Jima given five yards and told, “Take it to the center of the island!” And they just can't deal with stuff outside of their purview without losing fact of the assignment that they've been given. And so, you read about them and you see what their ministries are like, and you wonder at them. Elijah did some remarkable things. And yet, as Christ observed, there were many widows who lost children. There was only one that Elijah restored the son for.

We tend to want to see signs and wonders and miracles without ever appreciating the fact that it is a wicked and an adulterous generation that seeks after a sign. I mean, these signs follow them that believe. But broadcasting them in order to attract attention is not the way in which signs are supposed to be used. I've witnessed miracles; there are people in this room that have, likewise, with me. But that does not mean that any of us should talk about it. The signs follow. And if you have a sign that is given unto you, that's for your own edification and use. Because if we broadcast those things, do you know who we attract?

[Answer from audience member]

Yeah—they're shallow. And they grow up in a day, and then the heat comes and burns them up because they have no depth.

But what do you think? A man had two sons. And he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. [And] he answered and said, I will not. But afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I will serve, and went not. Which of those two did the will of [the] father? They [said] unto him, The first. Jesus said unto them, Truly I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you; for John came unto you in the way of righteousness and bore record of me and you believed him not, but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And you, afterward, when you had seen me, repented not, that you might believe him; for he that believed not John concerning me cannot believe me, except he first repent. And except you repent, the preaching of John shall condemn you in the day of judgment. (Matthew 10:11 RE)

You know, it's just like that continuously. The words that John spoke need to be separated from the demeanor that John presented and the physical attributes of the man. It always should be limited to an evaluation of whether or not it leads to repentance, belief in God, and righteousness; whether or not it convicts you in your heart that there's something amiss with you—because all of us have things that are amiss within us. And that (and repenting of that) is where we come in contact with the Almighty. It's in the struggle to leave behind the weight of those things that Christ explains, "Take upon me [you] my yoke, because the burden is easy, and the work is light." Laying down your sins may seem like an impossible achievement and difficult to be routed out, but on the other side of repentance, what you find is the load has been lightened, and your life is better, and things are seen more clearly, and you can distinguish between truth and error in an increasingly obvious way—because as light increases, darkness becomes discernible. The "light that shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not" **is the Son of God**. And so, accept the light, receive the light, let it cleanse what's amiss within you, and see if climbing on that upward journey doesn't improve the distance that you can see and the vistas that you behold because light illuminates and comprehension increases.

Oh, I'm gonna go ahead and say (on this initial part) that I'm gonna conclude.

I told them before we began that I would be willing to answer some questions—but not from people that I recognize that I've seen before [laughter] (because you're gonna ask questions about things that are off this topic or esoteric or less meaningful for the real people that we wanted to do this for this evening). So, did you gather some questions?

Todd Cella (Question 1): Yeah, we had one come in earlier, just regarding the hierarchy of the faith/the group?

DS: Yeah, if I had a board I would draw you the hierarchy. There is a... There's an absolute hierarchy...

[Amberli gets up to get a whiteboard] Oh, we don't need one. I can do this.

There's an absolute hierarchy. And you... I'll try and make it simple so you can commit it to memory. There is God the Father and Jesus Christ [at the top of the hierarchy]. Then there's **everyone** else [on the next rung down]. And then I'm below them, doing my best to try and elevate others—and accountable for how poor a job I'm doing. But that's the hierarchy.

Yeah, is that it? So we're done with questions?

TC: You're done with questions? Are you done?

DS: No, do not have any more questions?

TC (Question 2): There is a question regarding righteousness, if you could discuss: Is it possible... For example, Jonah was righteous but disobedient to a personal commandment he received from the Lord, and we all have personal commandments we're receiving from the Lord, and is it possible you can be numbered amongst the people of Christ while disobeying whether it's a commandment to forgive a sibling or keep a journal?

DS: Keep a journal... [chuckling]. Yeah, I'm fairly certain there will be enormous numbers of people who are kept out of the kingdom of Heaven for the want of a journal. [laughter]

You know, you can give tithe of mint and anise but leave out the weightier matters of law. And look: We've got nine kids, and sibling tensions come and go, rise and fall, and are inevitable. We have two granddaughters that are old enough now to occupy space and do things. And if the younger of the two infringes upon a toy that the older of the two feels possessive about, she'll go knock her down and take it away and go her way happily. And of course, they're beneath the age of accountability. And so, I mean, yeah—Jesus suffered for that too. And they seem to be aggressive about pouring it on our poor Lord.

Look, there's an inevitability in our own shortcomings—all of us, continuously. And there were, actually, four talks... There were two get-togethers called "Understanding Your Soul," where both my wife and I spoke about, you know, what comprises you. You are captured, and you are inside a body of dust that will be unoccupied at death, but it's

being occupied by you right now. This body—this physical body—has its own agenda. It wants to eat; it wants to sleep; it wants to reproduce—because the body senses its own inevitable decline and death. There are natural appetites that attach to this. And then there's a spirit inside of you that seeks to do good and would like to be holy. But we get preoccupied with the desires, appetites, and passions of the flesh.

Well, what that means is that inside you, there is a lot of “junk thought” that goes on. But that's what the body is doing. You're never going to overcome those fits of anger, those lapses. What you need to do is to recognize that that's not you and that you are eternal, you're better than that, and that you're here experiencing this temporarily, but that eventually, if you live long enough, all those passions are gonna fade, all those physical abilities are going to wear down. And it doesn't matter if you're an Olympic athlete, eventually...

(Boy, I just have to... I have a sense of humor that gets me in trouble more often than not.)

What I was gonna say: You could be a decathlon winner on a Wheaties box, but that doesn't mean you're not gonna wind up wearing heels and a dress later [laughter].

Yeah, look: Edit that out, whoever's...

TC: Does anyone else have any questions? If not, we will...

Amberli Peterson (Question 3): This is... Just to go to the heart of this, so really, at the end of the day, what you're saying is righteousness can be defined in the most simple terms as hearing the voice of the Shepherd, the voice of the Son, hearing that voice, heeding it, and repenting.

DS: Yeah, no matter where that voice comes from. The Lord can choose any number of ways to get His message across. And even if the *messenger* appears not to be ideal... I can almost guarantee you, however, that the only ones who are going to occupy the chief seats (once the chief seats become enviable) are going to be the publicans and the sinners. Because if the chief seats don't confer upon you wealth and power and status and recognition, if instead what the chief seats give to you is sacrifice and difficulty and derision and insults, then the chief seats are only gonna have gravitating to them the people who are in it for themselves.

I remember when the LDS Church was insulted and mocked and ridiculed (and it really wasn't that long ago). And the LDS Church has become increasingly more socially-acceptable/recognized as a good institution; they've become more popular! But the increase in their popularity has corresponded with a decrease in the spiritual power and the authenticity of their teachings in almost a one-for-one comparison.

If you go back to the moment when I listened to the LDS missionaries, my initial contact with a Mormon missionary outreach—he was in the military with me, at the time—came as a result of a night-school visiting professor attacking—gratuitously—the Mormon

Church in Salt Lake City. It just came right out of the blue. It sounded weird. I mean, I had lived in Idaho, so I knew what the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City was, but to me, the attack just seemed like, “Where did *that* come from?” And Steve Claproth raised his hand and took on Cal Colby (the professor) and defended the church and stood up for it. And I made the mistake of telling Steve afterwards that I thought he was effective, and he got the better of the professor, and “Good on ya!” It didn't mean I was interested in his Mormon heresy, but he mistook that because it was such slim pickings in New Hampshire that I became the golden contact. So the pamphleteers and the flannel board presentations ensued.

Yeah? Yeah?

Justin Griffin (Question 4): So how many people would you say in the world today would be considered righteous? If that's impossible to answer, how many people would you say you know personally that you would consider righteous?

DS: Fortunately, I don't really have to assume the responsibility of determining the one from the other. And I really can't say. But I believe that there are those who are true and faithful to the traditions that they're raised in that are good, and that (as the Book of Mormon puts it) God has given to all nations, of their own tongue, such truth as He, in His wisdom—actually, it's not the masculine pronoun; that's missing; it's “in wisdom”—that is appropriate for the respective groups.

I have been reflecting on the Buddhist tradition, where one of the very first Buddhist principles is that “suffering is inevitable,” and that fighting or resisting suffering leads only to misery, and that the best way to escape the misery of suffering is simply to accept it as inevitable and to live accordingly. It's like the dog that my son had who got cancer and had to have a leg amputated. And after the amputation, you could not tell the difference between the attitude of his dog on three legs versus the attitude of his dog before cancer required the removal of her leg. She accepted it, and it was of no consequence. She moved on and lived life with such joy as she was able to live with in that circumstance.

Contrariwise, unlike the founder of Buddhism, the founder of Christianity was a miracle worker who healed and who relieved the suffering and cured the blindness and took care of people. And in that legacy, Christians are never satisfied with suffering. They plead; they beg; they implore; they do not accept. They want the miracle worker to work a miracle. But not every leper was healed by the Lord. And there were whole communities that He visited in which He could do no miracle because none of them believed. There were still blind people in Judea after the crucifixion of the Lord. There were still lepers within eyesight of the boundary of the city. Not everyone got healed. But everyone who believed and who repented was saved.

And so, I don't know what turmoil has gone on in the lives of people who hear a message of salvation and who seek to repent. And I don't know what internal struggles they have to face—because all of us have individual challenges and difficulties. We might be amazed at what some people have overcome as a consequence of their faith in Christ, but we may look upon their outward appearance and their lives and say,

“That’s still a sinful man,” because we don’t behold the struggle. But the Lord does. And He knows who He numbers as His sheep. And I can tell you that if you hear His voice when it originates from Him, that you are getting close to the kingdom of God.

In a very real sense, the salvation of mankind is not going to reach the same kind of fullness as we had on the earth during those first ten generations until after the Restoration itself has been completed. And for some of what has to take place, the only way to accomplish it is outside of the view of the world, inside of a sacred precinct that has been consecrated to and accepted by the Lord, where He can come and visit and restore again that which was lost. That was attempted and failed in the 1841-1844 timeframe. And we’re still awaiting a command to build a house for the Lord in this generation. But I believe the command is going to come. And if it does, then we’ll act accordingly. The Lord is the only one in charge, and none of us are. So...

Yeah?

Question 5: Yeah, so I understand the purpose of someone like Joseph Smith, the servant of the Bridegroom, who had a very specific calling to help restore the gospel and invite the Savior back in. But the rest of us, it seems like, perhaps we don’t need to go around looking for someone to tell us what to do or trying to hear the voice of the Lord. Maybe we should just go directly to the Lord. Should we have/would it be better to have a personal relationship with the Lord than try to find someone to speak for the Lord?

DS: It would be better. It always would be better. The problem that you have, though, is that Jesus told Mary one thing, and Jesus told Martha another thing, and Jesus told Brianna another thing, and Jesus told Brooke another thing, and Jesus told... And so it’s almost always the pattern that the Lord will focus attention—in bringing about His work—into some trusted and proven and reliable hands in order to accomplish what He has in mind.

The road to finishing up the work of the Restoration is going to require a remarkable number of things to be accomplished: from constructing a house to fabricating implements to laying out (in ceremonial form) authorized covenant-making, in which the redemption of mankind and the revelation of all things from before the world was until the end of His work in this cycle of creation have to be put together in an ordered fashion.

For such things, no committee can be assembled. For such things, no voting is even appropriate. For accomplishing the things that God commands, it requires something more than just a tuned ear. It requires people willing to endure all of the false accusations and nonsense and all of the unwanted and foolish praise and all of the suggestions of ambition that aren’t there and all of the misunderstanding and cloud of nonsense that attends every step of the way! It requires something that *rarely* appears on this earth—and when it does, it comes encumbered with so much that is undesirable that only a fool would stand up and say, “I, I! Me, me!” For the life of me, even after the angel had purged the lips of Isaiah, I don’t understand why Isaiah said, “Here I am, Lord. Send me,” unless, of course, he was just as naive as I once was when I thought I

could take on anything. I've learned better since then. I don't know if I'd say the same thing or give the same answer today. But that's of no consequence.

I think it would be better if everyone were to go to God and to be a prophet. But God appeared to Saul and renamed him Paul on the road to Damascus. And the Lord commissioned Peter as the chief apostle. And the two of them butted heads. And Paul talked about how he "withstood Peter to his face" in one of his letters. (I mean, the audience to whom Paul was writing probably thought that was a real plus!) But again, they went their separate ways, and the Pauline church and the Petrine church were markedly different because of different emphasis that they put upon their view of the Lord.

But if you're trying to reel it back in and bring it back into a singularity, look: In that first beginning, Adam presided until Adam died. And he *was* the presiding patriarch—and Eve, too, the presiding matriarch—until they were taken. And it went down through that lineage. And so, yeah, it would be better. It hasn't happened. I don't expect that it will happen. I expect everyone can pray to God and get answers. And I expect everyone to be able to hear the voice of God. And I expect everyone who repents of their sins and who comes unto the Lord will know that He is with them and that He will not leave you comfortless. I expect everyone has access to the Lord.

But in terms of accomplishing the things that need to be done, if it's not accomplished in an orderly fashion—the same kind of pattern that has always been followed by the Lord, dispensation after dispensation—then I don't think that we're ever gonna arrive where we need to arrive.

Yeah?

AP (Question 6): One more question. Just, again, pulling all this together with... What advice would you give to all here as we see things around us in this world of the stranger's voice (you talked about the Shepherd's voice and then the stranger's voice)? What are ways, as you've seen things out there, are ways to decipher these strangers' voices? They sound so good; they sound so popular—however you want to say that. How do you... What's a good way to really discern?

DS: I think that people who are trying to make themselves the center of attention—not because they have something substantive to say but because they're eager to get out there and to accomplish something on their own errand... I mean, I got invited here; I got asked to talk, and I'm happy to respond to the invitation. I've spoken at conferences, but I've never organized a conference. I gave a series of ten talks in which I rented the places; after I'd given a few, there were others who rented them as a courtesy to me, but no one paid me to go there. No one... We spend a lot of money to renting venues and going out and giving talks.

People who sacrifice are a little different than people who are trying to earn a living or earn their keep. King Benjamin gave a talk, and then afterwards, he returned to his labors because one of the points he made in his talk was that he didn't suffer the people

to labor on his behalf to support him. I think there are a lot of people who are trying to profit off of ministry. And I would wonder about that.

Let me clarify one thing that kind of irritates me, though. If anyone has ever written a book and gotten a book into print, I can tell you that *writing* a book is about 30% of the effort. After a book is written, the process that's involved in order to get the book into print is about 70% of the effort. And make no mistake about it: It is work! The first books that I wrote, I had a list of demands:

- I wouldn't do any public signings.
- I didn't want them advertised.
- I would not appear anywhere to promote them.

And they were willing to do that. I had to pay for the editing; I had to pay for the cover art; I had to pay for everything that went into getting it into print. And so, to get a book into print, I went into debt—well, I spent my own money; I didn't borrow money to do it—thousands and thousands of dollars in order to get books into print. And it took *years* to recoup the money that was spent getting the book into print. But by the time I'd recouped enough money to pay for the book that got into print, I'd already gotten another book out and another book out and another book out. And so, it's really...

And by the way, the audience for Mormon books (doctrinal)... The universe market for that is tiny. And if you're an excommunicated writer, the universe gets even smaller. And if you've got other people out there who are denouncing you on the Internet (because they are high and holy and "spiritual," and they got their own view of how things ought to be), the market becomes sliver-thin. But charging to publish a book, I don't care who you are, if you write a book and you get it into print, you're entitled to recoup something for your effort. I think that's one criteria.

Another would be: How much attention is drawn to the Lord and what the Lord is up to and to fulfilling and doing the work that was always on His mind to be accomplished in the final generation, and how much of it is just interesting, plowing the same field with nothing new to be added? If there's nothing new to be added, it's just insight based upon another man's work. And it's not... As Joseph said, he was "always bringing some new thing to the attention of the saints."

One of the markers would be: Does light and truth emanate? And does it emanate in a fashion in which something is **self-evident** as soon as you hear it, **demonstrably true** the instant that you get ahold of it but had never yet entered into the heart of man beforehand?

You know, the purpose of the ten talks was to say, "Look at what the Restoration was originally designed to include." And there's things in the ten talks that you could read a hundred times, and you would still be surprised at what's there. And that was the Lord's doing, not mine. And I didn't feel comfortable in that process, and I learned of my excommunication on the drive to Boise to give the first talk. And I paid a price.

When I became a member of the LDS Church, I lost all my childhood friends who, in a polarized, southern Idaho community, Mormons weren't well thought of, and the friends I had retained from back then thought it was crazy. When I got excommunicated, my universe of friends was essentially the LDS community in which I was then serving.

Do they pay a price for what they believe? Normally, people are unwilling to sacrifice things that matter to them, particularly things that matter greatly to them. And yet the Lord requires someone to sacrifice and be willing to sacrifice all things if they're really going to be on His errand.

Even now, today, I hate when my children go on the Internet and search my name. I hate the things that are out there. And I don't respond to them. And I don't defend myself. But my children know who I am. The problem is that my children pay a price because their friends search their father's name.

Anyway, there are a lot of poignant stories I could tell you about that sort of thing. But generally, one of the hallmarks of representing the Lord genuinely is the need for sacrifice.

Okay, the time is far spent, and Todd needs to go shave! [laughter] So we're gonna go ahead and wrap...

Audience Member: Thank you for coming tonight.

DS: Yeah, we're gonna go ahead and wrap it up. And I think Jeremy Hoop's interpretation of Wilford Woodruff in "The Great Apostasy" (showing now on lds.org) is a worthwhile view; touched my heart to see that. I texted him after I watched that video today, and I said, "Did you really go get baptized in ice water?" He said, "Yes, I did, but I was wearing a wetsuit." So his level of sacrifice was diminished considerably by the... [laughter].

Anyway, let me end by bearing testimony to you that God is actually up to something right now, and the Restoration is actually continuing, and it will continue until it has been consummated in the restoration of all things that God anticipated doing from the very beginning and that Adam himself prophesied would take place before the end.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2023.05.21 Context of the Answer to Prayer for Covenant

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

Layton, Utah

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

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

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

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

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

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

“To place events into a context” challenges historians and puts us all in the position of having histories that disagree, that contradict, and offer differing viewpoints of exactly the same events. I've read, researched, studied, and contemplated the history of the Restoration. It's taken me over two million words to explain some of that history. The **revealed** Prayer for Covenant contains only 2,759 words. That's less than one and a half percent of the volume of words I've written in order to try to understand the events of the Restoration. In those few words, the Lord tells **us** the history of the Restoration clearly, succinctly, and truthfully. The Prayer is **His**.

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

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

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

We are mindful that in [September]...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It had been earlier offered on condition; the condition **was not met**. Therefore, it was taken away. They didn't “have it” and lose it. They had it **offered** to them, and they lost

the offer. So now God is renewing again the **offer** at this point in the recitation of the history.

... You offered and intended for a house to be built unto your name in which you deigned to reveal to your people things which have been kept hidden from before the foundation of the world, things which pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of times. You gave to them sufficient time to build a house unto your name, warning them to complete the work or their baptisms for the dead would be unacceptable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now we reach the second hinge point.

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

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

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

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

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

- secret works of darkness,
- follies,
- secret abominations,
- violating the commandments,
- wickedness,
- emboldened,

- openly practiced abominations,
- wrongly taught,
- secret murders,
- reigned with blood and horror,
- slaughter over 200 men, women, and children,
- barbarism,
- justifying lying,
- denying the judgments of God,
- speaking evil of Joseph,
- willful rebellion,
- foolishness, and
- blindness.

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

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

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

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

...which I would point out is language that gets identified in the Preface to the Book of Mormon, and the corrections that were made weren't translation errors, apparently. They were quotes of the Lord, in which the Lord said, "I want to make what I said a bit

more clear.” And so there were a handful of revisions made—**by the Lord, to the text**—which quotes Him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

...We were not responsible for neglecting your warnings, for treating lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments, nor for failing to do as you asked,

but have inherited that legacy and acknowledge that we also suffer under your condemnation as our inheritance. (§8-11, emphasis added)

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

*We also have been left with a copy of a copy of a revelation recorded July 12, 1843 that is not in the handwriting of a scribe of Joseph's, and which we believe to have been altered from its original form before it was publicly disclosed. That revelation has been the source of a great deal of mischief, sorrow, ungodly conduct, violence, and adulterous lusts among those who accept the published version of that revelation among the various Mormon factions. We first attempted to edit it to make it more consistent with your other commandments and revelations, but have ultimately concluded to remove it altogether because **we cannot fix it**. We ask that if there are any commandments, principles, or precepts involving the marriage covenant you would be willing to reveal to us to become part of our record, we would receive it with gratitude and rejoicing. We desire as a people to repent and remove the condemnation, and to overcome your rejection, and to be true and faithful to your commandments. All those involved have labored to avoid and eliminate the interpolations and uninspired emendations of others, however well they may have meant. If it is not from you or of you, we do not want to acknowledge it as scripture, and therefore we have labored to present this **to you** in the hope we have shown respect for your word and not the works of men. We acknowledge that you have inspired and guided this work by your spirit.*

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

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

You can see that dynamic playing out on the losing end of light and truth within **all** of the churches, from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints down to the apostate groups scattered everywhere. It gets diluted; the ignorance increases; the darkness grows. There's hardly a difference between evangelical television shows and general conference from the LDS Church anymore, except that there's probably more biblical truth, by far, among the evangelical group than you find in general conference—with the possible exception of Joel Osteen, who's rallying on the “gospel of success” is such rubbish that... Welcomed rubbish! He lives in a \$10 million home supported by his fan club (who want to know that if they follow that, they “too will be blessed” [imitating Joel Osteen]. “You can be blessed, too!”).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now, there's a chapter in Matthew that was considered so singularly important to Latter-day Saints that they put it in as one of the books in the Pearl of Great Price. Because

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

(Hi, Bev.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“In those days” = contemporaneous with us.

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

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

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

Yeah, that fits there. Yeah.

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

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

Now I show into a parable...

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

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

Keep that thought in mind.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And He says about these events,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is a new one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And then He tells the story of the ten virgins. And the virgins—as I heard Steve VanLeer mentioning—all of them knew there was a wedding, all of them knew what was coming, all of them had been invited, all of them were preparing for the event; it's just that five of them were *still foolish*.

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

*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory—the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left. And He's going to say that when He separated the sheep from the goat, some of the goats are gonna complain and say, "HEY! Uhh, we don't belong here!" But more interestingly, some of the sheep are gonna say, "I'm not sure... Lord, I'm not sure I'm really a sheep belonging on your right hand." And the Lord's gonna explain to them, *I was hungry, ...you gave me food. I was thirsty, ...you gave me drink. I was a stranger, ...you took me in; naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came [to] me.* And the righteous is gonna say, *When did we see you**

*hungry, and [feed] you? Or thirsty, and gave you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and took you in? Or naked, and clothed you? And He says, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. And then the others—the goats—weigh in and say, “Wait a minute! We didn't abuse you in that fashion!” And He said, Inasmuch as you did it **not** to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it **not** unto me. (Ibid. ¶21-25, emphasis added)*

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

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

Clearly, if you don't humble yourself and accept what the Lord has offered and you rebel against Him, and in your pride, you look up, curse God, and die (as the Scriptures say) —which is exactly what they did. I mean, cursing the people through whom the Lord administered punishment to humble you is the same thing as cursing and rejecting the Lord! It's like the Catholic nun that gets the ruler out and bangs on your knuckles, “Do you understand me now, Jake and Elroy Blues?” It's the same thing. And when you say, “There's nothing wrong with what I have done, and I can lie, and I can cheat; I can commit adultery and engage in all of the kinds of misbehavior” (even worse than what had provoked your judgments in the first place), well, then the outcome turns out pretty much like it has. And you see, right now, the restoration petering out everywhere, **except among us**. The loss of light and truth, of understanding, and of comprehension is falling day by day, just like was foretold at the time the covenant was offered in Boise about the eclipse that had occurred recently before that conference. An eclipse that crossed from ~~border~~ to sea to sea, border to border, and there's another one coming. It's almost as if the Lord is doing everything He can to call attention to the fact that He really is up to something. This really is His work. And signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath are being given, and the question is, Will any heed at all be given to that?

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2023.05.21 Q&A with Denver

*The Answer to Prayer for Covenant as an Assignment from the Lord:
Love One Another as I Have Loved You, Spring General Conference
Layton, Utah
May 21, 2023*

Denver Snuffer: Now, I said to whoever it was who called me... I think it was you, Taylor. Yeah. I said that I have two grandbabies—a four- and a two-year-old's (grandbabies born in the same month, within, I think, three days of one another)—whose birthday is being celebrated down in Sandy. And I'm heading there to eat birthday cake and forget about this. And I said that I would have a few minutes... They wanted to open it up for questions—and I've heard that there is a microphone... And there's Reed, Mr. Microphone himself, (which kind of reminds me of a story that I'll tell at some point).

They're trying to record this stuff—and so you can put the mic there, and if anyone's got a question, you can feel free to come up, ask your question into the mic. A question is a sentence that ends with a question mark.

My wife taught a class yesterday, and she said she was interrupting people and saying, “That's not a question. What's your question?” So getting her counsel before I came up here, I decided I'd *define question* in advance: It's a short statement, and it ends with a question mark—and normally, you raise your voice at the end of the question to make it clear you're done and now something's on the table, deal with it.

Now, you can ask **absolutely any question** you want to ask. And I **might** answer some of them. So does anyone have a question? Oh, look, there we are.

Question 1: All right. So I'm new to all this...

DS: Oh, good. Yeah.

Q1: ...just so to preface. I want to know: What exactly does God expect of us—here, as a covenant people—to actually accomplish in our lives?

DS: Most of what the Lord would like us to do at the moment is internal to ourselves. There's a kind of analogy/a description that's given when Ezra returns and they're rebuilding the temple, of how they had the scroll/the Scriptures in one hand and a trowel in the other. The people that returned to rebuild the temple in the Second Temple era were only a *remnant* of the people that were taken, a remnant of the descendants of the people that had been taken captive into Babylon. So you have a large body of believers who got exiled from the holy land, taken captive into Babylon. The overwhelming majority of those people remained behind in Babylon, and only a remnant returned back—because returning back from Babylon meant you were leaving a kind of secure economy, a kind of stable society, a place where things were stable and good. You... It took a lot of faith for someone to leave there and go to a city that had been destroyed, in order to rebuild and re-civilize. So the environmental circumstances were such that they'd already made up their mind that they were going to follow the Lord and accepted

the reality that following the Lord meant a sojourn into difficulty and hardship. They were willing to do that; that was what they knew would come by doing that.

In our day, we're being asked, for the moment, to stay put but to adopt a new set of values, rules, scriptural understanding, a body of teachings that really have been dissipated and lost. And we're doing that in the face of unrelenting criticism. ~~Many of it~~ Much of the criticism that gets leveled against the Restoration gets leveled against Joseph Smith specifically and gets done against a body of lies and falsehoods. The library of material that has been produced in order to suggest that Joseph Smith was a liar and an adulterer and someone who loved and made a lie—which, by the way, in and of itself tells you that he's damned to hell, based upon the “Three Degrees of Glory” revelation. Those who love and make a lie are those that are going to be cast down/thrust down to hell, and in the Book of Mormon text, it says the liar shall be thrust down to hell. And the body of information that people spread now, even within the “Answers to Gospel Questions” by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, states that Joseph Smith was unequivocally a liar because there were “some truths that are just so special and sacred” that one can't divulge that they're out there bed-hopping because that would not be understood by the “moral Gentiles” who accepted the ten commandments that included, among them, *Thou shalt not commit adultery!* It's just irony upon irony.

What is expected of you at this moment, is to recognize the truth, accept the truth, and change from within you. Then the even **greater change** is to get along with other people. I'd like you to meet Rob Adolpho; he's sitting about...

You're good? Okay! He's solved the riddle! You're there.

Any other questions? (I hope you're getting up to leave and not to ask a question.)

You wrote it down?

Question 2: I did! So you mentioned that we need to acknowledge our failure. What does He mean by “acknowledge”?

DS: Well, there's a... I think it's a psalm, but it could be a proverb. I wrote it down in the front cover of my quad, but I don't use my quad anymore, so it's home on a shelf. There's a statement that says, “I've inherited the heritage of the righteous.” Okay? And that was a psalm that was given at a time when, well, like... It's like Ruth and Naomi, where someone comes in and accepts the covenant, and then they're welcomed within the family of Israel. And by doing so, they become really an inheritor of everything that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Judah... Well, Joseph more than Judah. Ah, Judah—and we're supposed to get rid of the envy and the jealousy between Joseph and Judah. So strike that last part.

We inherited a mess. So when we start out...

There's an expression—it's a baseball expression—that someone was “born on third base and thinks they hit a triple.” Well, **we** were born *outside of the ball field* and don't

even have the opportunity to enter the dugout—because the way in which the Lord has treated the Restoration, based upon the response of the people to the Lord in offering the Restoration, is, “You're gonna get kicked out of Missouri. You're gonna get kicked out of Independence (where you think you belong) and driven into another county, you're gonna found a county...” They literally created new counties in order to, you know, put the city of Far West together and start their own local government. And then because they still couldn't get along with people, they wind up with the militia of the state of Missouri driving them out to Illinois. And Illinois was so sympathetic because the one thing that the church has always been really good at is propaganda. I mean, when they arrived in Illinois, the propaganda that had come out of the mouth of the Latter-day Saints made everyone there, you know, dry an eye and say, “How can we help?” but it didn't take long for them to, you know, gain the reputation of being—back then it was called, “making bogus”; today, it's counterfeit money making. Money all along the Mississippi River was plagued with counterfeit money, and a significant part of that appears to have been produced by the printing press that was in Nauvoo, Illinois.

Mark Twain was born in 1835 in Hannibal, Missouri, and he would have been like nine years old when Joseph Smith was killed in 1844. And, you know, despite all of what Mark Twain would have heard, he actually came out in *Roughing It* and visited Salt Lake and gave a pretty fair description of the Mormons. Funny! I mean, Mark Twain was! But it gives a pretty fair description of us. **We've** inherited that.

So when we start out, we are painted with the same ugly yellow paint, and we're leaving handprints and fingerprints all over everything, covered in unworthiness and offensive stuff. We can't even sit on the Lord's furniture without wrecking it. That's where we start out from. So what **we** have to do is largely what the Lord instructed us to do in the Prayer for the Covenant—that gets answered with the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and then the Covenant itself—and that involves a real sober assessment of exactly where we stand in God's eyes at the beginning of this and the acceptance of grace. And if He bestows grace upon us... It's like the apostle Paul writing to the Romans: “What? Shall we continue to sin so that **grace** can abound? Do we benefit ourselves by having even more grace because we don't repent, and we continue sinning, and then God's grace can be, you know, even more rapidly and widespread applied?”

We're not supposed to be doing that. I mean, he says—after posing that question—he says, “God forbid!” He's saying, “Don't impose upon God's patience by getting forgiven of your messes and then turning around and making another mess!” Part of what the saints did was not... It wasn't just a defect internal. Envyings and strifes and all of the conflict that went on, that's not just a Latter-day Saint treating a Latter-day Saint that way. That's not just people in this room dealing with people in this room in an inappropriate manner. I've never heard of anyone financially cheating anyone else that's among the body of believers; that was going on back in Missouri and in Illinois and in early Utah—and it goes on right now, except the perpetrator is the Corporation of the President, and victims are everyone that was willing to donate money to 'em.

But it was a problem that existed between the body of believers and the “outsiders” who they treated with the kind of... If you could put it over on them, then, you know, “Good on us! Our side wins,” you know? We’re not supposed to be doing that. We ought to approach the people with whom we are dealing with the same kind of humility and respect that we would hope they would show to us or for us. We ought to be really good neighbors. The last thing we want is to have Independence, Missouri repeat itself or Far West repeat itself or Nauvoo repeat itself, where neighbors are... The neighbors felt themselves **defined** as “outsiders.” It’s just... You know, “You’re a Gentile.” You know, “We’re a saint!” I mean, the word “saint” has a kind of hallowed meaning because of Catholicism. So when you say, “We’re saints,” you’re... It’s offensive. I mean, if I’m... “You should be building magnetic statuary to me, and putting it on the dashboard of your car.”

I don’t care if it rains or freezes
Long as I got my plastic Jesus
Sitting on the dashboard of my car.

Who did that song? Okay, anyway, the...

Yeah, you were at the microphone. Save us.

Question 3: You read in Matthew 11 verses paragraph 11 that “the people of Noah were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them away.” Does that mean that we need to be careful about eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage? And if so, how do we do that?

DS: Well, there’s two ways to look at that. One way is exactly like the question you posed. The other is to say: While you’re eating and while you’re drinking and while you’re giving in marriage, be aware that the end is just around the corner—which will make you eat a little more carefully and share your food with others, drink a little less and be sober-minded, and only marry—in righteousness—someone for whom you have shared values and respect. And of the two readings, I would say I favor the latter.

Yeah?

Question 4: In 2019, you made a statement that you felt like we were getting... There’s a chance that we were getting close...

[replying to the microphone being repositioned] Oh, thanks.

There’s a chance we were getting close to gaining the spirit of Elijah. And I was curious as to where you think... It’s been almost four years. How much closer do you think we are?

DS: Umm... Closer still. Okay, look: There... That... Joseph Smith makes a passing reference to three different kinds of spirit. There’s a spirit of Elias, there’s a spirit of Elijah, and there’s a spirit of Messiah. Now, there are those who say that Joseph was an ignorant farm boy (as he confessed that he was) and that he didn’t understand that *Elias* was simply the Greek form of the name *Elijah*—and so Joseph didn’t know what he was

talking about. I rather favor the other view, which is that Joseph found the term useful to illustrate a point and that he wasn't giving you a language course. He was trying to inform you about the manner in which restoration of material rolls forth.

- The spirit of Elias, as he defined it, was a forerunner that would deliver a message that warns you of things to come.
- The spirit of Elijah is where you begin to have a restoration that includes fulsome enough material to seal people up unto salvation against the day of the harvest.
- And the spirit of Messiah is when the Lord Himself comes and returns.

And he commented about how David had failed to get the greater spirit. So the question needs to be answered and the question needs to be understood in the context of the talk and the vocabulary that Joseph was employing at the time. And the answer I would give is that everything that the Lord has intended to accomplish, He has set about achieving the steps necessary to move everything forward. And that if the Lord were to command that a temple be built, we have everything that would be needed in order to fulfill, at our end, what Heaven expects to take place here, from Heaven's end. And that, should we get the command, we won't have anything at our end that impedes getting that done.

Yeah, you've got a question, I can tell.

Question 5: I'm gonna give a quote and then try to formulate the question. It's ummm...

DS: K, that doesn't sound like my wife's definition of a question. But go ahead, you can make an attempt. Hey, you can throw a shoe...

Q5: I'm trying to "honor her circle."

DS: Okay.

Q5: So, I think it's in Isaiah: "Wo unto those who are big with child or give suck in those days." It almost suggests that, at some point, it's not a good idea to have kids. But I don't know if that's just a false conclusion of mine, or I mean, I feel like... I would like to ask you to... If you would be willing to kind of expound on that?

DS: Yeah. Okay, the first thing you need to understand is that you're a boy, and you can't get pregnant.

The statement that was made by the Lord quoting from the earlier text was made in the context of the distress that would befall Jerusalem in the generation that He was talking to at that time, which included the very Jews who rejected Him. It's really a big deal. You can reject a message and a messenger the Lord sends, and He'll send another in another generation. If you **kill** the prophets, then it's three and four generations. And if you **kill the son of God**, it's more than a millennium before work will begin again, okay? He was talking to a generation who would not only kill Him, but they would also kill Paul, and they would kill Peter, and they would kill Stephen. (Paul would hold the cloak of some of those throwing the stones at Stephen, which just goes to show you how willing

the Lord was to forgive and **is** willing to forgive, because Paul looked back on his sins with just dismay).

But He was talking to a generation, He was saying that... And it literally unfolded exactly as He foretold. The people in Jerusalem, and pregnant women in Jerusalem, or nursing mothers and babies in Jerusalem, it was an awful, awful circumstance. He didn't say **that** about **this** day. It was apt, and it fit then. But in particular, where the body is and the eagles are gathered, they don't... They will **hear** about famines; they will **hear** about wars; they will **hear** about this distress that goes on. But it doesn't sound like that gets right into the community in which the eagles have been gathered.

But then after all of the distress and after all of the wretchedness that happens globally in His return in glory, the angels still gather out “elect” that remain. And that remainder has been a remainder that’s spread literally everywhere. And so, if you read the words of the Covenant, there's a promise of protection, and that promise extends from Heaven **and the Earth**, who's gonna watch out for righteousness that appears upon her face. The Earth itself... If you read the Enoch prophecy in Genesis or, if you're still holding on to your Pearl of Great Price, the Moses/Enoch text in Moses in the Pearl of Great Price is reporting the lamentation from the Earth itself. She is speaking—she is cognizant of wickedness, and she is cognizant of righteousness that appears upon her. And let me tell you, the Earth has extraordinary destructive capability. But if she targets it, a landslide can wipe out a community, and there can still be someone standing there unscathed; a tornado can come through and wreck an entire neighborhood and leave one home largely untouched. Hand grenades can be thrown into a crowd of soldiers and detonate when it hits, and some die, and some are grievously injured, and some are trying to figure out, “How did I survive that?”

My father arrived on Omaha Beach on the morning of June 6—D-Day. And when he was dying in a hospital in his 80s, many years later, the thought that puzzled him was, Why did so many of the friends that he had, so many of the people that he had served with, why did they die? And why was he spared? Because he was uninjured on D-Day. On the morning of June 7, his company was gone. He was a combat engineer when he landed on the beach. He was an infantryman on the morning of the next day because they didn't need a combat engineer; they needed an infantryman. And he walked from there to Paris and from Paris to Berlin. And except for frostbite during the Battle of the Bulge, apparently the Lord intended to spare him. And if the Lord can spare a combat engineer landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day, the Lord can spare **anyone—anywhere, in any circumstances**—that He intends to keep in His fold.

“I have graven you on the palms of my hands.” He's saying the mark on His hand is a reminder to Him of how intimately acquainted with “those He intends to preserve” He is. So I wouldn't worry about... You know, Thomas Wolfe didn't coin the phrase, but he used the phrase to good effect in *Breakfast of Champions* [*Bonfire of the Vanities*]. When you're in an inner city—any big city—and the pigeons take off, what the pigeons do when they take off is they begin to flap their wings, and they crap—and the term is a “shitstorm.” And he used that to good effect in *Breakfast of Champions* [*Bonfire of the*

Vanities]. And in the coming shitstorm, don't worry; you'll have an umbrella...assuming you're penitent and your heart's right and you meet the conditions of the Covenant.

Yeah, you're clearly getting ready to ask a question, I can tell.

Question 6: Thank you. You talked about the indelible gift of the Holy Ghost, which is awesome, but we seem to not have access to that at this point. So, many of us are still wondering about the kind of lesser gift of the Holy Ghost, which we have access to. In our LDS upbringing, it's very confusing. It's a... They really just kinda muddle it up. Many questions on that, I mean, is it a one-time event? It's the entrance into the straight and narrow path, but does this baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost happen many times, one time...? Just so many questions on that. And if you could give any clarification on that lower... If that's something you would like to speak on more. I mean, I'm still curious.

DS: They do a fairly reasonable job of talking about that, among the Latter-day Saints. Henry Eyring has talked about how, you know, you can grieve the spirit, and it withdraws from you, and then you have to be penitent in order to fetch it back. The admonition in the ordinance given in the LDS Church is to receive an admonishment to *receive the Holy Ghost*. And I... It's not as if the Latter-day Saints have any kind of a franchise that allows them to either be guaranteed of the presence of the Spirit OR of having some exclusivity that prevents other people from doing so. There are some brilliant, enlightened, meaningful material that gets produced by Buddhists who are reflective. There was a time when some of the greatest theological minds, some of the most well-informed people that understood things by the power of the Spirit were Muslim.

There was an effort—a translation of ancient text effort—made in Brigham Young University, and a deep theological thinker (a fellow by a Muslim scholar) that lived around—I think it was around 1100 AD—wrote some things that were remarkably, just remarkably praiseworthy and deep and contemplative. The problem is that Islam has lapsed into another Dark Age. But there was a time when it was contact by the Crusaders with the Enlightened Muslims who had preserved Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, that brought back material from the Crusades, that provided the stimulus for the Renaissance. We think of the Renaissance as some kind of a re-awakening in Europe. And, in fact, all that was is the Islamic traditions (that had been valued) getting spread into Europe and reawakening/reigniting that fire of knowledge and truth and love.

(And I'm getting the sign; I'm gonna get a sheep hook around my neck here in just a second.)

The Holy Ghost gets redefined in... It's like chapter 6, verse 61 (or [6]2 or [6]3) of the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price; you'd have to go into the book of Genesis (in which it's now paragraphs) in order to locate it. But it's redefined as the truth of all things, the keys of the kingdom, the fullness, and the comforter; it's a string of words. That's what we seek to have access to. You lived in Heaven before you came to Earth. And that is true of everyone everywhere, no matter where they hail from. They all came from Heaven. And they have a pre-existence that embedded within them knowledge of

truths that you have to bring back to the surface here. The way in which you detect the truth of some things is by deep study and reflection and finding it here, and then recognizing it as being true—because something within your core is able to do that. There are some...

I heard a talk that was given by... Actually, I think it was Rob and Q both talking together about some native traditions that were remarkable in their application of truths and knowledge and symbols that convey eternal truths. There was a time and... God, who's that great anthropologist...? Campbell! Joseph Campbell wrote a book that said that there was a time when there were navigators. (And these guys are not necessarily living only in Polynesia. We're talking about people who had sailed, you know, as part of the Portuguese fleet, as part of the Spanish fleet, as part of the English fleet.) There were times when sailors could **see** Venus in the daytime. **We** don't see Venus in the daytime! We've **lost** it. (Well, if you've got a program that gives you the stars that will tell you on your iPhone, you can see it—but that's not Venus; that's your graphic on your iPhone.) There were times when people could see things and perceive things that we have become *too coarse because they're irrelevant to us* to behold anymore. But within every one of you, there are powers and capacities, gifts and abilities that lie dormant that only need to be awakened within you. And you can talk about how miraculous something is or how enlightened you've become. Largely all you're doing is waking up something that was resonant there before. It **was** there. It **is** there. It **longs** to be reignited. And it **can** be reignited by careful attention to Native traditions, the gospel of Christ, the teachings of the Buddha.

Everywhere you find truth in this world, it is an echo of something that began with Father Adam and Mother Eve. They had possession of a body of information that has been disseminated throughout the world. And every culture that has some great truth that they prize ultimately reckons from that same original source of truth. We just have the obligation of discerning between the one and the other and holding fast to the things that are true indeed and leaving to the side the things that are corruptions or inappropriate emendations. One of the challenges that the body of Scripture that we've been given has been supplied to us in order to help us overcome.

So, last question, and then I will go see some grandbabies.

Question 7: So, the Scriptures say that the natural man is an enemy to God. My question is: Is that a result of the fall, or was that true at the time of creation as well?

DS: Okay. Yeah, the statement found in the Book of Mormon about how the natural man is an enemy of God and has been and, you know, will be—we are, in our present condition, unlike God, okay? We get tired, and He does not. We get hungry, and She does not. We feel pain and can be manipulated through the application of outside, deliberately-inflicted pain, and They do not, okay? Your vulnerability and weakness and susceptibility to hunger makes you something that is not merely “other” than God, it puts within you something that is or would be **detestable as a god**. It is “unlike,” and therefore it is a way in to compromise you. God cannot be compromised. He and She

and They are above that—can't be manipulated, can't be compromised, can't be made vulnerable to weaknesses. We are *filled* with weaknesses. We...

There was a prayer that got read by Taylor, and I knelt down, and I was reminded (when I knelt down) that I bumped my left knee on furniture a couple of days ago, and there it was: It kind of hurt. And I endured as much as I could kneeling, and then I sat down, hoping all you people had your eyes closed, so you wouldn't see that I was given up on that kneeling thing. But I did that 'cuz my knee hurt. Well, it's another manifestation of how easy it is to get me to do something just by inflicting a little bit of pain.

Go on a hike and put a pebble on each heel in your shoe, and see how long you hike. It's... You'll hike as long as you can remain on your tiptoes—and then you'll either sit down and cry, or you'll take the rock out of your shoe 'cuz it's kind of stupid to do that.

We are an enemy to God because we can be easily compromised. We're an enemy to God because we have vulnerabilities, susceptibilities, weaknesses, and frailties that get used more or less consciously. We are vulnerable (in addition to all that) to lies; we are vulnerable to emotional manipulation. You take the language of virtue and you apply it to corruption, and you get people to say evil things and do evil things because they are paraded as if tolerance and kindness should openly embrace things that are repugnant to and in direct opposition to the will of God. And it doesn't matter that the language of virtue gets used in order to manipulate that, we're susceptible to that. God is not. You can't fool Him. You can't fool Them. You *can* fool us. A false Christ never got the angel Gabriel to say, "Ooh, wait a minute, I want to hear this guy out! He might have something good to say. I think he might be the real thing." Gabriel wasn't gonna do that because he exists in a plane that is shed from this. And as long as we occupy bodies of dust, these bodies are weak, and they're vulnerable. And therefore, **that**—all of that—makes us liable to error, failure, and sin, and **that** is an enemy to God's plan to exalt you, to raise you, to make you a holy being. Because in our current state, we are not **that**, and therefore, that weakness/that vulnerability is what makes us an enemy to God.

I've got little baby Harper and little baby Nora waiting for me with birthday cake in hand, I'm sure. Thank you, all.

2023.07.14 Truth at All Costs - Interview with Michelle Stone

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
Recorded July 14, 2023

Michelle Stone: There you are... Can you hear me?

Denver Snuffer: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

MS: Perfect, yep, there it is. We're just barely getting set up—the last-minute stuff with the kids, always.

DS: Hah.

MS: Okay, let me get this started.

Well, thank you again for agreeing to talk to me!

DS: Yeah, yeah!

MS: I appreciate it. Okay, anything you want to start with? Should we just go ahead and get going? Is there anything you want/topics you want me to avoid or make sure to cover?

DS: Well, if you ask something that I don't want to talk about, I'll just not talk about it. Umm...

MS: Perfect.

DS: I don't really like doing these kinds of things. So, you know, I'm not enthused, but I'm willing to participate. So...

MS: Well, thank you!

DS: ...we'll do that. Okay.

MS: We'll hope for the best! Well, I'm gonna go ahead and start recording, if that's all right.

DS: Yeah, that's fine.

MS: And then...

DS: Yep.

MS: Okay. I had a super late night last night. So hopefully, I can remember all the words I need to... I'm a bit sleep deprived. Hopefully, it will all go well. So, okay.

(Oh, let's see what's going on with this. One sec. Gotta get the microphone going as well.)

DS: Do you need me to talk to check volume level?

MS: Umm, I think it sounds good. I'm gonna put you on a separate recording. So it should... I'm sadly low-tech. So it'll just be the best it's gonna be. Okay, we'll go ahead and get started, if that's all right.

DS: That's fine.

MS: Okay.

Welcome to this conversation that I am having with Denver Snuffer. Denver, I really, really want to thank you for coming. I know this is not your favorite thing to do. This is not your cup of tea. But I also wanted to explain... Well, I've kind of explained to my audience a little bit about why I wanted to talk to you. There are so many things I would love to talk to you about. For those who don't know Denver's story, I'm sure we're going to go into that. And for anyone who feels nervous having Denver here, I just want to repeat that I have talked to many different people who are not members of our faith who have different journeys and different paths. And I think that we can all rely on the fact that the Lord has given us the gift of discernment, so we can listen to what people say and discern truth and error without fear and without needing to just reject people. That's part of why I wanted to have Denver come. It's 'cuz I feel like his voice has been silenced, and other people have been talking on his behalf in ways that don't feel very fair to me.

So Denver, with all of that being said... I guess I should say Denver was/has been a member of the church, I believe, for 40 years. He was baptized, and 40 years later, to the day (if I'm getting the story right) was excommunicated in 2015 for, I believe, a book tour, right? Like a series of lectures you were giving?

DS: Yeah. I was baptized on September 10th of 1973, and I was excommunicated on September 10th of 2013...

MS: Oh, of 2013. Okay.

DS: ...and it was exactly 40 years to the day.

MS: That is amazing. So, yeah, this is a complicated conversation, 'cuz I really want my faithful LDS listeners to feel comfortable and welcome and not be afraid, so I'm hoping that people can just listen. But I want to tell a little bit about my...

So I've shared before that I was struggling in my church membership 'cuz I felt like the church was not living up to what I expected it to be if it was the true church of God. And I was reading the Book of Mormon and just getting these powerful, strong messages from it: mainly, that it was TO us and ABOUT us, that we ARE the Gentiles, we are the ones being called to repentance. And also, what I started to see was this pattern of people coming into the presence of God, basically telling us how to do that. It seemed like an instruction manual with part-by-part, and it starts with Nephi telling us everything he possibly can until the Lord tells him, "You can't say anymore," and ends with Moroni basically summing it all up and saying, "If you have..." you know, and right before

Moroni, we have Ether, that's one of the most profound stories, the brother of Jared telling us, "Wait, this is how you come into the presence of God." And then again, Moroni setting it up. And I felt so... Yeah, I just felt like how... What is going on here? How can I dare believe that this is what the Book of Mormon is about—because someone would have TOLD me! How can I think I know more than everybody else or that I know something different than anybody else? I really, like, it really was actually quite a bit of turmoil. And that was when I was led, really, by the Lord to this book that I believe is... I don't know if this is the first book you wrote, but it's the one that I found pretty early on.

DS: It is...

MS: And it sure...

DS: ...the first.

MS: Is this the first one you wrote?

DS: Yeah.

MS: So this is *The Second Comforter* (so they can get it in the screen), ~~Communing with the Lord through the~~ *Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*, and it—for me—served as this beautiful second witness. It gave me permission to believe what the Lord was teaching me without feeling like I was all alone and crazy, you know? So I want to thank you for that. That really was a gift to me. And I want to say also, for those worried about Denver, he wrote this book as a fully active, participating member of the church, I believe serving on the High Council, if I'm not mistaken. And...

DS: Yeah...

MS: ...and this book didn't do anything to get you into trouble. This book is not...

DS: Oh, no; heavens, no.

MS: ...unsafe for continued members.

DS: No. And in fact, the manuscript for that book was submitted to Deseret Book, and they took seven months to evaluate it before deciding that they thought the content was too sacred for them to feel comfortable putting out there. But when they finally decided not to publish it, they encouraged me to find another publisher to put it out there, and ultimately, yeah, it got into print. But I didn't want it advertised; I didn't want it... I didn't want to do book signings. I didn't want it to become something that a lot of attention was drawn to.

Because I refused to advertise or publicize or do book signings or promote it in any way, I had to bear the cost to get it into print. I had to pay the cost out of pocket for the cover art. I had to pay to get the professional editor. I had to... It took a lot of money to get it into print, but I was hoping it would be a very quiet book—that people for whom it was appropriate would find it, and everyone else would just go their way and pay no notice.

But the printer—the month before it went into print—the printer was acquired by the world's largest bookseller, Amazon; it's a subsidiary of Amazon that printed the book. And when a title comes out on Amazon and anyone does a word search like... The title of the book is *The Second Comforter, Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*. If someone picks up and does a search for "the second comforter," Amazon has worldwide, global reach. And so the, uh... It got more attention than I wanted it to.

It's a very personal book. But it's personal **to the reader**. It's taking the reader on an individual, internal journey in themselves. But there are vignettes about me. The vignettes illustrate how to get something wrong. And then the chapter that follows the vignette explains how to get it right. And so it's personal in the sense, for me, that I'm talking about a lot of personal failures. And it's personal to the reader because it's pushing the reader internal to themselves in a search. And your mention of the Book of Mormon... I mean, there are three chapters devoted to Nephi's struggle and search, because his experience illustrates a great deal about the process. And so Nephi figures prominently for three chapters early in the book.

MS: Tell people what those three chapters are, so they can go and look at 'em...

DS: Oh, I don't have the book with me. And I don't have the index. But if you look in the table of contents, it talks about Nephi's journey and how Nephi came along. I mean, initially, the first thing that Nephi did was to struggle and have a confrontation meditatively and prayerfully with God, struggling to try to believe what his father had said. And it begins with something as simple as that, and then it culminates in what happens with Nephi. And the Book of Mormon, I think, intends to invite everyone—every reader—to go on that same journey.

MS: Exactly. Yes. And I just was rereading... We were speaking to some friends the other night that were talking about it in Moroni 9. One thing that I really also appreciate about your book—appreciated at that time, especially—was that it seeks to almost, I don't want to say "normalize" but "give people permission" to have spiritual experiences, to have manifestations and visitations, and the things that we have made... They seem crazy. Like, I know that at one point, you know, I had people decide I was schizophrenic if I would share experiences. That literally happened, you know? And it's very difficult for people to be able to understand that not only do we have the opportunity but almost the obligation to believe that these kinds of experiences, the ministry of angels for, you know, a start are not only possible but are part of what is expected of people of faith. And Moroni 7 makes it so clear (I hope people will read that/reread it) that if angels are/have ceased to minister to/if we aren't experiencing these kinds of things, it's not because the heavens are silent; it is due to our lack of faith. And that's what I think is part of the essential message that all of us are trying to spread is, like, this shouldn't be so suspect; it shouldn't be so strange and scary and odd to have communion with the divine. That is the very purpose of the gospel; like, that's the message I was getting from the Book of Mormon is: What the gospel is, is the power to overcome death and hell (which means separation from God—right?) and physical and spiritual death. And so instead of saying, "So, I can live with God again, someday," which we mean, just live a good life on the safe path, and then when you die, you'll be in the presence... It's so

minimized and dumbed down—when what we actually have is the process to come back into the presence of God, overcome spiritual death, and then (eventually, the next step) be translated, overcome physical death (which is the city of Enoch), which is everything we claim to believe in, right? And there's a literal-ness to all of this that it's maybe too great and marvelous, too terrifying for us to be willing to accept and embrace and pursue.

DS: I think that's... Yeah, I think that the institutional encouragement is for Latter-day Saints to outsource spirituality to a hierarchy and trust them to then feed you whatever it is that you need to have fed in order to obtain salvation. And the Book of Mormon is going in an opposite direction, in which we all become individually accountable before God and independently authorized by God to pursue the path of faith in order to reach the point where we, "having been true in all things, are prepared to converse with the Lord through the veil and receive further light and knowledge" (which is still a preserved part of the LDS temple ceremony, despite all of the other changes that have been made). You know, you're introduced as "having been true and faithful in all things" and desiring now for "further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil," and that's a ceremony—but it's a ceremony that's pointing to a divine invitation and a religious expectation. And the Book of Mormon is ratifying that in account after account, experience after experience—and I mean, why are those accounts given to us if they're not meant to be accepted, trusted, and acted upon? And you're right: In chapter seven of Moroni, *If these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also* (Moroni 7:38 LE). It's kind of an indictment of the institutional position of outsourcing spirituality and trusting other people to tell you what it is that's important.

I think we become easily submissive to religious authority and that the temptation always is if you are given a little authority, that you begin to want control. It's chaotic when everyone is given the opportunity to believe and trust and act for themselves. And yet, you do not want (and the Scriptures do not encourage you) to seek order at the price of unrighteous dominion, control, compulsion, and abrogating the agency of man. Joseph's "teach them correct principles, and let them govern themselves," actually did result in a mess in Nauvoo, in a mess in Far West, in a mess at Independence, in a mess at Kirtland. I mean, gathering after gathering, group after group, "teaching correct principles and allowing them to govern themselves" always resulted in unruliness and the fringes of the folks who were gathered being up to a lot of mischief and engaging in a lot of expectations. But I don't think that is a poor reflection upon either the Lord's plan to give us all agency or Joseph Smith's calling to start a rough stone rolling down the hill, to fulfill what Daniel foresaw. What it means is that, individually, we're just not accepting the responsibility devolving upon ourselves to be peaceable with our fellowman, to be obedient, to be true and faithful, to be something more than the kind of wayward, chaotic, self-indulgent, ambitious, self-promoting people that vied for power and influence in Kirtland and then in Independence and in Far West and in Nauvoo. And Joseph never lived to see a group of people who would rise to the occasion that he had hoped—in teaching them correct principles, that in governing themselves they became like the people of Enoch.

I don't think that Joseph was deficient as a teacher. I just think Enoch had a better audience. I mean, Christ is clearly the best teacher of them all, and Christ's audience didn't become Zion. And of all those who heard Him throughout His mortal ministry, at the end, the account that we're given in Paul's writing is about 500 people were there to see Him ascend on the Mount of Olives. So at the end, after the thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—who had heard the Lord minister, the greatest teacher (greater, more intelligent than they all) only managed to make about 500 people really adopt and accept the lesson. It wasn't for want of a good teacher that the people at the time of the Lord's ministry we didn't realize Zion, and so I don't think you can indict Jesus or Joseph Smith. I also don't think you can laud Enoch. I think you have to take the realization that the people themselves have a say—they all have a say...

MS: Okay!

DS: ...they all have the opportunity to rise up or to not. And so it's not... You can't point to the failure by saying the Lord didn't send someone adequate to the task, because I think Joseph was more than adequate to the task. It's just that...

MS: As was Jesus, right?

DS: Yeah. It's just that people had... They had more interest in worldliness and the weaknesses of the flesh and the aspirations and ambitions of mortal men, and the consequence was: No Zion. And even now, while I think the Lord is fully prepared to permit a group of people to rise up, the problem remains the same. "Lo here" in hierarchy, "lo there" in a-faction-that-practices-fundamentalism. There are chaotic voices, but none of them penetrate to the heart of the people living today to allow them, with deep reflection and with humility, to live according to... I mean, it's... If you've got your Doctrine and Covenants, it's D&C section 93, verse 1. I mean, right there is the formula; that's what's required: *It [should] come to pass that every soul who forsake[s] his sins and come[s] unto me, ...and [hearkens to] my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.* I mean, that long—well, long?—relatively short list of things is something...

The battleground is internal to the person. It's not how you get along with other people; it's how you slay the dragon within. Then having slain the dragon within, you can live at peace with your fellowman because the turmoil, the turbulence, the disruption, the fear, the anxiety, the ambition, the hope, the aspiration... All of those things go away if you can slay the dragon within and be right with God. And we have far too many people in Joseph's day and today who don't get that first verse of section 93 right. And we're looking for—and we actually want to be—oh, hey, "Lo here! I'm good! I'm great!" Yeah...

MS: Okay, there are so many things I want to respond to that you just said because... Oh, they're like... Let me start here: I think that it is an individual responsibility. And part of the reason that it's messy... Like, I live in the Doctrine and Covenants, and I won't remember the section right now, but where it says, "If you build a house unto my name, all of the pure in heart can come and will see God" (see D&C 97:15-16). And then right over on the next column, it says, *this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART* (vs.21), right? True Zion is made up of a people who walk and talk with God, which is why... So when

those people come together... And it is an individual responsibility. I even... Well, I see God's hand in this entire thing. God needed the pattern set with the city of Enoch to show the rest of mankind. Enoch had hundreds of years. They... You... Their lives were much longer. God established that pattern, if we see that as a literal story, right? And since then, it's been... Like, I see the Restoration and the—I guess, if we want to call it the "failure" of the Restoration, the failure to establish Zion, the "being disparate" and following under what I consider the covenant curses (because that's what seems to have happened, you know, to the states in Utah)—I see this all in God's hand, because everything God does is good. And God is the author. And so all of us, even the leaders of the church are—Brigham Young and the continuing leaders—are playing their role because there has to be this... There's this necessary traction or friction that you have to grow through, right? I don't... Like, I think that all of us want to find this perfect place, find this perfect thing where we'll all just be in the presence of God, without recognizing that that's not how it works. There has to be the opposition in all things, even—I've said before—even in Eden, even in paradise, there was a snake to set this all going, there was a poisoned tree, you know, like, there's not going to be this perfect place to escape to. And so I think that even our leaders... Like, the process is internal, and we come to God however we will, in whatever organization we're in; that doesn't matter very much. The question is, Are **we** following the promptings **we** are having? The church structure cannot in any way keep us from God any more than it can bring us into the presence of God, as can no other structure or no other leader—or just like you were saying, even Jesus and Joseph Smith couldn't bring the people into the presence of God. All they can do is, like the Book of Mormon strives to do: give the example, give the instructions, try to encourage, and try to promote faith, because that's... Does that make sense?

And so I think that, like, the faith is multifaceted. We have to have faith, first of all, that this is a possibility. But maybe the harder step is that it's a possibility for each of us. I know so many people who are like, "Well, I don't think God expects that of me. That's..." Right? That it's... And then the possibility that God can lead us through that process and that whatever effort we make in that direction is good; it's not like a "you've succeeded" or "you've failed." It's that: Are you striving on this path, in whatever setting the Lord wants you to be in while you are striving on this path? That's how I see it.

So I don't see any church leaders as being obstacles to this journey. In some ways, they serve us as helpers because everybody, you know, like, everybody in our life is a helper for us on this journey if...

So anyway, and then I do think that Joseph, what he established and where that all went, God knows the end from the beginning. God knew that the whole time. It wasn't a mistake in the plan or a failure. It's this incredible opportunity that I feel that we now have to pick up the mantle, to begin finding what is still there. It is still there, absolutely, in the Book of Mormon, and it is even still there, like you said, in the temple and in the gospel and in the church, we see...

Well, I guess I should talk... Your second book that is... The other one that I have of yours (these are the only two books I have of yours), *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, which I think this was the troubling one, right? This was the trouble book?

DS: Yeah, that... Yeah.

MS: And so this, but this does, I remember, it does talk about the embers still being there; you can still blow carefully on the embers and reignite the flame.

DS: Right.

MS: It is still present in the gospel that we have. And so, anyway, so that's why I wanted to, like, clarify... I don't think... I think that people get scared, thinking, "If I go on this path, then it threatens everything I know. It threatens my family, my membership in the church, and..."

DS: Yeah.

MS: While... Okay, a couple of things, and then ~~I'll~~ I'll let you talk again; I'm talking too much. But a couple of things, because you were talking about the messiness of this path. And it is messy, because striving to become pure in heart... And I think that there are so many false spirits and so many opportunities to be tempted from one side to the other like... I think there is—maybe it's an inevitable part of this path—this sort of grandiosity, this feeling of, "I'm really important. I'm really special." And we, as mortals, want to put people on pedestals. That's part of what the problem is. It's not just that our leaders are claiming that they're on pedestals. It's that we want to put them on—we want people on pedestals—and as soon as people get disillusioned with the church, then they want to find someone else to put on the pedestal, whether it's you or someone else that is vocal about their experiences with the divine, right? So we want to put people on pedestals, and then a consequence of that is we want to be put on a pedestal...

DS: Hah.

MS: ...as soon as we start... Right? I think... To me, that's part of the problem, right there. It's just our desire. Like I think every time we want to be around someone that we think is important, it's because it makes us more important, and if we can recognize, "Oh, I'm trying to fill that person in for God; it's God that I really want to be in connection with, not that person, not..." and "I don't want people to glorify and put me on a pedestal." We all... If I'm feeling the desire to have people put me on a pedestal that also is my lack of connection with God.

DS: Hmm.

MS: I think connection with God fills all of those holes. And I think all of those holes are what make this such a crazy, messy, complicated process for every individual. And so, luckily, kind of when you're a little further down the road, you can see, "Oh, I think they're at/in that place on the process that I relate to," you know—not that everyone's journey is the same, but when you see someone being a little bit, maybe, self-glorifying or when you see someone wanting to glorify somebody else (you or somebody else), you can kind of recognize that and just pray, "Lord, okay, help them make it through that journey on their own."

Anyway, does that resonate with you? Do you find some truth in that?

DS: Yeah. I think there's very little I would quarrel with. The purpose of a Zion is to have a community that, in effect, a community that finally lives the Sermon on the Mount—because the Sermon on the Mount was simply a blueprint for how a society would get along. And it really is Jesus explaining to people, in a sermon, how He lived, how Christ dealt with the law of Moses as an internal challenge that He was trying to face.

Zion is a community, and there's no such thing as an individual Zion. I mean, if you're gonna have a Zion, you have to have a community. The impediment to the community is the failure of the individual to internalize what the Lord has invited us and commanded us and asked us to do. And part of what interferes is that very notion about, "Hey, there's something special about you because the Lord took note of you."

I can tell you that there's absolutely nothing special about me. And in fact, as I look around at Latter-day Saints generally, as I was being baptized in September 10th of 1973, I was convicted and convinced that Joseph Smith was a prophet, the Book of Mormon was true, and that I needed to be baptized. I was convinced of that. But I looked at the Latter-day Saints ('cuz they invited me into family's homes), and I did not think that I was as good a person as the people in whose homes I was being taught. Some of these were very young married people with children, who were, you know, in their early 20s; they were still very youthful themselves, and yet they were living chaste, moral lives with families: they didn't smoke; they didn't drink; they did all of the Mormon things. And I did not believe myself to be capable of living as good a life as the lives I was seeing on display. But I had this conviction that I needed to be baptized because I had gotten an answer to prayer—and that if I failed to respond to that, that I would be losing that connection (because this connection was important to me, and I wanted to preserve it). So I went and I got baptized but didn't believe I was as good a person as the people I was joining. And realistically, as I look back on my life, I **don't** think I'm as good a person as the Latter-day Saint model would suggest.

I do think that forgiveness from God is absolutely important in order for someone to be reconciled to God, but the fact that God forgives you doesn't change that you were never good enough in the first place but for Christ's forgiveness. Therefore, of what do you have to boast? Is there something about you that makes you better than someone that did not need forgiveness for these errors? And my view is that, No, there isn't. And it's preposterous to think that, in a spiritual journey, that your stumbles and your falls and your bruised knees and your bloodied elbows are something that **you** can overlook when you think about **yourself**. The Lord may forgive you, but you're still that weak individual that needed to be lifted, that needed to be forgiven, that needed to be buoyed up by the Savior. And the idea that now, "Oh! You get to be a great model, and you get attention!" is foolish. I try to do what the Lord asks, in the way that He asks for it to be done, using what I'm told to do, at the time I'm told to do it, and nothing more. And I believe that anyone that then inserts themselves into the process cannot be trusted by God! And part of what gets favor with God is trustworthiness: the desire to give heed and diligence to Him and to His agenda and to lose yourself and your ambition and your desire. And there are a lot of people who, once having a spiritual experience of any

kind, wants to go out and shout about it and call attention to themselves and go stand on a street corner. I mean, I did not want to—throughout, I did not want to call attention to myself. And even now, I don't like doing interviews because it does seem like you're trying to get noticed and get airtime with someone. And I don't like that!

MS: Put the focus on you.

DS: Yeah.

MS: I think the focus on you is always a... I struggle with that with my podcasts. Like, I feel like this is what I'm supposed to be doing. This is...you know. But it is a challenge to not want the focus to be on me. Of course, it's nice when people say nice things to me. I appreciate it, you know. But at the same time, I don't want to *drink* that—right?—because...

DS: Yeah. I don't think the Lord can trust someone who has that within their heart, within their ambition. And I think that “being trusted by God” is a rare thing. It does not happen much in Scripture. It does not happen much in life. But if you ever obtain something like that, the last thing you want to do is betray it. And so...

MS: Absolutely.

DS: ...~~I worry about~~ I don't worry about the Lord trusting me, because I know what I'm about. However, I worry that people misinterpret, misread, and project onto someone else ideas that don't belong there. And if they project that onto someone—but they're trying now to follow a path towards God, and they think that that becomes part of that path towards God—then they're led astray by that. And so you have to be careful about the misimpressions that people take into themselves and then hope that they can get over on God, employing the misimpression that they've obtained from their misread of someone's motives. And I think that happened to Joseph all the time.

I think, as I read carefully the *Joseph Smith Papers* and look at, you know, what was going on in the contemporaneous material, there's a lot of people who are throwing onto Joseph their views of what they think he's about. And then they go about what is in their own hearts, believing that if they imitate the projection that they put upon Joseph in their own lives, that that will then let them get over with God. And I worry that just as the Lord was misunderstood, and Joseph was misunderstood, and undoubtedly, you know, Peter and Paul and others were misunderstood, that anyone who says, “I have come to know God,” will be misinterpreted and that there will be projections put upon them as a consequence of which they are misled—which is one of the reasons why I think the telestial world includes within the “list of those who are damned” those that say, “I, I am of Cephas, and I am of Peter, and I am of Paul, and I am of Esais,” because what they're doing is they're taking someone who was merely employed temporarily to deliver a message, and they're reading into that individual and projecting onto them what they believe to be a useful pattern to mirror their own lives when that is not the case. The one... These are true messengers that are listed in those that inherit the telestial world. The problem is that they project onto that messenger instead of saying that the messenger was following only the Lord and that...

MS: Can you back up and say that again? I lost the audio for just a second. Can you...? Say the problem is that they worship messengers...

DS: Yeah. The problem is that they project onto the messengers a pattern that they interpret as being the way to follow the Lord. And so they've substituted someone between the Lord and themselves. The messenger ought to be listened to...

MS: Absolutely.

DS: ...They ought to be heeded. But the purpose is to take that in order to try and draw closer to the Lord and only to the Lord—because the only one that ever got it right was the Lord! All of these other people are serving as delivery boys. But the cook in the kitchen and the food is coming from somewhere else. I mean, your DoorDash guy is not the... There's a whole infrastructure behind him.

MS: He's not the gardener that grew the food. Right!

DS: Yeah.

MS: I think this is exactly what it means with “cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh” (see 2 Nephi 28:31 LE). Because I do... I really... That has been my pattern is, for a time I feel so inspired to learn from this person, you know...

DS: Yeah, sure.

MS: ...and I drink up what they're teaching. And then they say something or something happens, and I'm like, “Oh, that doesn't resonate with me. They're off on that.” That doesn't mean I reject them as a teacher, but I... The spirit is the teacher. What is the truth is the teacher, right?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS: And I'll learn from this other person, and I'll learn from this other... And so, I take the messages from all of these people with messages to deliver, but keep the eye on... Don't... It's so tempting to want to be in someone's good graces or in someone's good favor, 'cuz it makes you feel more important, right? And that's, I think, exactly what you're talking about. And then, when we start having experiences with God, all of a sudden, we can start trusting in our own flesh, in our own self-speaking: “I can lead these people.” And that is really... That's a real temptation. To want to be put on a pedestal is as much of a...**more** of a temptation than wanting to put someone on a pedestal, right? And all of those things are part of this messiness that we have to avoid. Just true messages, letting the Holy Spirit be the guide, not any individual person.

DS: Yeah, yeah. And that is... We have to be wary. And wariness isn't confined to the motives or intentions or desires of the heart of **another** person. Wariness needs to be addressed internally to myself. We never escape the weaknesses of the flesh; so long as you're occupying a body of dust, that body is weak and vulnerable to the appetites of the flesh, the weaknesses of the flesh, the desires of the flesh. We get hungry; we get thirsty; we feel ourselves all the time in need of something else. And our egos are just

as big a problem to be wary about as anything else. I don't think we ever escape the weaknesses of mortality, and we fool ourselves if we think that we do. But the purpose, I think, that we best serve if we have something to offer is in teaching others and helping to lift them so that they draw closer to the divine, closer to light and truth. And in that sense, if you are able to raise someone else and have them accept more light and truth into their life, that's all you can do to please the Lord and to satisfy your obligation to your fellow man. After that, you don't get to control them! You don't get to collect...

MS: Right.

DS: ...tithes from them. You don't get to, you know, pay yourself a dividend, and you don't get to, you know, stand up and ask for adulation. You really... If you succeed...

MS: You don't get to become the authoritarian, institutional leader.

DS: Yeah.

MS: The Lord's messengers are rarely, if ever, ~~the institution~~ the authoritarian, institutional leader.

DS: The letter from Liberty Jail that Joseph Smith wrote, *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (D&C 121:41 LE) is an indictment of church leadership. And all of what follows in talking about the only correct way is by "love unfeigned, gentleness, meekness, pure knowledge," all of that is about the church leadership. It has nothing to do with the government. And it has nothing to do with individual rank-and-file members sitting in the pew. It's about people who **claim** to have power and authority by reason of the priesthood. If Jesus Christ is the head of the priesthood, if He is the one from whom all priesthood authority is derived through generations, if He's the head, **He did not come to BE served but to serve.**

MS: Yes.

DS: And so...

MS: And I do have to push back on you just a tiny bit...

DS: Yes?

MS: ...for saying it's an indictment of church leadership. Because I would say... Like, there are so many leaders who truly are servant leaders in the church, and I don't want to paint...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...with a broad brush there. Like, that is... I think each of us has the opportunity to be a servant or to be an authoritarian. Even as a parent, when I look at myself with my kids, and I'm like, "Go to bed; stop bothering me," 'cuz I want my time alone. And I... right? Am I being authoritarian, or am I serving? That's a question for each of us to ask at all times, in everything that we're doing. And so, we can't... Again, we can't put that off on somebody else when it's something... It's in all of our hearts all of the time. I think

whatever authority we have—I'm bigger than you; I'm in charge of you, I...right?—we always can get into unrighteous dominion or into servant leadership. So anyway... So I don't want to... Like, I think that's a question for all of us all the time. Because how we interact in the stewardship we have shows us how we will interact if we had a bigger stewardship, if we were the president of the church, our own little authoritarianism that would come out with... But in a way, the worst thing that happened to Brigham Young is that he accumulated so much power. If he hadn't had so much power, he couldn't have done so much mischief and caused so much damage, right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so that's the question for each of us in our... I think that applies to all of us all the time is, What do we do with the authority we're given?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And one example I use, like, my stake president is, you know... At a very, very difficult time, the way he used his calling was he brought the stake presidency over to clean my kitchen three weeks in a row when I was going through unthinkable things—because he was using his calling to demonstrate the service that can and should be done in our communities. And that... You know, so I really think there is a power to... It is possible to be in any position and abuse authority or not abuse authority. So anyway, continue, I didn't mean to cut you off.

DS: No, no, no! I think I don't have any quarrel with that. You know, I have met some... Some of the greatest people I know have been local Latter-day Saint leadership. The stake president who called me to the High Council, President Lorin Pugh, deserves special mention because I think he was a a godly man and a righteous man.

We had a stake patriarch. He was actually the stake patriarch before Lorin Pugh; he was released, and he became the stake patriarch. And the high priest group leader wouldn't call him to be a home teacher—because he didn't want the stake patriarch to be burdened with home-teaching or to have to deal with any family's problems or issues. And President Christensen went to the High Priest group leader, and he said, "I WANT to home-teach. I don't feel like I'm doing my duty if I don't home-teach." So the high priest group leader called me in and said, "Okay, I'm gonna let the patriarch home-teach a family, but I want to make sure it's the right family. And so I'm calling you and your family to be the home-teaching family that I'm sending the patriarch to because I don't want him to have to bear any burdens or be troubled by anything." And so, we were called to be the home-teaching family to whom the stake patriarch was assigned as his single home-teaching family.

MS: That's great!

DS: And he was a wonderful home teacher! He was the patriarch that came to know my children sufficiently well that when it came time to get patriarchal blessings, we took our kids over to Brother Christensen for patriarchal blessings 'cuz I thought he certainly would know and understand them. We still have a straggler who was too young, and so

she hasn't yet gotten a patriarchal blessing—so maybe I'll just give her one; we've talked to her about it.

MS: Wow.

DS: Anyway, there have been some wonderful men that...

MS: Yeah.

DS: ...that I've encountered who have been in local church leadership, and you're right! There are some great... There are no categoricals; there are good people everywhere.

MS: Right.

DS: Yeah.

MS: So, okay, so I have a couple of different areas I really want to get into. The reason I asked you to come on the podcast, specifically—it's not the only thing I want to talk to you about, but...is... One of the things... So, I talked about how you have different people that you learn from and listen to, and I told you what a service your book (your initial book)...that I was just miraculously led to. I was online, and there was a little link down at the bottom to some other page that just like shot... I had no idea what it was. Clicked on it. It took me to some conversation where there was another link that kind of glowed; I clicked on that. And it took me to some discussion where someone mentioned your book.

DS: [chuckling]

MS: That was my process of finding your book, which I had no idea what it was; I just knew that it was... The screen was glowing extra bright, and I was like, "I have to buy that book!" And I did. So, I do think it worked that the Lord led people to it who needed it. That was my experience, you know. So...

DS: Oh, hey, while you're talking about that: *The Second Comforter*, *Nephi's Isaiah*, *Eighteen Verses*, *Beloved Enos* are all written by me as a member in good-standing, a High Councilman, active Latter-day Saint, and they all are LDS orthodox. I've had a number of people say, "Why don't you go back and rewrite the books now that you are on the other side?" And my position has always been: Every one of those were written to reflect what was then LDS orthodox teachings, and I don't... Well, they are an artifact at this point.

MS: Right.

DS: Every one of them is a reflection of what the doctrine, what the teachings, what the principles, what the understanding was of Latter-day Saint Mormonism at the time those books were put into print. And so if something has changed between then and now (and some things have changed), I want to preserve what it was like at the time that I was a member in good-standing, holding a temple recommend, attending the temple with some regularity, serving on the High Council, and having taught either Gospel Doctrine

or Elders Quorum or High Priest Group priesthood for three decades. I understood the orthodox teachings of the church. Now, those books are, in context, an exposition of Mormonism as it was when I was a member—active and in good-standing—and I won't edit them to change them at this point. And you will see a lot of encouragement to orthodoxy in all of those books; even *Passing the Heavenly Gift* encourages faith in the Restoration and fidelity to the church—although it takes some of the varnish off the historical narrative of the church, it doesn't say you should run and hide from LDS orthodoxy; it's just saying that the narrative is not accurate, it ought to be improved, and suggests ways in which it might well be improved. But it was that and the lectures that followed...

One thing that excommunication did (in the lectures that followed) was freed me up from what I perceived to be an obligation to pull punches. I really...

MS: ...to be careful, to be gentle. Okay.

DS: Yeah, I really did.

MS: I feel that.

DS: Even in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, I am not hitting anything very hard. In fact, a...

MS: Okay, I felt... I will say, as a member, I felt... I loved the terms that you introduce in the first one. Like, the term “institutional pride” was one that, really, I was like, oh, my goodness, that is what the Book of Mormon is talking about, our institutional pride of “we are the chosen people; we have the fullness of the gospel; we're the ones; everyone needs to be like us,” right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: But you do hit pretty hard. Like, if people, you know... Like, I have a little bit of a softer tone, but I was able to tolerate it; I thought that it was very useful. I just always... I kind of argue back at you a little bit, 'cuz I have a slightly different “come from” or way of approach. But I still think that you were... But my understanding—and I need to clarify a few things—but my understanding is you still were trying to preserve faith and trying to...

DS: Yes.

MS: ...preserve [indecipherable] membership in the church—your own and of those who would be your readers. I think that was your goal, even at that time.

DS: Right. It was, it was—and let me illustrate with one little incident. I had a (or I HAVE a) law partner who left—he had been on a High Council—he had left the church, and he had actually become Catholic. And he's a lay Catholic minister. (He can't be a fully ordained priest in Catholicism because he's married, and he has a family.) But he had left the church. I took a copy of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and I gave it to my law partner to read, and he read it. His reaction was, “Well, this is an apologetic book, AND I have to tell you, if I had read this book before I had left the church, this may have kept

me in the church. So, you know, it's too late now; I'm not going back. But it's really an apologetic book.” That's in the view of someone who I think is a more objective reader than someone who is a Latter-day Saint and who doesn't want to acknowledge that there may be some unresolved issues, some fudging on history, some shading of accounts...

MS: We're plagued by defensiveness.

DS: Yes. Yeah.

MS: I think the defensiveness is one of the greatest things...

DS: Yeah.

MS: Like, anytime I feel defensive, it's really... I really take that as a signal of going, “Okay, God, I know this is not from you.” Defensiveness is about pride and fear and shame and things that are the adversary's tools, not the Lord's. And so it's our defensiveness that makes us object to these things. And I think that's one of the main things we need to get rid of. And so, yeah—so that's my experience of those books. I will say, and I don't... This is just, you know... (Someone just called me honest to a fault; it's true.) But I read your first book—very much inspired by the Lord; greatly appreciated it. I didn't feel inspired to read any of your other books. I shared your book with my sister, and she went and bought all of your books, and lent one to me, and I started reading it. And while I appreciated it, I wanted to read the Scriptures—do you know what I mean?—like, I didn't get very far into it, ‘cuz I just felt like, “I'm reading his interpretation of Scriptures, but I want to read the Script...” I get my own interpretation of Scripture. So it wasn't anything against it; it was just the Lord saying, “Hey, you got what you needed. Now go back to me,” right? That was my journey.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so I never became sort of a follower or, you know (which I don't think you even like the term “follower,” from my understanding, you know). So I don't think you'll object to my journey that I... That was the book I needed from you. And then my journey has been in the Scriptures.

But I do know... One of the things I wanted to talk to you about (because I don't know where you talk about this or if I misunderstood), but at some point—and I had, I don't know, I'm trying to... The memories are fuzzy [on] the timeline. But I know at some point, I heard you say something about polygamy, which led me to believe that, at that time, you believed polygamy was of God, right? Because we all... ‘Cuz I believed polygamy was of God; I'm not... You know, like we all grow and learn. And so that's kind of what I wanted to talk to you about because I know there was a time where, based on all of the information all of us had, we believed polygamy was of God. And I think maybe what it was... I have sort of now developed a sort of a maybe unhealthy, maybe not knee-jerk reaction to hearing men talk about women's identity or destiny or purpose that... Do you know...?

DS: Yeah...

MS: Like, that's... I don't mean to come up with that. It just is how it is for me at this point, and it has been for many years. And so maybe you were talking about men and women or something, and that's where I kind of was like, "Okay, I'm tuned out for a little while 'cuz I can't have any more men get the answers that are mine and my sisters to get and to present." Does that...?

DS: Yeah.

MS: That's my... I'm sorry. I'm a little bit of a feisty ~~low-cap~~ I mean, small-cased "feminist," you know?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so, I just kind of instinctively feel that way. So... But what I wanted to talk to you about, because I've gone on this journey of **strongly** believing polygamy was of God and that it would be Zion and that it would be, you know, very much the Bruce R. McConkie perspective, that it would be the celestial kingdom, and it was... It would be a privilege when we were able to live that. I was incredibly naive, went through the journey of learning, first of all, that polygamy was never of God, then, yeah... I was naive about polygamy. I only saw the glowing, you know, top level—not all of the underbelly. And then went through the process of learning that polygamy was not of God and then, more recently, have come to this conclusion that has become... You know how you finally accept truth and then the Lord confirms it and confirms it and confirms it?

So, now in the position of not believing that Joseph was the author or any sort of participant in anything to do with polygamy, but that he didn't define it. And I believe you've gone on a similar journey. And I kind of wanted to hear your, like, how you got from point A to point B to point C, what your journey was, and what convinced you, because I think it's a valuable... People like to write me off. I'm, you know, I'm dealing with a lot of people saying I'm too emotional, and I'm too... They, like... It's pretty unpleasant. You're a lawyer, hard-nosed guy, pretty logical. Let's hear it from you, Denver: Why should people consider that polygamy is not of God, and that Joseph wasn't a polygamist?

DS: Well, if... Let me start by just talking about the way in which I had understood it at the beginning because, as a Latter-day Saint, you accept what the Latter-day Saint tradition tells you. So I began with the proposition that it was of God and true, and section 132 is in the Scriptures that...

MS: Right.

DS: ...I got, and I respected. And if it's in the Scriptures, then it just...

MS: It's canonized! Yeah!

DS: ...as a matter of fact, it's part of the religion! And so I accepted it.

There was a time when it got called into question. And so, while I accepted it, I then became a little more sensitive to the historical source material that it was predicated upon. And it actually became an issue for investigation that I investigated for more than a quarter century. I didn't... I accepted it as true; I began to investigate it; it took a long time before I began to question it; then when I began to question it, it didn't arise to the level of doubting it until I read enough source material ~~that may~~ that troubled me. So I went back to section 132, and I wrestled with the content of section 132 because it is an internally inconsistent document.

MS: Absolutely.

DS: It doesn't hold a constant theme. And one of the things that I was trying to reconcile is how can this unsteady voice in a single revelation make contradictory statements? I began by accepting the notion that Joseph Smith had received the revelation early on. I found were Brigham Young—in that five volume set of Brigham Young's discourses—there is a place in there where he says that the revelation was originally received in 1828, while they were translating the Book of Mormon. He says that Joseph and Oliver became exposed to that. I became acquainted with little known history about Oliver Cowdery (one of the first four missionaries going out), and one of the ideas that they entertained on that mission was that they could grab Indian squaws (they refer to them as that; I'm not being disparaging—this is their view) and get them pregnant; breed with the Indian squaws and produce half-breeds. (There was an entire section of land on the other side of the Mississippi River in the Iowa side, opposite Nauvoo, that was called the half-breed section, in which children that American soldiers had fathered with Indian women were considered, you know, the appropriate landowners in the half-breed section.) Well, the first four missionaries that went out were engaged in the thought of taking extra wives and impregnating them.

MS: Now can you clarify that: Are you saying they actually did that? Or that's the report that came later?

DS: No, that was what was part of what motivated Oliver Cowdery in the first trip out west to engage in the missionary work. They got into Kirtland, and one of the missionaries converted—or started the conversion process for—Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon then went up to where Joseph was in New York. Missionaries continued on and wound up in Independence. But that's... All of that is a separate issue. It was Brigham Young that put it as early as 1828. And so, one of the questions about section 132 is:

- Was it a singular revelation?
- Was it multiple revelations?
- If it was multiple revelations, is there any way to divide it up into the time...?

And I looked at it, and I thought, “Well, they're so different in the way that this subject gets treated. It's so different that this HAS to be separate revelations,” and I parsed it into four and maybe five different revelations, while *still accepting* the notion that it was true. And it took some time after that before enough information accumulated that I changed my mind. And that was not a, you know, hasty thing.

I changed my mind, and I concluded that section 132 was not at all reliable. Its provenance was very dubious. And it's attribution to Joseph is very suspect.

In Michael Quinn's exposition and in Brian Hales' exposition, they acknowledge that there is only ONE document contemporaneous with Joseph Smith that clearly ties him to the practice—and that one document is section 132. And so if section 132 is suspect because its provenance is insufficient that it shouldn't be trusted, then we have nothing to tie Joseph to the practice, other than the *enormous* library of material that was generated years/decades after the death of Joseph Smith, in which they attribute—back into the “Nauvoo era”—things TO Joseph which made sense after the 1852 public announcement and the public advocacy that went on and the indoctrination and the propaganda that went on. It makes sense that they would feel comfortable providing these narratives years/decades after the death of Joseph Smith.

So, one of the challenges...

MS: Right.

DS: ...that I thought needed to be undertaken—which I undertook—was to look at everything that existed on June 27, 1844 and before then as evidence that linked Joseph to the practice, and what you find...

MS: So you wanted to limit the search to the contemporaneous evidence...

DS: Only!

MS: ...because I'm just watching everyone... 'Cuz what we have... They **claim** that 132 is contemporaneous. It's not! It appeared magically after Brigham's death in 1852, which is not contemporaneous with Joseph or when it was received.

DS: Right.

MS: And then the very first testimonies we have start in 1869 and then continue on throughout the rest of that century, right? So from what I'm hearing, you were saying, “Okay, we have all of these later documents. Is there anything that can tie them to Joseph's life? Is there anything contemporaneous I can find to validate or verify any of these later claims?” Is this what I'm...?

DS: Yeah, I...

MS: Okay. ...which is what a good lawyer would do (or a good critical thinker). Yes.

DS: I wanted anything that I could find that would tie Joseph directly that existed June 27, 1844 or before then. And so in looking at that, I concluded that the **overwhelming body** of information was Joseph Smith denouncing/opposing/holding church courts to discipline anything and everything which suggested spiritual wivery, polygamy, multiple wives. He was absolutely opposed to the practice publicly and in any of the private meetings that were held in church disciplinary proceedings. And even the stuff that purported to tie him to it... That McClellan letter about Emma Smith catching Joseph in

the barn in the very act—with exclamation points—which was written after the fact and based upon an interview that McClellan had with Emma Smith **decades** after the event (and she denied Joseph had done that) appears to be not about sex or intercourse or even marriage; it appears to be something about a ceremony being conducted, in which they were in the barn. And that's it. And what was that ceremony? Because Joseph was in the process of employing a sealing power in order to link people together in order to provide for the eternality of marriage—and the only way that you could make the eternal marriage work in a family in the next life was to link them through Joseph to the eternities. And Joseph was doing something which... You don't find it in any of the documents (because I've looked carefully) until October of 1843, when Joseph (for the first time) mentions the word “adoption.” And so whatever was going on was designed to preserve a family into eternity, and it included a concept which Joseph finally employed the vocabulary word *adoption* to describe. But one of the problems with saying “sealing=marriage” and “marriage=sex” when it comes to this whole subject matter is that Joseph Smith never fathered a child with anyone other than Emma Smith. Fanny Alger is supposedly someone with whom he had sexual relations, and there was some kind of sealing. Well, she went on to get married to another man, and I forget, it's either eight or nine children. She was fertile, and she bore eight or nine children. She's at the...

MS: She also never claimed to be Joseph's wife.

DS: Correct.

MS: She never claimed there was anything between them; she refuted... And I will push back a little bit against you again...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...if you don't mind. You know, like, I think that... I think you're bringing quite a bit of speculation to the Fanny Alger situation, because we don't even know if there was any sort of a ceremony happening at all. We'd, like... What we do know is that Oliver said that he had misunderstood; Emma did not hold Joseph accountable/was not angry. We know that the wording in that... Like, it—again—is a very convoluted, like... Something happened in the barn that was somewhat misunderstood and that all works out. As soon as Joseph...

DS: Yeah, they...

MS: ...was able to talk to people—people that he was not manipulating or exerting power over—he just was finally able to explain, and they were like, “Okay, I've got it.” So, the reason I get a little uncomfortable, like... And Joseph did talk about adoption, but nobody has any idea what that meant or what it was, other than we can listen to his own words saying it had nothing to... There was no...

DS: Right.

MS: ...allowance for any kind of sealing to anyone as a wife.

DS: Right.

MS: And so, for me, I guess, the reason I get a little bit feisty about it is because, for me... Emma is my connection to this, you know? Like, I am perfectly happy to defend Joseph, but it's really Emma—studying **her**—that convinced me...

DS: Right.

MS: ...that this did not happen—because to believe this about Joseph, you have to believe this about Emma. And for me, if Joseph did anything that felt like a betrayal to Emma, then that was a betrayal of their marriage, even if it was some sort of a sealing that Emma didn't understand. And so, for me, if he was doing some sort of ceremony in the barn with Fanny that upset Emma, that's not okay. Do you know what I mean? Like, I'm not good with that.

DS: Yeah, well...

MS: And so, still, there's so little that we know.

DS: Well, let me be clear, because apparently you're misunderstanding. The only source material that we have for recounting the incident with Fanny Alger is the very late McClellan letter...

MS: Yeah.

DS: ...which, again, it's decades later, and it's filled with exclamation points, and it's intended to be scandalous. But at the time, I think McClellan felt comfortable in writing it in that fashion because word had leaked out decades earlier about what was going on in Utah.

You also have the Far West High Council disciplinary court involving Oliver Cowdery, in which, purportedly, Oliver Cowdery said something about Joseph and Fanny Alger; however, the court disciplined Oliver, and he testified that there was never anything untoward that Joseph Smith had done, and that he was unaware of anything that Joseph had done that would violate any of the commandments.

And then we have Emma's statements that are contrary to the idea that there was something untoward that took place.

But the final piece is: The son of the man who claimed that he performed the ceremony in the barn... We don't have an account of his father; we have his [the son's] account, and his account is also late! And therefore, I question whether the son's hearsay comments about what the father did are reliable.

So the whole Fanny Alger thing... IF something happened—and I don't think there's enough to clarify *if* or *what*—I am fully satisfied that if the answer to *if* is, “Yes,” that the answer to the *what* question is, “The sealing, if it was something that took place, had nothing to do with marriage or intercourse.”

As I was saying before you interjected that last part, she was at the height of her fertility at the time...

MS: Yeah.

DS: ...that this encounter purportedly took place. Joseph Smith fathered, I think, eight pregnancies through Emma (some of whom, you know, died and others miscarried). But he was...

MS: Well, I want... Just to clarify that as well.

DS: Yeah.

MS: 'Cuz now... I want to interject again. Well, you finish your sentence, then I'll interject. I apologize.

DS: She was at the peak of her fertility, he was at the peak of his fertility, they were young, they were youthful, and yet, if something happened, it produced nothing! I don't think that you can say that Joseph had 37 (or however many they now aggregate to) women other than Emma, and there was no progeny produced, when most of those women DID bear children and yet Joseph, who—according to 132, its purpose is to “raise up seed unto the Lord,” which is a euphemism for, you know, getting them pregnant and having your cattle produce offspring, which is what Brigham Young did. I mean, you look at the pregnancies, and Joseph was not engaged in whatever it was that Brigham Young began teaching in the absence of Joseph Smith. And the number of plural wife pregnancies mushrooms as soon as Joseph is killed.

MS: Right.

DS: And before then, it's just... It's kept on the down-low. One of the things that I think you have to take into account (if you're examining this whole narrative about the credibility of section 132 and its authenticity) is the lack of any offspring other than through Emma and the presence of this 50+ offspring from Brigham Young that begins after Joseph's death; it... The narrative doesn't match the conduct on the ground! And when you've got—June 27, 1844 and before then—Joseph denouncing it, Joseph convening church disciplinary councils to discipline those who are caught in this process and asking those, “Where did you learn about this?” and then bringing in the people from whom they learned it and holding a church court for them. These aren't public; these are private matters, and Joseph is doing this in private. In public, he's giving lecture and discourse and sermon denouncing this stuff; he's running denunciations in the *Times and Seasons*; he has Emma (and he assisted) publishing a declaration from the Relief Society of Nauvoo and trying to get the sisters in Nauvoo to cut off these wayward men seducing them by saying, “Oh, Joseph teaches this nonsense in private.”

I went to dinner with D. Michael Quinn, and he had a great opening line for starting a conversation: After we settled in for dinner, he said, “I think your position on polygamy is bullshit.” And I said, “Okay, so let's just think about it for a moment: If you take June 27, 1844 as the cutoff date and you look at what information we have available to us from

June 27, 1844 and before—if that's the library you look at, and you ignore everything after then—tell me what proof you have that Joseph was involved.”

And he reflected for a minute, and he said, “Well, yeah, the Far West High Council doesn't quite get there, does it?”

And I said, “No, it doesn't!”

And, you know, he mentioned two or three other things and then said, “Okay, I understand your position,” you know, it wasn't that...

MS: Okay...

DS: ...he agreed with me. It was like, Okay, if that's going to be where you focus, then you're not just full of bullshit; I mean...

MS: Yes.

DS: ...there's something there for that. But he and Brian Hales and others who are proponents of the narrative, immediately turn to, “Yes, BUT you have to believe that hundreds of people were lying in the years afterwards, and you can dismiss one or two or three, but you can't dismiss hundreds of people being liars!” And that's the problem with this whole subject area. Because a person who wants to support the narrative that polygamy is legit can list off a hundred sources in rapid fire and say, “There! I've now proven my case.” In order, then, to respond to that position, you literally have to go through every single one of the examples...

MS: Right...

DS: ...one by one by one to show:

- It couldn't be true,
- They weren't in a position to know anything,
- They contradicted themselves elsewhere,
- They borrowed words from an affidavit that was put in front of them by Joseph F. Smith (who pre-wrote the affidavit),
- They were locked into a system in which polygamy was the law, and it was being enforced, and
- These are vulnerable women who are signing the affidavits, and by not conforming to the narrative, they could be put out on the street. And so there's pressure put upon them.

There are so many problems...

MS: And not only put out on the street... Not only put out on the street in this life, lose their entire exaltation!

DS: Yeah.

MS: These are the men telling them they have control over their **eternal** destiny.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so, lying for the Lord **became** part of your way to qualify; it was very much a... Obedience... I mean, the preaching of obedience at this time is hard for us to imagine, and the connection between “Follow counsel or go to Hell”...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...was profound. Your life will be made healthier, or your eternal life will be hell...

DS: Yeah. And...

MS: ...literally. The fear is something we can't relate to.

DS: One of the things that I tried to explain or bring to people's attention in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was what was really going on during the Mormon Reformation. I mean, things are going very, very bad in Utah, and Brigham Young blamed the saints, not himself; he blamed the saints for that failure. The Home Missionary Program asked a series of questions that were designed to determine whether you had sinned in a way that justified the shedding of your blood, because blood atonement was being preached. And so the intimidation that was going on during that time period was... I mean, it was life-threatening! If you wanted to be a righteous saint, you had to conform to the system, and the system included plural marriage. So the gathering of hundreds of affidavits in an atmosphere that is oppressive and threatening is not something to say, “Oh, we've proven our case with”—because every one of those has flaws in their credibility, in their reliability, or even whether they were present at the time they claim they were present. I mean, Orson Pratt is rather famous for talking about things that he witnessed when he was in a complete different location, and it was impossible for him to be able to testify to something. I mean, it... Yes...

MS: Right...

DS: ...the conclusion I reached is, yes! Hundreds of people can be lying!

MS: Well, and I want to also say it doesn't require even hundreds of people to be lying. Because even, like, there are just a few of the women who claim to be... There are a few of the women who have to be lying and a few others. And I guess my question is, How many do we have to **show** our lying absolutely?? Like, we have turned out so many lies! Even the church has many of these people that claim to be wives of Hyrum and Joseph that the church doesn't accept!

DS: Yes!

MS: That means the church is acknowledging they were lying, right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And I guess my question would be, Hey, do you think that the FLDS—before they became this, you know, before that fell apart—do you think they could get hundreds of affidavits saying that Warren Jeffs was not a pedophile and was not a rapist and was

not abusing control? Do you think that...? Like, that's this kind of system we have to get our minds... Anyone who doesn't think that that absolutely would and could happen is up in the night. And when we recognize that that is what Mormonism was at that time, it should not surprise us at all that we have all of these affid... Everyone was lining up to do affid... I mean, they were being pressured so much. Everyone of these affidavits you see was in response to being asked for it, to being pressured to give it in some way or other.

DS: Yeah...

MS: We've gone through so many... And more and more all the time saying, "That's not true. That's not true. That's not true." There is no... Like even Helen Mar Kimball, who's one of the best known, all of her reasons that she gives, all... Like, none of it is recognizable to anything we would recognize as eternal doctrine. There's nothing about it in Joseph Smith's writings anywhere or the revelations. And so it's bizarre that we say, "No, these things are all true! And God told them that was the truth!" Well, where did that truth go then...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: If we needed these dynastic sealings, why don't we still need them? Like, why could it... I mean, there are so many, many problems. So, I guess that's what frustrates me is this idea of...

And it's not hundreds. It's not hundreds. We have affidavits of people that were [age] three at the time. They wouldn't know, right?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS: We can prove all of these things. So if we can prove so many of them automatically false, and then we have a *few* that are hard to deal with... Like, we're calling the women liars. And my example for that is Elizabeth Smart. You can't look at a trauma-bonded woman and call her a liar.

DS: Yeah...

MS: You look at the situation that she is victimized by, and go, "Are we wise to listen to the words of her oppressor, even if they're coming through her mouth? Is that serving that woman well?"

DS: I think that this subject is also extremely problematic for the LDS Church and its narrative—because the official position of the LDS Church in the essays that they have written on this subject and published on lds.org makes...

MS: ...are written into their history *Saints*, now; it's been written into that narrative form, uh-huh.

DS: It makes Joseph Smith:

- a liar;
- under the law at the time, an adulterer;
- someone who disobeyed the marital law at the time that governed conduct, and therefore, a criminal;
- it makes him a pedophile because of the ages involved;
- and given the narrative that they've adopted about how he solicited them, it makes him a predator.

Therefore...

MS: Um-hmm, and also a hypocrite because he was disciplining other people...

DS: Yes!

MS: ...for doing what we claim/what they claim he was doing.

DS: Therefore, the people who are bitter, angry, anti-Mormon, former Mormons who are vociferously denouncing and fighting against the the Restoration itself are not irrational or ill-motivated.

MS: Right.

DS: They are simply accepting the way that the LDS Church claims that Joseph Smith lived. And they're saying, "This is abhorrent!" If you accept the church's view of Joseph Smith, I understand why you would throw the Restoration itself out, Joseph, the Book of Mormon, everything. I understand why you would do that. The reason why I hold on to Joseph Smith, to the Book of Mormon, to the Restoration, and to God's promises that He intends to have a shoot come out from the dead stump and still live and survive is because I believe Joseph Smith did NOT engage in hypocrisy, pedophilia, predatory, hypocritical, adulterous relations. I believe that Joseph Smith was honest in his public denunciations. And I believe that God would never deal with a man subject to so many flaws, weaknesses, so much treachery, so much betrayal.

My read in the *Joseph Smith Papers* is not that Joseph Smith merely loved Emma, but he admired, respected, and **deferred** to Emma!

MS: RELIED on her, yes! He NEEDED her. And...

DS: She was better educated than him; he respected that. She was older than him; he held her in esteem—she was an elect lady. I think if Emma contradicted Joseph in a discussion, that Joseph would not only listen to her, he would give heed to and probably surrender his opinion to hers if it was better informed—and very often that WAS the case. And I think you read the letters between Joseph and Emma in the *Joseph Smith Papers*... I don't get any sense that this is a two-faced, hypocritical, dishonest, treacherous husband betraying a woman that he had little enough regard for that he would consign her to destruction.

One other thought that I forgot to include earlier. I mean, section 132, was written by someone who was not very well acquainted with the Scriptures, wherein you justify by servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in having multiple wives. Isaac didn't have multiple wives! It...yeah.

MS: Right. The very first problem reveals what a farce it is. In fact, the very first verse reveals what a farce it is. And then it goes on from there to innumerable other... My podcast is called "132 Problems." Exactly! There is, like... And we can see... Well, I have Brigham Young and others were... Brigham Young was not familiar with the Scriptures. Joseph Smith very, very much was.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And there's consistency in his teachings. He believed them; he tried to carry them out.

DS: Yeah, yeah, there's... Yeah. And so I've come, ultimately, to the conclusion that section 132 is a—wherever it originated from—it's not a product of Joseph Smith's. There may be some internal teachings that reflect what Joseph was teaching about the eternal nature of the marriage covenant. There may be some morsels of truth that migrated into the 132 that originated from Joseph, but 132 did not. I don't think it is authentically something that we can rely upon. And I don't think the practice of polygamy is something that originates with Joseph.

Now, I'm willing to look for additional proof. But the meticulous search that I have made to this point, leads me to the conclusion that the more carefully you examine the credibility of the authority...

You know, Jeremy Hoop is trying to put together a website and a product that gets everything out there and allows people to make an examination for himself. I gave him a copy of a jury instruction that gets used in court about the credibility of witnesses: You can find one witness to be credible and find ten witnesses that oppose the one not to be credible, and it's not the number of witnesses that carries the day; it's the underlying believability and credibility. The church certainly has numerosity on their side. They have... The LDS Church has been effective propagandists. And when they take on a subject, they generate libraries of material to support their position. But that doesn't mean that the library is trustworthy. You can have a single voice crying in the wilderness, like John the Baptist, who, as Joseph put it, The kingdom of God was with John and not with the Jews at the time. But John was a lone voice crying in the wilderness. He certainly didn't have numerosity. But he did have the kingdom of God with him.

MS: I... Okay. And I think it is useful to look at the modern-day examples. I was trying to remember the woman's name—I won't remember it—but the one woman they finally got to testify against Warren Jeffs to hold him accountable, right?

DS: Oh, yeah.

MS: They have... Like, it was so hard. Oh, and I know there's a book, *The Witness Wore Red*, and it's her younger sister ~~that Joseph~~ that Warren married off/forced to be married as underage. And to get that ONE woman who was courageous enough and crazy enough to testify against her entire community, and the entire community lined up, called her liars, called her... Right? It isn't the number; it's the veracity of the testimony. I just want to emphasize that in this modern case, in our day. That as soon as that one woman was willing to go to trial, it was a slam dunk! It's so obvious what Warren did! And then, they went in and did the raid and found the tape recordings and found the, you know, then they found much more evidence, but...which I believe is what's happening, to a great extent, now as we're getting more access. And that's one thing I say often: The more gain access, the more we gain scientific valid verification through things like DNA testing, the more information we have available to us, the more innocent Joseph is; the stronger the case is in his favor. And that is a really good way to determine where truth is, right? So to just go by, "I believe these women!" Okay, well, then you need to believe all the polygamist women who *still* don't believe that Warren Jeffs was doing anything wrong. You need to do that to be consistent. And people don't do that!

DS: They don't. By the way, I went down to the Colorado City community area, and spoke directly to the polygamists a while ago on the subject of plural marriage. I don't know of any outreach that's being made by Latter-day Saints, but I don't think you just sit back and criticize people for believing something—because there is a library of material that justifies their conclusion. I went down there to address them, you know, face-to-face to discuss candidly with them and to try and disabuse them of things that they need to be confronted with and taught about...

MS: Yes.

DS: ...and some effort made to reclaim them. And, you know, I'm not interested in just sitting back and throwing rocks. If there's a way to help people to overcome something, I'm happy to go and attempt to do that—don't know what...

MS: I love that! I feel like that's one of the tragedies happening now is the LDS's...

DS: Yeah.

MS: The church's insistence on keeping 132 and keeping this doctrine continues the abuse; we are complicit in the ongoing polygamist suffering that's happening.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And even the anti-Mormons and ex-Mormons insistence on saying it was Joseph also continues this abuse. If people could look at this evidence honestly, we could actually help men, women, and children suffering under this deplorable satanic system, this abomination today. We can really make an... Us coming to truth and sharing that can help people today! It's not just a historical question.

DS: You know, earlier I mentioned Doctrine and Covenants 93, verse 1. I believe Joseph to have been an honest man and an authentic messenger called by God. I do not think you can be a morally corrupt man and have that kind of assignment given to you by God. And I think that first verse of D&C 93 defines the character of Joseph Smith: *...who...cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am* is not just a recitation of, you know, a laundry list of interesting facts. I think it is a description of the kind of character that is required in order for someone, as Joseph did, to come into the presence of God. And to impute to him hypocrisy and predatory behavior and dishonesty is to completely confuse the kind of character that God will deal with in asking for a message to be delivered.

MS: Absolutely.

DS: I think Joseph was naive in that he trusted a lot of people that he should not have trusted. I think he was imputing to others the kind of character and heart that he had within himself. And so he assumed...

MS: We all project. He projected his goodness onto other people. I've done the same thing and gotten myself in trouble. We assume people are the same as us. Right? And so...

DS: And Joseph did that. And he trusted a lot of untrustworthy people. And THAT, I think, is his biggest mistake, but I don't believe that to be a sin!

MS: Absolutely.

DS: To trust someone when they're untrustworthy doesn't reflect poorly on your character; it reflects generosity and big-heartedness on your part, requiring that they *prove* themselves to be untrustworthy before you assign to them untrustworthiness. And Joseph made that mistake.

MS: But if we're going to be hard on Joseph, then we need to also be hard on Jesus...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...who called Judas. Right? It's... We can see the Lord's hand in it, or we can blame the individual, which is ridiculous. Yeah.

DS: Yeah, it's true.

Well, this is a workday. And I have work to do! So, is there anything else that you wanted...?

MS: Can I ask a couple more questions?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Let's hit your list of whatever you want that's important, and let's wrap it up. Okay.

MS: Okay, this is great. Well, I do want to know, and this is a question for you. So, as we talked about, you did want to stay in the church, and you did want to assist people in staying in the church dealing with this messiness. So my question is for people who are in the church who are coming onto this path, ummm... I guess it's a two part question. First of all, do you see anything that you... Do you ever deal with regret or self-reproach? I struggle with those things a lot. Do you ever feel like, "Maybe if I had done this a little differently...?" Or do you feel like it was inevitable? And what would you tell people who are dealing with that fear today of "How can I embark on this path without threatening my life as I know it? Or do I need to get rid of that fear and maybe threaten my life as I know it?"

DS: Umm, I think everyone has to sort that out for themselves. However, I do think that preserving marital harmony is important. I... From time to time... Look, the LDS Church has a great Primary program. I have some granddaughters who are benefited by going to the church on Sabbath days to get through the Primary program. It's an occasion for them to actually put a dress on, to sit and be reverent, to engage in the kind of personal self-discipline that you only get if you go to church before you go to school. And when my granddaughters go to church, they go to the ward I once belonged to because that was where my daughter... (And actually, my daughter and son-in-law lived in our basement; that's where they went to church after they were first married.) And I go with them. And we go to a local LDS ward, and when the Sacrament meeting ends, I escort my younger of the two granddaughters; she knows exactly where the nursery is, and she runs down the hallway because she's eager to get there—now that they're through with the sacrament thing—to get into the nursery. And she and I go down the hallway, and I get her safely into the nursery. And my daughter—because, you know, her children are in Primary and in the nursery, and she's got to stay around—my daughter will stay and attend Relief Society, and my wife will stay and attend Relief Society with her. And I'll just go home. And I'm welcomed; in fact, I keep getting invited to stay for Priesthood, but...

When they excommunicated me, they did not tell me that I couldn't participate (normally, they give you instructions that say you can't speak up). And so for some period of time, we attended church after the excommunication, and I did speak up in—back then it was Gospel Doctrine still—and in Priesthood. And there was one fellow in particular that that made uncomfortable. Ultimately, I concluded that it's better off if I don't make him uncomfortable. So I go to Relief or I go to Sacrament, but I wouldn't attend the other meetings. I don't think that I benefit anyone by going in and answering questions 'cuz my questions at this point would be honest.

I don't see a thing wrong with someone continuing to enjoy LDS membership. I think you can believe in the gospel of Christ, the Restoration, Joseph Smith, and attend a Methodist Church. I mean, his mind had become somewhat partial to the Methodists for pretty good reason (if you read about Methodism and some of their earliest advocates). I think you can belong to whatever church you want to belong to because churches, generally, are fellowshiping forums. How you relate to God and being baptized—because used to be Latter-day Saints were rebaptized with some regularity, and I believe, today, being rebaptized if you're going to accept the Book of Mormon as a

covenant (because the LDS Church has not done that) and if you're going to repent and try to accept Joseph as an authentic prophet-leader and the version of Joseph that throws out 132—I think you can be rebaptized, but after that, I think you can go sit in an LDS Church, and if you find fellowship and comfort there, I think that's fine!

I know there are a lot of people who are independently fellowshiping now. They don't contribute tithes to an organization. They gather tithes in little fellowships, and then once the tithes are gathered, they look at the needs of the people in that little fellowship so that money doesn't aggregate and go to some institutional purpose. Tithing goes to help with the transportation, the food, the rent, the housing, the medical bills of the local people and isn't spent elsewhere. People do that, and I think THAT is fine.

But how you deal with your reconciliation with what you're hearing in the LDS Church is an individual matter—and I wouldn't encourage anyone to go storming off and becoming an enemy to Mormonism. Even now, I don't pick a fight with the LDS Church. I don't go around denouncing them or challenging them. I try to state clearly and plainly my understanding, and if it contradicts a narrative that the LDS Church is advancing, I try to explain why I view it differently than does the institution—but that's not picking a fight! That's an attempt to give clarity to why I understand what I understand.

But I'm not interested and I do not hope for the ultimate failure of the LDS Church. I think Utah and the Mormon corridor from Canada to Mexico is *enormously* benefited by what the LDS Church offers. I think that the communities all throughout the Mormon corridor have better citizens, they have better people, they have better neighbors who are Latter-day Saints. And so I don't want the LDS Church to lose its members. I want them to try and hold onto them and continue to make good citizens of them. But that doesn't mean that I think that they bear the imprimatur of truth and that everything they say is “God speaking on high.” I think that's kind of a silly notion.

But I do think that Joseph was authentic, the Book of Mormon is reliable, God was up to something then, and I believe that God intends to conclude that, vindicating everything that had been foretold to happen. It's just that I don't think it's gonna happen, at this point, institutionally. I do think it's gonna involve the individuals who rise up and who become pure in heart before God, so that they can become pure, neighborly with one another, so that there can be a city of peace. I don't think you can impose that hierarchically. I think the only hierarchy is you getting right with God, which will in turn make you right with your fellow man.

But I don't think anyone should run away from the church. And I do think that the church has—in particular, for youth—a marvelous program. I think foreign missions and learning another language... It helps people prepare for life. It gives them a leg up on other...every other religious community! The programs of the LDS Church make people better off.

The most articulate people in my high school were the Mormon kids; you could almost pick them out...

MS: Wow...

DS: ...because they were composed; they were used to public speaking; they had gone through the Primary program, the Young Men and the Young Women's program; they had spoken in a Sacrament meeting. And so when they get up to present a paper in class, they were FAR more polished than the contemporaries. People that go on a foreign mission and come back with a second language that they've learned, they're all benefited.

One of the guys I baptized fell away from the church, asked for his membership to be withdrawn, has become an anti-Mormon. Talking to him, he said the best thing that ever happened to him was when he joined the LDS Church; it set his life on a new direction that benefited him from that moment, and he doesn't regret one moment of having been a member of the church. I worry that a lot of people display horrible ingratitude for everything the church has done (to personally help develop them into a much better, more polished individual) when they discovered that there are problems with the church. Be grateful for what you got—even if you part ways, and you say, “Ah, it's just nonsense!” Still, you were benefited. Every one of them were benefited, and they ought to acknowledge it.

And I'm grateful for what the LDS Church gave me. And I'm still—although kicked out; I didn't leave, I got kicked out—still believing in Joseph, the Book of Mormon, and in the Restoration.

MS: Okay, I love that. It sounds like we're kind of on the same page. My desire is that people—as many as possible who feel it's their path—can be in the church but not of the church (is the way I describe it). I think that even aside from the kind of utilitarian benefits of the church...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...there also is the training to listen to the Spirit, the training to pray, to believe in God, to... Like, all of the seeds of the path that we believe in and that we walk are taught and nurtured in this church, and there is a way to—for many people, I hope—a way to try to be elevated while in the church and, as a process, be part of elevating the church. That's my hope, but...

DS: Yeah.

MS: Denver, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. I didn't give you much time to kind of share some of your experiences or share a testimony. Is there something—some encouragement or guidance or testimony—you want to share, just as we're wrapping up?

DS: I think Joseph Smith understated who he was and what exposure he had gotten to things beyond the veil. And I think that when you underestimate Joseph Smith, you make a grave mistake. You would be better off paying careful heed to everything that we got from him, and realizing that he could—and would—have offered a great deal more if the people had been prepared to receive it. And the problem that existed in 1820-1844 (while we had him here) is not a problem that reflects on Joseph Smith as

having failed. It's a reflection on the people who lived contemporaneous with him, who underestimated and who went off with exaggerated self-importance simply because they got close to the man. It's about penetrating our own veil of darkness—because our flesh IS the veil, and the weaknesses of the flesh are what alienate us from God.

There's a great deal of truth out there to be found anywhere and everywhere. And some of the most profound teachings (that echo and mirror what Christ was teaching and what Joseph was trying to get across to us) can be found in all of the world's great religions. They all have some truth, or they wouldn't have any adherents. You can find truth in Judaism. They translated in the—I think it's the CPART project down at BYU—some of the Islamic texts, and there's a teacher, al-Tha'labi, whose teachings resonate with light and truth that were preserved in Islam at a time when Christianity was so oppressive from the Catholic dominance that everyone was darkened in their mind. And God was still preserving truths there. Taoism and Buddhism and Hinduism...

I have a fellow who went to India to learn from the Maharaja in India in the 60s who, upon the death of the Maharaja, came back here and rediscovered in the Doctrine and Covenants truths that he had learned in Hinduism—and was excited about the possibility that Mormonism was really every bit as transcendental as what he had been studying over there; began to teach Transcendental Meditation here in Utah, and he read *The Second Comforter* and looked me up, and said, “How did you find this? How did you find this without a trip to India? How did you find this without going first through Hinduism?” He said, “I didn't... I couldn't see it. I couldn't realize it was there until I had taken this other path.”

Joseph Smith restored to us [a] phenomenal wealth of information; he could have given us more—we just weren't ready at the time to accept it. So if God starts up things again, we really have to be careful about the heed and the diligence, because we have—in the past—wasted opportunities, and without individually reconciling ourselves to God's work, we can forfeit opportunities again, which is generally what mankind does. I mean, we only had Zion in Enoch's time, and then Melchizedek (who was Shem—that used to be a teaching; people doubt it now, but nevertheless) reckoned from before the flood, and he had the covenant. He had the promise that he could be translated, and he lived through the flood, and he was here until Abraham—after generations of apostasy—got fully endowed in the Holy Order, and then Melchizedek acted on the covenant, which was really derivative from before the flood and belonged to Enoch. Melchizedek realized it too, and there was a second city that got taken up (that's a big story and beyond the scope of this). But twice now (Enoch and then—derivative from Enoch—Melchizedek) two cities have gone up. The next time—the prophecies tell us—the city isn't going up, but there is a city returning, and there needs to be people here to welcome them so that we can fall on one another, and we can kiss each other's necks (which is the way that it's put in the Scriptures: we will fall upon one another and kiss each other's necks in the welcoming return of Jesus and his ten thousands—Enoch with his ten thousands with Jesus—as He returns in glory). All of those prophecies are going to be vindicated; it's gonna happen! But the question isn't “Will it happen?” The question is, I mean, are we gonna have ten thousands falling on two dozen, or are we gonna have ten thousands falling on ten thousands? And it's just... Numerosity has never been a big deal. Jesus

managed to get 500. Joseph got about 18. (That is another discussion.) And the question is, what, if anything, can we do? And...

MS: Yes.

DS: ...expectations need to be modest.

MS: So what can people do to try to be among that the residue, the small portion? What would you tell people?

DS: Take very seriously the Book of Mormon. It is the keystone of our religion, and a man can get closer to God by heeding its precepts more so than any other volume. And that's still true today. Just take the Book of Mormon seriously. And if you have a real problem understanding or parsing the Book of Mormon in a way that elevates your view, that was the purpose of *The Second Comforter*, *Nephi's Isaiah*, and *Eighteen Verses*. Every one of those... Well, and *Beloved Enos*. Every one of those books is simply parsing the Book of Mormon, trying to get people to look at it. The Book of Mormon is a shallow book [when] read by a shallow person. The Book of Mormon is a profoundly deep, deeply meaningful book if you bring enough with you to the party. Those books are intended to help someone bring more with them to the party—because the Book of Mormon is very serious stuff. And it doesn't have much good to say about us. It doesn't have much good to say about our churches. It doesn't have much good to say about our superficial religion these days. So...

MS: But it does offer us a tremendous amount of hope for those who will allow the scales of darkness to begin to fall from their eyes. 'Cuz we can't just read it as we've always read it, through the lenses that are provided to us, through only the Scripture Mastery verses or the lessons. We have...

DS: Yeah.

MS: We have to read it as a vehicle to come to know God and with God's mentorship as we... Like, we should always approach it asking God to help transform us through its pages.

DS: That Scripture Mastery comment reminds me—it made me laugh at the time—there was a talk in general conference; it was quoting from the Book of Mormon something about Christ, and the quote in the Book of Mormon was from Sherem, the first Antichrist. And I looked it up to make sure, because when I heard it, I thought, “Well, that's the wrong source.” And sure enough, there it was, in general conference: an Antichrist being quoted with favor! But that's probably...

MS: That's why we need to know on our own, so we can discern.

DS: Yes!

MS: That's why we can't take these people as our guides. We need to take the spirit and the book as our guide, because often ~~the same~~ general conference is filled with

false doctrines and false attributions to Scripture and false interpretations. So... I shouldn't say it's "filled." It has plenty of it, though. So...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...you've got to ask individually. Ask: you and God, right? Every individual person.

DS: That's where it belongs.

All right. Well, thank you.

MS: Thank you so much. I appreciate it. I hope to talk to you again sometime.

DS: Take care.

MS: All right.

DS: All right. Goodbye.

2023.07.29 A Fountain of Filthy Water

Sunstone Symposium
Sandy, Utah
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

DENVER: I am pleased to return to Sunstone and to see it again exists in the form we took for granted before Covid-19. I feel more welcomed here among you intellectuals, doubters, apostates, and seekers than I do now among the active Latter-day Saints. Like many of you, I see gaps, contradictions and falsehoods in the claims made by the LDS church. But I also see many gaps, contradictions and falsehoods in the critics of the LDS church. I'm a believer in Mormonism as Joseph Smith defined it: "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may." When it comes to Mormonism, renegade apostates are often that because they have discovered some new, unpleasant truth about the LDS church. These disappointed former saints are not evil and do not deserve being branded as 'apostate'—but are in reality practicing a more correct form of Mormonism by accepting more truth.

The theme discussed by this year's Symposium presenters is "(Main)Streaming Mormonism"—an effort by the LDS church to accomplish that objective is certainly underway. But if you define "Mormonism" as Joseph Smith did; that is: "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may." Well, then all of you who welcome the truth are Mormons. Even if that search has alienated you from the LDS church, or (in my case) alienated the LDS church from you. If you seek for truth then you are companions with Joseph Smith and "Mormons" as he defined it. [More on that later.]

As for the LDS church, the hope to mainstream their organization has resulted in two things happening simultaneously: First, the original form of Mormonism is being abandoned. Second, political, social, economic and moral trends of modernity are replacing it. Considering many of the titles chosen by presenters at this Symposium, it should be apparent to us all that the present-day LDS church is both threadbare and foolishly attempting to put patches of new cloth on an old garment. The 'traditional' believer's voices no longer dominate LDS meetings, conferences and lessons.

But this is getting ahead of the matter. I should start with another part of this story that requires me to clarify some matters about which many of you will hold very contrary views. I am not going to defend my position on foundational matters. I've already done that in some 38 volumes currently in print. This is an hour-long talk, so here is a list of things I believe, but won't be defending here:

-First, that Joseph Smith was in contact with God and used by Them to accomplish a Divine work.

-Second, that Joseph Smith was a devoted monogamist, faithful to his only wife, Emma. Emma had the stronger personality and better formal education of the two.

-Third, that Joseph Smith opposed plural wivory, did what he could to discover it and eradicate it from Nauvoo, and believed that these secret adulterous crimes would lead to the destruction of the church.

-Forth, that it is wise, noble and virtuous to follow Joseph Smith's example and counsel, and foolish to hold him in derision and attribute wickedness (including adulterous plural wivory) to him. Ultimately, those who believe and trust lies regarding him will have reason to mourn.

-Fifth, while Joseph Smith was at the head Mormonism was optimistic, utopian, revolutionary and innovative. It was intent on reshaping the world into a better, more egalitarian place.

-Finally, Joseph Smith was not understood by the majority of those living in Nauvoo during his lifetime. Once Brigham Young ascended to control over the LDS faithful, he implemented a different (although arguably still utopian) form of Mormonism than what Joseph Smith and God intended to accomplish with the restoration.

Joseph was constantly adding to the breadth, depth and width of a religion he understood to have been both ancient and lost. He claimed to be a restorer, not an inventor. When the text of Genesis says that man was formed "in the image of God, male and female..." it only hinted at the truth Joseph would add about mankind: "You have to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one: from grace to grace from exaltation to exaltation until you attain to the resurrection of the dead." Joseph taught we have not only God's "image" but also Their potential. Joseph held a much more elevated view of mankind than did Christianity of the 1800s.

I prefer the optimistic, self-confident, revolutionary Mormonism of Joseph Smith over the devolving form it has since assumed. The deformities have multiplied and it now is lurching forward toward an unrecognizably abominable form.

LDS Mormonism has not seen such radical changes as Russell Nelson's since Brigham Young's reign. At one point Brigham Young's agenda brought Utah's Mormonism into a violent, downward spiral that the US Army was sent to dethrone him as governor. President Young hoped to employ Native Americans as the "battle axe of the Lord," but that came to nothing. A few years later the Blackhawk War from 1865 to 1872 proved that 'battle axe' was the Lord's, and He wielded it against the Mormons rather than the gentiles. Brigham Young did not take the hint when removed as Governor, and he ignored the slap when the Natives made war against the Mormons. Likewise, Nelson is ignoring the tremendous outflow of disaffected LDS now underway. Instead of radically adopting bad ideas, the LDS church should just be truthful.

Truth need not destroy faith in God, in Joseph Smith, or in Mormonism. Once the varnish is removed, keep digging and remove the veneer also. What you will find is that

the LDS church has warped even Joseph Smith as part of their false narrative. There is sturdy lumber lying beneath the marketing veneer of corporate LDS-ism.

There is a vast library supporting institutional LDS historical claims. The LDS church has always been prolific-propagandists, whose effort to claim historical support for themselves has been enthusiastic and overeager. It was, after all, the saints who threatened to “exterminate” the Missourians first, but church apologists have preserved that memory only in the form of a cruel order by Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs. He was only a reactionary.

There were LDS apostles who strayed into bigamy and ‘spiritual wifeism’ in England years before it became something they attributed to Joseph Smith. The LDS reliance on William Clayton’s Journal is misplaced.

The Church History Library withholds many original resource materials, including contemporary journals, diaries and letters from the public. Interesting materials are becoming increasingly available that provide a valuable peek inside censored, authentic LDS history.

Woodruff’s Official Declaration 1 was a lie, and the “Manifesto” was only to mislead the ‘gentiles’ long enough to get statehood for Utah. The document remains part of the LDS scripture canon as if it were an authentic renunciation of plural marriage.

There is another library, not quite so prolific, written by LDS naysayers. They, too, have been enthusiastic if not overeager. After reading both libraries, I’ve reached the conclusion that both overstate their cases and wind up distorting who and what Joseph Smith was. As a result, I do not fit into the LDS church and they properly excommunicated me. As they define “apostasy” I did that. I apostasied [apostatized]. They have every right to define the terms for continuing membership in their religious club, and I violated their terms. However, I do not hold a virulent view of Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, or whether God was up to something beginning in the early 1820s. I believe that something resulted in an inspired renewal of God’s commitment to help mankind. For that reason many of you also have strong disagreement with me.

I doubt anything I have to say will be welcome on either side of the ‘pro vs. con’ LDS divide. But at least my voice is heard and even welcomed here. Sunstone is still a valuable meeting ground for Mormons of every stripe.

As LDS Mormonism undergoes another metamorphosis, one question I think should be asked is, ‘what is the role of religion’ any religion, in any society, at any time in history— what role does it serve? To me the answer is to preserve proven or traditional values, to stabilize society against rapid and often disruptive change. Religion impedes new ideas from diverting society into a potentially unwise detour from traditions that have provided stability. Correspondingly, the greatest criticism of religion is that it interferes with adopting fashionable, new ideas. It is inevitable that when “old flattop” comes “grooving

up slowly” with “hair down to his knees” he challenges the status quo, and provokes a chorus of churchgoing criticism.

“Changes” require you to “turn and face the strange,” often leading to an uncertain, unpredictable outcome. The voices urging change offend the religions, all religions, because they oppose social stasis. A good lyricist has put the matter both clearly and persuasively:

*Come mothers and fathers throughout the land
And don't criticize what you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command
Your old road is rapidly aging
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand
For the times, they are a-changin'*

Because LDS Mormonism is teetering on this brink, the Sunstone Symposium this year is timely. It comes when most of you are cheering on this current metamorphosis of LDS Mormonism. LDS leaders have made more changes since Russell M. Nelson ascended to the top at any other time, excepting only Brigham Young. Nelson embraces change, even advising his followers to “eat their vitamins” so they can keep up with his aggressive agenda. His wife, Wendy Nelson, said his elevation would now “unleash” the changes he always aspired to adopt.

All the recent LDS policy changes tell us where the leadership’s heart lies: The church longs to be far more “woke” and popular, urging its adherents to prize a “living prophet” and neglect the dead ones. Dead ones said things unsuitable (or at least very uncomfortable) in the Brave New World where LDS Mormonism awakens. And so we have Elder Haynie of the first quorum of the seventy, telling the LDS faithful in General Conference, “unlike vintage comic books and classic cars, prophetic teachings do not become more valuable with age.” Elder Haynie added, “we should not seek to use the words of past prophets to dismiss the teachings of the living prophets.” That turns things onto its head but will be necessary because LDS “living prophets” contradict and ignore past prophets and even scripture.

Even the vocabulary of “living prophets” was an innovation during the presidency of David O. McKay. Before then, the LDS leader was called “President” and not “Prophet.” Opinion polling showed that LDS members responded more readily when the word “Prophet” was used, and therefore it got adopted in February 1955 by the LDS Deseret News and has continued in use ever since. Query whether now an ‘LDS Prophet’ could implement female ordination by fiat—or if past teachings would prohibit such a change? It probably comes down to when Baby Boomer tithe payers will poll in favor of making the change.

The Community of Christ has ordained women since 1984, and today five of their twelve apostles are women. The LDS organization appears, from the symptoms of recent behavior, to look with envy on that achievement. The overtures are there: Russell Ballard’s May 1, 2015 talk at BYU (The Essential Role of Women) mentioning how women have been allowed to weigh in on church councils, from wards to the highest

levels of church administration. Then rewriting the temple endowment to put Eve into direct rather, than indirect, contact with Elohim. The LDS patriarchy glacier clearly wants to melt and run rapidly downhill, freed from the icy prison of its past. Homosexuality is no longer grounds for excommunication. Some homosexuals serve in local leadership positions.

In a gesture that was likely intended to keep more traditional Baby Boomer believers to 'hold fast', Dallin H. Oaks spoke to the LDS youth in May 2023. His talk was reported by Peggy Fletcher Stack on May 21, 2023. She reported his talk included this advice:

"Marriage is central to the purpose of mortal life and what follows," said Oaks. "We are children of a loving Heavenly Father who created us with the capacity to follow his commandment to multiply and replenish the earth."

The power of creation is "one of the most precious gifts we have in mortal life," he said, but "central to that gift is the law of chastity, the commandment that our powers of procreation be expressed only within marriage between a man and a woman."

Delaying childbearing, he said, "means fewer children born to grow up with the blessings of the gospel."

There's more than a little common sense to that advice. Catholicism has lasted for two millennia in part because, although its clergy is celibate, its members are traditionally quite fecund. Catholic teachings oppose abortion and birth control, and emphasize having large families. The result is that over the generations, Catholic membership numbers exceed 1 billion.

The one thing that almost all varieties of homosexuality fail to produce is children. Homosexuality does not result in pregnancy and/or children. Transsexuals do not reproduce. It will take only one generation of such sexual non-productivity to "leave them neither root nor branch." Those Biblical words are genealogical terms, and in context mean without descendants or posterity. It is not a matter of 'go woke, go broke' but instead a matter of 'empty wombs leaves only tombs.' Any church, including the LDS, which wants to survive the next century, will need a birth-rate well above the mortality rate.

The theme that worldly popularity is antithetical to godliness appears early in the Book of Mormon. Lehi saw but failed to notice, and Nephi both noticed and described the meaning of filthy water:

And the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw, yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell. And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the Devil which blindeth the eyes and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost. And the large and spacious building which thy father saw is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men. And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them, yea, even the

sword of the justice of the Eternal God and Messiah who is the Lamb of God. (1 Ne. 3:17.)

Broad roads and large, spacious buildings are symbols of worldly success, acceptance, popularity and vanity. Pretty much what we get in the values advocated by mass media, entertainment, current fashion and now well represented in opinion polling among those aged 18-35.

In contrast, as Joseph Smith taught, there is a narrow pathway that runs contrariwise and is to be preferred:

[I]f one man cannot understand these things but by the spirit of God, ten thousand men cannot. It is alike out of the reach of the wisdom of the learned, the tongue of the eloquent, the power of the mighty. And we shall at last have to come to this conclusion, whatever we may think of revelation, that without it we can neither know nor understand anything of God, or the Devil; and however unwilling the world may be to acknowledge this principle, it is evident from the multifarious creeds and notions concerning this matter that they understand nothing of this principle, and it is equally as plain that without a divine communication they must remain in ignorance. The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God they considered to be false prophets, and hence they killed, stoned, punished, and imprisoned the true prophets, and they had to hide themselves *in deserts, and dens, and caves of the earth*, and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, while they cherished, honored, and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men. (T&C 147:6, italics in original.)

Joseph Smith was killed by the conspiracy of adulterous insiders, jealous politicians, and mobs motivated by lies. They did not understand him or know what he stood for. The LDS church today has essentially adopted those same slanderous lies as their version of his biography. And many of you think him to have been a pedophile and a liar. I disagree. In 1829 God predicted there would be these opposing views:

The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor. (D&C 122:1-3; T&C 139:7.)

I hold Joseph in high regard, believing he was a much greater spiritual presence than what he claimed publicly—meaning he understated his visionary calling and mission. He was a friend of heaven, and that alone vouches for his character. I think I understand what heaven requires of a prophet. The caricature believed to be Joseph Smith by the LDS church and many of those attending this Symposium is not a fair representation of

what is required to have the heavens opened. God does not entrust salvation of the souls of men to the self-indulgent and sexually promiscuous.

Mormonism today seems to agree with one of the anti-Christ characters of the Book of Mormon. It was Nehor whose message was:

“...preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church, declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular and they ought not to labor with their own hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice, for the Lord had created all men and had also redeemed all men; and in the end, all men should have eternal life.” (Alma 1:1.)

The religion of Nehor is not only practiced by the LDS church, but also by many of that church’s opponents. The many podcasts, websites and ministries that are anti-LDS hope to be popular and supported financially by their audience. In a sense they are part of broadening mainstream Mormonism by the practice of anti-Mormonism. They contribute by advocating either the futility of salvation in the afterlife, or that salvation is generally available without any need to accept or acknowledge Joseph Smith’s contribution to God’s work of saving us. “Mormonism” has therefore become an inadvertent broad tent, being practiced even by everyone attending this Symposium.

Sincere Nehorists are preaching, teaching and crying “Lo here! And Lo there!” inside these turbulent LDS competitors’ competition for consideration.

Any attempt to be part of a mainstream of thought is denounced in the Book of Mormon. If there is a “truth” to be valued, then whether it is popular or not the Book of Mormon prefers we follow that truth without regard to the opinion of others:

For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world and to do all manner of iniquity — yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the Devil — are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake. They are those who must be brought low in the dust, they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet. (1 Ne. 7:5.)

Following truth in a lifelong quest to discover more light and truth rewards the seeker. Popularity invariably pulls away from enlightenment and toward decadence. “The truth is not always beautiful, nor beautiful words the truth.”

Then there is this:

Behold, the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots are the desires of this

great and abominable church. And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God and bring them down into captivity. (1 Ne. 3:19.)

There is a lot of money in religion. The charitable impulse produces a great deal. Gold, silver, silk and harlots are often where tithes and offerings wind up among successful religious organizations. That is why today we have been taught by the Lord to not gather tithes, but to distribute them locally and immediately within fellowships to those with needs. Those needs include food, clothing, housing, transportation, education and medical needs. This precludes the need for any Ensign Peak Advisors.

What about those “harlots” that creep in at the end of that list? How far does that word extend? Are drag-queens contemplated as part of the harlotry? Transvestites? Is the effort to popularize sexual dysphoria through such institutionalized events as “Pride Month” included as “harlotry?” Can we accept and welcome such conduct while adding “sin no more” tolerance, or something else? If there were to be homosexuals in the final, actual City called by the Lord ‘Zion,’ would they ignite in flames when the Lord appears in His glory? What thoughts expand as we contemplate the “harlots” that are the desires of this great and abominable church? Can we ever discuss the matter without fear and loathing? Or are we doomed to damning one another because we are too immature and foolish to talk honestly and candidly with one another?

Frequently sexual dysphoria has an underlying traumatic cause. Many personality disorders are likewise the result of unresolved trauma. Certainly the Bible and Book of Mormon have many triggering words. Religion can also be the source of well-intentioned abuse. And good intentions alone cannot repair the scars inflicted.

The anti-Mormons are often as abusive in their approach as the LDS church they oppose. Benjamin Franklin said: “Half a truth is often a great lie.” When the search extends only far enough to discover a justified criticism, the search ought not end. Whatever your conclusion is about Mormonism, you are probably wrong. Even the claim you are thinking for yourself is vain, as Kathryn Schulz explained in her landmark book, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*.

Thinking for oneself is, beyond a doubt, a laudable goal. But there are three problems with the idea that it is a good way to ward off error. The first is that the glorification of independent thought can easily become a refuge for holders of utterly oddball beliefs. You can dismiss any quantity of informed and intelligent adversaries if you chose to regard them as victims of a collective, crowd-driven madness, while casting yourself as the lone voice of truth. The second problem is (as we have seen), our own direct observations and experiences are not necessarily more trustworthy than secondhand knowledge. ...

The last and most significant problem with the idea that we should always think for ourselves is that, bluntly put, we can't. Every one of us is profoundly dependent on other people's minds—so profoundly that if we took seriously the charge to think for ourselves, we would have to relinquish our faith in the vast majority of the things we think we know. In his Confessions, Augustine wrote that,

I began to realize that I believed countless things which I had never seen or which had taken place when I was not there to see—so many events in the history of the world, so many facts about places and towns which I had never seen, and so much that I believed on the word of friends or doctors or various other people. Unless we took these things on trust, we should accomplish absolutely nothing in this life.

This explanation of the problem of proof, knowledge, and thinking for yourself reminds me of the Second Lecture on Faith. But that is beyond the scope of this talk.

Today the Lord has provided a way to practice Mormonism without the risk of being subjugated to an insecure, insular hierarchy. Hierarchies eventually succumb to the temptation to make the institution itself “God.” Today we are asked to fellowship independently, joining together in our homes without brick and mortar facilities. It is one small precaution against priestcrafts, which always replace priesthood in hierarchical religions. They are described in the Book of Mormon:

He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world, but they seek not the welfare of Zion. Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; (2 Ne. 11:17.)

It may be forbidden by God, but priestcraft is the inexorable result of a stratified body of believers where power and influence are concentrated in an office. The LDS church was doomed to apostasy as soon as Joseph and Hyrum were killed because offices of “President” and “Patriarch” could be occupied by anyone. There was no need to wait for God to choose a suitable occupant. A vote by common consent was considered enough to put a person in the office. Over time the ill-defined concept of “keys” took center stage. Now, even common consent is irrelevant because the “keys” (whatever you conceive them to be) are held by the leader. Therefore the hierarchy feels comfortable teaching that there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men. If you want salvation, hearken ye unto my precept. The bloated, distended, swollen, but altogether ill-defined idol of “keys” has replaced the unknowable God described in the Athanasian Creed.

Mormonism is no longer interested in gathering together believers to establish a city of peace. Instead it is gathering together funds for a ‘rainy day’ and for the payroll needs of far-flung interests of the institution.

And behold, instead of gathering you, except ye will repent, behold, he shall scatter you forth that ye shall become meat for dogs and wild beasts. Oh how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you? But behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity; and for this cause, woe shall come unto you except ye shall repent. (Hel. 3:4.)

It becomes apparent that the Book of Mormon unequivocally denounces the LDS church and her daughters. Despite what those who attend Sunstone or post on the exMormon Reddit forum, to listen to Mormon Stories or Radio Free Mormon, watch Shawn McCraney think of themselves, they are all daughters of the LDS church every bit as much as the FLDS and Apostolic United Brethren. Mormonism controls their content. It makes little difference they are pro or con, they are still part of today's Mormonism. They are all comfortably situated in a 'broad mainstream' into which the LDS church's gradualism has been, and is, proceeding.

Joseph Smith hoped to welcome all into a friendly brotherhood of mixed faiths peacefully co-existing. "Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, &c., any truth? Yes. They all have a little truth mixed with error. We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true 'Mormons.'" It was truth, not sectarianism that mattered to him: "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may." In that same spirit, would Joseph Smith been willing to likewise acknowledge, "Has John Dehlin any truth?" and answer, "Yes." And would Joseph ask, "have RFM, exMormon Reddit, or Shawn McCraney any truth?" and admit likewise, "Yes."

Brigham Young twisted big-idea, broadminded Mormonism. He instituted an integrated patriarchal and polygamous society that employed threats, intimidation and murder to reign with blood and horror in his Telestial Kingdom. I spoke about that in a previous Sunstone Symposium and will not address that again here. Young's leadership viewed outsiders or non-Mormons with disdain as though they threatened his kingship. His fiery rhetoric helped inspire the Mountain Meadows Massacre. While employed as LDS Church Historian, Richard Turley acknowledged, "tough talk about blood atonement and dissenters must have helped create a climate of violence in the territory, especially among those who chose to take license from it." That would be the apologist's view, but more candor would admit that Stake President Isaac C. Haight and other LDS leadership organized and executed the slaughter at Mountain Meadows, even holding a prayer circle prior to the killing.

Wilford Woodruff wanted to keep the polygamous practices in place but tried to hide it from public view to get statehood. Congress, the President and the US Supreme Court would not be placated, and when the Edmunds-Tucker Act passed in 1887 both the church and its Perpetual Emigrating Fund were dis-incorporated. Woodruff yielded and by September 24, 1890, President Woodruff knew the U.S. Supreme Court had found the federal campaign against Mormonism to be constitutional. The church's property was forfeited, trustees had acquired title, and criminal prosecution for bigamy was lawful. In the face of that pressure, the "Manifesto" was issued pretending the practice of plural marriage was over. It was a lie. The Manifesto was written by church lawyers in response to the Utah Commission's finding that plural marriages were continuing in Utah even after the U.S. Supreme Court decision. Woodruff's Manifesto denies the report. Later in 1890, when the abandonment of polygamy made statehood at last possible, Mormonism reached a point of "abandonment of its violent culture and the

beginning of its selective memory of a turbulent past.” Polygamy continued, but went underground.

From 1903 to 1907 the US Senate debated whether to seat Reed Smoot as a member of the Senate. This was before Senators were popularly elected, and he had been appointed by the LDS church-dominated legislature. During the Reed Smoot Senate Confirmation Hearings, LDS President Joseph F. Smith testified under oath that the practice of polygamy had ended. Apparently, shortly after that testimony, he took the step to officially end it and submit to US rule. That change of direction was not merely submission to the government, but Mormons changed culturally as well. The ambition to create an independent kingdom turned to dust, and uber-Americanism became the new order of things. Baseball, apple pie, Boy Scouts, pledges of allegiance, and hopeful conformity into the American ideal was progressively how Mormonism projected itself into the Twentieth-century. It worked.

Gordon B. Hinckley helped accelerate this assimilation using public relations tools. Opinion polling and focus group testing informed LDS programs, messages and even temple changes. Social science tools became the new form of ‘revelation’ as the institution adopted social studies and marketing tools in the quest for popular acceptance.

The unsteady course that the LDS church has followed over their history resulted in a compromised, untenable message now that alienates everyone on one issue or another. The message is as frayed and discordant as this:

- Homosexuality is evil and God destroyed Sodom because of its wickedness
- BUT, children are innocent before God
- HOWEVER, children raised by homosexual parents cannot be baptized because of the malevolent influence of the parents until after they leave home at 18
- EXCEPT, we’ve changed our mind now that we think about the unaccountability of children for the sins of their parents
- AND, now that we think about it, everyone has sexual fantasies, so if your queer and only fantasize then you’re not unlike the typical Elders Quorum President who fantasizes about women he can add to his harem in the afterlife because of D&C 132
- SO, we’re tolerant and accepting of everyone, and love queers, but don’t approve of their behavior; ‘cuz God destroyed Sodom after all...

OR, as discordant as:

- We teach that Joseph Smith lied about multiple wives
- We lied when we said publicly that we abandoned the practice
- SO, we are just like Joseph Smith when we lie about multiple wives
- AND, we’ve added it to our scriptures (even though it was a lie) -BUT, we really now do want to stop that excess wivery thing so Joseph F. will mail out a letter (and it’s not scripture),
- AND SO, now ‘all we have to do is take these lies and make them true’

-THEREFORE, D&C 132 authorizing plural wives, and OD1 ending it will both remain LDS scriptures...

-BECAUSE we are just like Joseph Smith when we lie about stuff; and that is how 'modern prophets' always act...

I'm trying to understand their position and I think that represents a fair retelling of it. Maybe not, but I've tried to pay attention and I'm not deliberately mischaracterizing their message(s). It is an on-again/off-again attempt to be traditional and untraditional, not too hot, but not too cold, firm, but yielding when needed. If the LDS church is ashamed of its history, it would be better for the institution and its members for the leaders to confess and drain the infection than to deny and lie. I'm not suggesting that as an attack or as an enemy. I'm sincerely trying to be helpful. I hate to witness the LDS church failure now underway. If it is to be reversed, it can only come through institutional confession and acknowledging errors—or what the scriptures term “repentance.”

Wouldn't we all be better off if there was one, consistent, unchangeable message that was reliably stated across the centuries. You can disagree with it, argue against it, reject or accept it but it should be knowable and unchangeable if religion is serving its purpose.

If there was a broad mainstream of popular opinion in the 1920s, supported by popular opinion, journalism and entertainment, (and there was) did the LDS church fit in then? How about the broad mainstream in the 1950s? How well did the LDS church adapt to the cultural changes of the 1960s? What about the morass of today's broad mainstream? Can today's mainstream even be defined? Can the same church attract membership from the ranks of Democrats and Republicans, New Green Deal advocates, Black Lives Matter, NRA members, Bill Maher, and Tucker Carlson fans? Probably not. If the organization is trying to be all things to all people.

Probably so, if the message is a timeless statement of moral values that advises people and lets them govern themselves. A religion needs to stand for something solid, reliable and knowable.

Churches must understand that drifting along with the stream, choices need to be made. It is impossible to float along rudderless without getting grounded on one bank or the other.

As the Book of Mormon reminds us, popularity may be profitable, but it can be morally hollow:

O ye wicked, and perverse, and stiffnecked people, why have you built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God, for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled. Behold, the Lord hath shewn unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shewn you unto me, and I know

your doing, and I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts. And there are none, save a few only, who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquity. And your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies? Because of the praise of the world? Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick, and the afflicted to pass by you and notice them not? Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain? And cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground for vengeance upon your heads? Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you, and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer. (Mormon 4:5.)

The mainstream now more closely resembles the fountain of filthy waters described in Nephi's vision than a pure and healthy stream. The voice of gladness Joseph wrote about in 1842 has lost its vigor, and is not likely to be heard again from the conference center pulpit. Thankfully, Mormonism does not belong to a single franchise.

If Mormonism welcomes all truth from whatever source provides it, then instead of debating fashion, politics and social causes, why not teach the brotherhood of man, man's eternal nature, doing good unto others? All this by focusing on the crucified and risen Lord.

Thank you.

2023.07.29 Sunstone Symposium Q&A

Sandy, Utah
with Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Steven Pynakker: So, thank you. We'll now open the floor for questions. Please come up to the audience mic to ask your questions...

Denver Snuffer: And I get to decide if I answer.

SP: ...and if we don't have time for your questions, please enter it into the Whova app where your presenter can answer it after the session. Also, it's been requested that the questions remain on topic and that they BE questions.

Question #1: Thank you for your comments. My question comes by way of seeking clarity on a point that I've heard you make a handful of times about hierarchies, and where this talk talks about the hierarchies—the hierarchical institution of the LDS Church—and asserting an idea that there are to be no hierarchies in seeking truth (or something along that line; I'm not trying to put words in your mouth but just trying to make sure I understand what it is that you're trying to say). Because I really appreciated the concepts that Jordan Peterson is... (And I only reference it because, you know, if people aren't familiar with it.) But that hierarchy... Hierarchies are something that are present in everything in nature, in the way that our brains are constructed, in the very way that we look out on the world—that we don't see every detail; we see the hierarchical positions of things that come to us. So is the assertion that you're trying to make that we're trying to eradicate, within practicing Mormonism, complete eradication of hierarchies, or more along the lines of eradicating hierarchies of power, meaning hierarchies of office?

DS: Well, obviously hierarchies of office and power positions are invariably what ambitious people gravitate to. And when they acquire possession of office, then moral authority is no longer what gets respected. It's “office” that gets respected. And therefore, perhaps with good meaning, the lines get a little blurred and they exceed the bounds of propriety. But over time, that becomes a window into abuse.

Are there people who wield more influence within society? As far as I know, Jordan Peterson has not been elected to any office, has not done anything to gain authority or control over anyone, but he wields influence because what he says attracts the notice of and persuades people that he's presenting something that's laudable, persuasive, worthwhile, and ought to be respected. Opinion leaders do not have to have AUTHORITY in order to exert influence. I think if the...

“Office” was fine as long as the person occupying it was a morally straight, trustworthy individual. But as soon as you remove the morally straight, upright individual from the office and you leave the office open for someone else to occupy it, you are now leading yourself into a trajectory that's going to be destructive, as all institutions eventually show us.

We have a great federal government program that anticipated warring factions of ambitious men having divided authority that fight among each other, in the hopes, then, that the public would be left free. And what we see going on in Washington right now is working—kind of—except they didn't anticipate the administrative state, which (at some point) we're gonna have to get rid of.

SP: Okay, here's a question from the Whova app from a member in the audience:

Question #2: You seem to admit that scholars and historians of all stripes disagree with your positions and consider your scholarship to be wishful thinking, illusion, or fiction. Is there any historical evidence or other scholars' works that you would find convincing or that might lead you to reconsider your polygamy-denial position?

DS: Well, yeah; absolutely. If good proof can be generated... I was musing over the LDS Church Historian's volume 15 of *The Joseph Smith [Papers]: Documents*, retelling a transcript of a talk that Joseph Smith had given (in Nauvoo in June of 1844) for which we have three accounts. The documents gave us two of the three accounts, but it excluded—as unreliable—a third account that appears to have been a re-creation by George Smith in 1856, some years after Joseph's martyrdom in 1844. Most of the proof that the LDS historians rely upon in order to create the polygamy narrative are after the death of Joseph Smith and not before.

I respect a lot of the work that LDS historians have done, and I appreciate D. Michael Quinn. He and I disagreed about stuff, and we talked about our disagreements. And the point I made with Michael Quinn was if you take June 27, 1844 (the day that Joseph was killed) and you look at what existed before that date, what evidence do you have to support that Joseph Smith was the originator of polygamy? And what evidence do you have to support the proposition that Joseph Smith opposed polygamy? The record on that date when he died is overwhelmingly—it's not even close—overwhelmingly that Joseph Smith opposed the practice. But you remove him from the place, and you allow people access to the records, and you let them edit the historical journals... (There's more rolling out on that, and I don't want to get high-centered on this one question.) But I'm open to persuasion if you can find me proof. All of the proof that I find is so incredibly suspect that, quite frankly, in a courtroom, an objection could keep it out of evidence!

SP: Okay, another question from the Whova app:

Question #3: Do you agree the church is proud to rebuild the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple yet unwilling to repair cracks in the foundation of their ideology?

DS: Yes. That's well put. Yeah, they're messing with the foundation that... Unfortunately, all of that appears to me to be an ego-driven bunch of rebuilding that doesn't help the original edifice. In fact, they've stripped the interiors. Down in Temple Square, looking at the building under construction a while back and you could see through the windows all the way up to the sky. I mean, they've gutted the original pioneer-era plaster and lath crown moldings and beautiful artisanship; it's gone. It's gonna be replaced by, you know, modern wallboard crown moldings that are manufactured at a plant somewhere, and it's just...it's gone. The artisanship isn't there; they've gutted it. I thought the Lord was going

to do something to destroy the Salt Lake Temple, and in my view, Russell Nelson decided to destroy it on his own. He's succeeded. They're gonna turn it into a movie house.

You're up!

SP: You've got three minutes left. Three minutes left.

Question #4: Okay. You've made the case a number of times that the LDS Church has become this huge corporation, and the segment that is the church itself, the faith portion of it, is relatively...it's just another business. What's their end...? I mean, they've amassed hundreds of billions of dollars at this point. Why do they try to even continue to perpetuate the illusion? What interest do they have in maintaining that little segment when they have this vast wealth from all their commercial businesses?

DS: The religion is the goose that laid the golden egg, and it continues to provide ongoing tax-free-tied revenue that is... It's just an ongoing revenue stream. And you wouldn't kill your revenue stream that is tax-free. It's the goose. And you know, they need it, in part, for some credibility as well. You don't throw away stuff like that if you don't have to.

Yeah?

Question #5: Two questions: One's a really softball question; the other one's a little harder. I was talking to Jeff Foley; he said you had been interested in potentially going to Independence area and doing...

DS: He's ASKED me to do that...

Question #5 (continued): "Potentially." I'm not saying you've committed or anything like that. But in light of this convers[ation]... And that organization's idea was to bring all the cousins of Mormonism together and have a unifying voice. But given your talk today, you wouldn't possibly try and do that talk there to create a unifying voice, I don't think. So, what would you say in that regard? And then my follow-up is the harder question, possibly (maybe not), but do you, then, deny the exaltation of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who also lived plural marriage?

DS: The marriage of Abraham to Hagar was an accommodation Abraham made for his wife; he did not seek that out. And as it turned out, it not only proved to be incapable of being sustained, but it also proved to be a curse that has endured down to today in the ongoing conflict, generation after generation, of the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac.

Isaac had one wife! He was not a polygamist.

And Jacob... When I used to teach Gospel Doctrine for all those years and we got to the account of Jacob and his marriage and the father misleading him on his drunken wedding night, I'd mention that it was a scene often repeated in Las Vegas today: *[Behold,] in the morning...it was Leah* (Genesis 9:25 RE)! It's one of the few places

where they ought to have thrown in an exclamation point because he was surprised. He was surprised! He didn't... He never gave up on the first wife he wanted, though. And she proved to be barren.

And no...I think there's something in our Scripture—and by “our,” I mean Scripture that has been developed since 2017—that says that each of them, with a singular wife, are exalted. But you'd have to look at the... There's a replacement for D&C section 132 that describes marriage.

And no, I wouldn't come in... I wouldn't go bitch-slap people that are trying to unify. I would remind them of the core, of the most important things—the Christ and Him crucified. That's where we come together. And that matters more than, you know, all of the other financial problems.

SP: Okay, our time is up. Thank you all for attending this session and for supporting Sunstone.

2023.10.14 Unity in Humanity Interfaith Celebration

Online Conference

October 14, 2023

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

One of the comments that Brian Bowler just made about prayer circle: That's a practice that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints participate in in the temples that they build. And at one point, when you get through the process of the temple and the ceremony is wrapping up, there's a symbol that gets discussed, and it's a symbol that represents (according to the lecture given) "all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole"—whole w-h-o-l-e, not h-o-l-e, although given where society is right now, all the truths may as well go into a hole. But the truth that can be circumscribed into one great connection is really represented, I think, well by the comments that were made in the earlier presenters. The truths that you discover at the highest level of the teachings of Hinduism and at the highest level of Buddhism and at the highest levels of the Christian experience all merge into a kind of singular, harmonious whole that agrees with one another across the religions. The problem is that our... Marquita [Oliver] was talking about how she doesn't like organized religion. The problem with organizing religion into entities—no matter what form that entity takes—is that it very often, then, has jealousy for itself and defensiveness against anything that would be viewed as a rival. The religion that I believe in was founded by a prophet who claimed God had visited with him and enlightened him. And one of the proclamations that he made in defining what it was he believed was that all truth belonged to that religion, no matter where it came from.

The traditional form that Mormonism is regarded to have assumed is in a corporate entity called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but that institution has renounced the name "Mormon," and they no longer claim that they ARE Mormon. In fact, the leader of that church says that whenever the term "Mormon" gets used, that's a victory for the devil. And I am a Mormon. The founder—the Prophet-founder—defined Mormonism as "more good," and the religion consists of all truth, no matter where it can be found. And I think that's a welcoming proposition where, if you can find truth out there, then that's what we believe. That's what I believe. That's what **my** religion consists of: whatever truth can be found.

The theme of this conference is "Sacred Beliefs and Holy Writings," and those, in my view, are two separate things. Not all sacred beliefs are contained in holy writings, nor does holy writings contain fully the sacred beliefs. Texts that I regard as holy writing demonstrate the dichotomy between these two things. This is from a passage in a book called Alma:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given

unto him to know the mysteries of God...in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 9:3 RE)

Another way of stating that is: If you ignore light and truth, you get less light and truth, and eventually you fall into darkness; and that darkness, that misery, that hopelessness IS hell. It happens here, and it happens now; it is hell.

That same concept—that you have more understanding or you have less understanding, but that there are limits to what you are able to share in mortality—shows up in the New Testament writings of St. Paul. Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians about a person (we all think he's referring to himself, but he's not identifying himself as the person) who was *caught up to the third Heaven... (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows), that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory (2 Corinthians 1:41 RE).*

The idea that there is something that God can reveal but that man cannot talk about is embedded throughout the Scriptures. Joseph Smith (the founder of Mormonism) and Sidney Rigdon were shown a vision of what will go on in eternity, and they end that description of what they saw with this:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he shewed unto us, which surpasseth all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the holy ghost, which God bestows on those who love him and purify themselves before him, to whom he grants th[is] privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves, that through the power and manifestation of the spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (T&C 69:29)

See, there are some things about the highest form of religious experience which are intended to be shared between you and God alone. Religion can have sacred beliefs, and religion can have holy writings. But the holy writings often tell you about the sacred experiences that those that pursued the path received, going along the way, in which they encountered God. Religion is intended to bring us to encounter God, whether that is in the least dramatic form of feeling yourself closer to Him or more dramatic forms in which sudden bursts of clarity and understanding come, overwhelming the mind; or a voice speaking to you that comes out of nowhere that informs you of some great answer to a dilemma that you've been looking for; or an angelic visitor who comes from another dimension that steps into this dimension to speak to you and to make themselves known and visible to you; or the experience of being caught up (as Paul writes about) into Heaven and seeing and hearing unspeakable things. Everywhere along that continuum, there is a connection that happens between the individual and God, and

that's what religion and sacred writings are intended to cause to happen. Institutions that interfere with that process by claiming that they are a substitute for the experience of a living, breathing, presence of God in your daily experience are really substituting themselves, like an idol, to become a false image, a false messiah, a deceiver, if you will.

Enlightenment should be experiential (in that you go through it), and it should be shared universally. Nephite disciples recorded in the Book of Mormon: *And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things which are not lawful to be written* (3 Nephi 12:3 RE). God wants to tell them to you. He doesn't want someone else to; **He** wants to tell them to you. Three of the Nephite disciples reported about their experience:

And behold, the Heavens were opened, and they were caught up into Heaven and saw and heard unspeakable things. And it was forbidden them that they should utter, neither was it given unto them power that they could utter, the things which they saw and heard. And whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did [not] seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God. (3 Nephi 13:4 RE)

Your sacred beliefs, based upon holy writings, point you to something that is ineffable and intended to be personal and intended to be shared between you and God alone.

Nephi saw a vision at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, in which he saw the unfolding of history down through the end. But he was instructed by the angel who was his accompanier on the journey, *But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write* (1 Nephi 3:30 RE). We should all have experiences that lead us to a familiarity and an intimacy that we share between ourselves and God alone.

And I do want to comment on the eclipse. As we heard about the eclipse that it—like a snake—it gets a bad reputation. Oddly enough, the snake is not originally a symbol of the deceiver or the adversary. Originally, it was a symbol of God. In order to mislead—in the myth of Adam and Eve—in order to mislead them, the adversary assumed the form of the snake (which was a symbol of renewal of life, shedding the skin, rising from the grave, eternal life), co-opted that, and turned it into the source of temptation and, ultimately, transgression against God and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. But it wasn't always so.

I do think that we're in the midst of a series of eclipses that hold some communicative value from on high. The one that happened in 2017 and the one that happens in 2024 (next year) are total eclipses. I think the total eclipse brings together a symbol of both the Father and the Mother: *In the image of [God, created he them], male and female, created he them* (Genesis 3:14 RE) is a statement at the very beginning of the account of God's dealing with this world in the book of Genesis found in the Bible. The image of God, therefore, is both the man and the woman. The sun is many times larger than the moon, but the moon is many times closer than the sun, and from the surface of the Earth, the two occupy the same space in the vision field that we have from the surface of the Earth looking up. Well, when the sun and the moon in an eclipse are at totality (a

total eclipse), then you see neither the sun nor the moon; you can see the one and the other *joining together*, but at the moment of the eclipse, they're both blotted out.

Today's eclipse was an *annular* eclipse, which is unlike a *total* in that this one is called a "ring of fire," because the ring of fire leaves you still with the ring of the glory of the sun exposed, but the presence of the moon there. I think today's eclipse, unlike the one in 2017 and 2024, represents an agreement between both the Divine Father and the Divine Mother—the image of God—striking an agreement. And I think you have to view the first eclipse ~~and the~~ (in 2017) and the second (in 2024) as conveying a message and today's eclipse signifying that the two of them are in agreement about that message. (And I think that I'll speak more about that when we get to a conference in April of 2024.)

For today, I do think that we have heard from people a consistent message that there is truth, it does matter, that you can take the Hindu teachings and look at the message of Christ and you can find that what Christ is talking about and what the highest level of values in Hinduism represent can be found there. The idea of "awakening" in Buddhism and the "illusion of separation" and the "presence of God in us all" is one of the themes in the talk given by King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon, where he talks about how God is within every one of us, that God is sustaining us from moment to moment by lending us breath so that we can live and move and have our being, and that we are all connected because we're here borrowing power from God to be here, and that same God who sustains us all, therefore, we have in common. Our separation is an illusion. And there is a constant recycling of existence that we read about in the prophecies of Joseph Smith, about how this process continues *worlds without end* (T&C 69:28) and how we go from exaltation to exultation until we attain, ultimately, to a point where we secure the resurrection from the dead and we're no longer needing to go through endless cycles of existence. I agree with what Marquita had said that we are not as different as we are the same. The problem is we tend not to notice our similarities; we tend instead to only reject by noticing our differences.

And one thing I noted before the schedule was put out was that we intended to end at 12:45, and I think it's discourteous to go on and require people more time than they've allotted for this. So I intend to wrap up now. I don't think there's any questions for me, and I'll turn it back over to you, Jill.

Jill Van Haren: ...Denver, there is a question that came up in the question thread. Would you like to take a look at that, or do you want me to read it to you?

Denver: "Many of the panelists explain explicitly, to a degree, what their particular spiritual practices/prayers/mantras look like. Could you share some light into how you pray?"

Well, this is what I would say. It's different now than it was at the beginning. At the beginning, prayer seemed the same sort of thing that one would see in a Christian church or in a Mormon church or in a Catholic thing. I didn't use *rote* prayers. I used the kind of formal language of prayer. And very often it had the same elements that you would think of in a normal prayer setting: You address God, [and] you articulate what it

is you're looking for. That has changed over time. And while I still will, on occasion, engage in something that is akin to that, very often I reflect upon the things of God **all the time**; that's where my mind goes, continually. It's not that I am constantly in a "state of prayer," but I will be aware of the presence and involvement of God in things that are going on and will take time to reflect upon and to meditate upon things that involve God and truth [and] creation.

Yesterday, my wife and I were on a hike, and I was reflecting again, out loud, about how—in both the revelations of Joseph Smith and in the book of Revelation itself—there will come a point at which time is no more; there will be a point at the end of this creation when time ceases to exist in the way in which we encounter time; and at that point, there is time no more. And so if we continue our existence on into that state and there's timelessness there, then we're already there; I mean, we will **move** into that condition, but since that condition is, in itself, timeless, that timeless existence already exists, even though I'm here in time.

There's a notion in the Egyptian religion about the *ka* and the *ba*, the *ka* being you in an eternal sense, and the *ba* being you here in mortality, and you both exist in both places at one time and that there's no difference between the two, and the objective is to try to get in touch with your eternal self. And there are echoes of that within the Scriptures that I regard as sacred writings or holy writings. And reflecting on that and trying to push that theoretical concept back further is a kind of meditative enterprise that is, in my view, a form of prayer, a form of reflection, and I engage in a lot of that a lot of the time. And there's not a clear distinction between the prayer life, on the one hand, and the daily existence, on the other hand.

There's a passage in the book of Alma about how you ought to pray, and he starts at a distant spot (in your fields and over your crops), and he talks about prayer, and he mentions place after place where prayer should take place, and then it ends with the proximity getting closer and closer until, finally, you're alone in your closet at home, and you're praying. And that "alone in your closet at home," I don't view as merely physical; I view it also as when you're alone in your thoughts when you can—by meditative practice—exclude everything there is here and to take into account your relationship to God, you can go to your closet in secret prayer. And I think—now—prayer is more of a constant phenomenon and not an event to be scheduled and to be set apart. I can pray even while I'm in a meeting like this or when I'm talking, as I am now. So, it's changed over time.

2023.11.14 Live True to Your Faith

United Kingdom Conference

Leeds, England

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Knowing that I was coming over here, I found some quotes from Englishmen to use. Assuming that a proper education...

[Audio cuts out from 0:15 to 0:35. Denver quoted Winston Churchill as follows: “Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.”]

...That's one of the problems with religion, generally, and the truth, almost invariably.

George Bernard Shaw said, “Beware of false knowledge; [it's] more dangerous than ignorance.” Ignorance leaves you, you know, still unaware; false knowledge makes you certain. And that's where unbelief comes from.

And then this other one, which I like most of all, from George Bernard Shaw, “All great truths begin as blasphemies,” which is where often we find ourselves. I had a Catholic friend—I still have him; I shouldn't talk of him in the past tense—I had a Catholic friend who heard I had been excommunicated from the LDS Church for writing a book, and he called me excited about that, saying, “You know that when you write a book and get excommunicated from a religion, over time that makes you a saint!” He said, “Someday, you're going...” Well, as a Catholic would think, “Someday you're going to be canonized!” I thought, “Oh, settle down. You're my friend because you coach baseball, and that's what we talk about, not religion.”

He's an honest man, however. I went to the Rose Festival at the Catholic Church with him. He owned a motorcycle. I owned a Harley Davidson. We went on a poker ride (and this was a Catholic Church affair). On a poker ride, you ride from bar to bar to bar, and then you stop at the bar, and you get a card. And after you have made five stops, you have five cards. And depending upon the hand, someone would have the winning hand with the best group of cards. Now, when we got to the fourth stop, which was a bar in a little town called Lehi, Utah (full of cowboys and about 98% Mormon), the bartender was talking about how the Catholics were welcome; they ought to come back. They have a big affair every week on Wednesday evenings where the local Relief Society ladies come in for dinner at this Lehi, Utah bar. And so if the Relief Society could go on Wednesday evenings, I felt proper as (then) a Latter-day Saint attending the same thing. But it was going on too long, and I had to leave. So I gave my four cards to my Catholic friend, and I had to go home; we had some family thing going on. He kept my four cards. He went to the fifth bar, he collected two cards, and then he went back to the Catholic Church in Draper, Utah, submitted two hands of cards, and in my absence, my Catholic friend said I had the winning hand. I won a \$700 leather coat as a result of winning the Catholic poker run. I wonder how many Mormon friends, Presbyterian friends, or others entrusted with the winning hand and in my absence would have

surrendered a \$700 leather coat because it was me that was the winner and not him. He's a trusted friend, as a consequence. I know him to be honest.

I've been listening to everything that got said here today, and I was struck in particular by Amberli's statement about this singular individual: that murder went on among the Nephites, but it wasn't coupled with "secret" until Gadianton, and then the account that she gives of how things progressed from there until the utter destruction of the people because of the prevalence of secret murder among the Nephites. And I'm persuaded by her book; I think she makes a very sad but telling point.

When I was a law student at Brigham Young University, it was a very young law school, comparatively; I would be in the fifth graduating class. But every year, because the president of the university and the dean of the law school and several of the other members of the faculty had been clerks at the United States Supreme Court, every year during the moot court competition, we would have one or more members of the United States Supreme Court come to the law school to sit during the moot court competition by the students, and then they would meet with us afterwards. And I met a number of the Supreme Court justices, including Chief Justice Warren Burger, while I was a law student. (And I was a member of the ad hoc committee with Chief Justice Warren Burger that founded the American Inns of Court, modeled after the British Inns of Court. And so someday, I hope in London to visit the Inns of Court there.) But one of the justices who visited while he was there was Justice Harry Blackmun.

Justice Harry Blackmun wrote the majority opinion in *Roe vs. Wade*, which in 1973 made abortion legal in the United States. No one voted on it; no one had a say on it; it went through the courts. And Justice Blackmun wrote an opinion which said that, through the third trimester, abortion was a constitutional protected right not found in the language of the Constitution but found in (and this is the language) found in the penumbra to the right to privacy. "Penumbra" is a word that describes that gray zone between light and dark; it's not fully lit, but you're still somewhat out of the darkness. And in that vague, poorly illuminated (if you can call it that) area between the right to privacy (that we think is brightly lit in the Constitution) and some things that may possibly be implied, there was this right to privacy that guaranteed a woman the ability to have an abortion.

There's a scathing dissent written by Justice Rehnquist (who also would come to our law school while I was a law student), and Justice Rehnquist said, "There's absolutely no precedent for finding this to belong to the right to privacy. It didn't exist at the time the Constitution was written; it was illegal and considered immoral—in fact, criminal—in every one of the original 13 states that adopted the Constitution, and it is, by and large, illegal throughout the nation at this time."

And so you have a "penumbra" in the majority opinion, and you have an outright declaration that what Justice Blackmun had written is a load of crap! However, there is a majority opinion and a dissenting opinion written by Rehnquist—there were other opinions that joined in for other reasons—but Blackmun's was the majority opinion. And

it was like they were speaking opposite one another in different directions with different reasoning, without ever coming together to meet one another's arguments.

So when Justice Blackmun opened up the meeting for questions in the moot courtroom, and I was raising my hand to ask a question, and Dean Lee knew that was problematic, Dean Lee was relieved to see Blackmun was calling on people throughout. I was on the far left (I guess I would have been on Justice Rehnquist's far right, which is probably a little more symbolically suitable). And after trying to be called on for some time, Justice Blackmun said, "Oh, I'll take one more question. I haven't called on anyone from over there." And he called on me, and Dean Lee looked like, "Gah. I could have gone all day without having this!"

So I stood up, and I said, "Justice Blackmun, we have a dissenting opinion in *Roe vs. Wade*." Okay. I just spoke the tragic words "*Roe vs. Wade*." He'd been on campus for like two weeks, and no one had invoked *Roe vs. Wade*, and now there it is in all its messiness, sitting right on the table.

"In the dissenting opinion written by Justice Rehnquist in *Roe vs. Wade*, you in the majority seem to be like two ships passing in the night. Would you please respond to Justice Rehnquist's dissenting opinion and explain why he got it wrong?"

[Impersonating Elvis]: Thank you very much. Elvis has left the building.

And I sat down, and there was this long, awkward pause while ~~Justice Rehnquist~~ Justice Blackmun paced back and forth up behind the bar at the front of the moot courtroom, rubbing his hair back. And after a long silence, he did not answer my question, but essentially said... Well, he first told the story about how when he came to the Supreme Court, the Sergeant at Arms came into his newly assigned chambers and dropped a large book on the table with a loud thump and said, "Sign it." And he looked at the book, and it was the Bible. And it had the signatures of venerable prior justices: Oliver Wendell Holmes, Taft, there were a number of names that he listed, and he's kind of being a tourist looking at the signatures in the Bible, when the Sergeant at Arms [clearing his throat loudly] clears his throat like, "Get on with it." And he signed his name, and the Sergeant at Arms closed the Bible and left.

He said he was a religious man. He said he was a man of faith. And he said that religiously there was no way that he could justify abortion. But he said *constitutionally* he did not see any way to prevent it. And therefore, what he wrote in the majority opinion, he felt had to be done—all of which got sent down the river by a decision of the Supreme Court just in the last few years, in which they overruled *Roe vs. Wade*, and they sent the decision back to the states for the states to grapple with, and not as something that gets imposed from the top without the public being able to vote on the matter.

This is from the Book of Mormon: *Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right, but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right* (Mosiah 13:6 RE).

In 1973, the people did not have a vote; they were not given the opportunity to decide that. A single man, acting in the role of Gadianton, imposed upon an entire nation of over 200 million people the judicially imposed, from-the-top-down edict that abortion in the United States is a right. Can't be prevented. But that right got restored to the people, and the United States was given the opportunity to make a decision at the state level about whether they would or they would not permit abortion to continue on. And so for the last couple of years in the United States, state legislatures have been grappling with it. Politicians have been running campaigns in which they came out supporting or opposing abortion, and state legislators have been elected as a consequence of the position that they hold. And just (I think) last week, Ohio voters were given the opportunity to decide whether they would amend the constitution of the state of Ohio to allow abortion to take place as a constitutional right in the state of Ohio. And the people of Ohio voted to amend the constitution of the state and to make abortion a right that they have in the state. Well, see, the role of decision-making was never given to the voice of the people in 1973. But it has been given now.

For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction. For the laws had become corrupted, yea, and this was not all; they were a stiffnecked people, insomuch that they could not be governed by the law nor justice, save it were to their destruction. (Helaman 2:15 RE)

There are a handful of states that have made abortion either illegal altogether or limit it to circumstances that we find compelling, like saving the life of the mother or rape or something similar. But on both coasts of the United States, the decision has been made that abortion is permitted. So we find, now, the voice of the people having been persuaded. If you had had an election in 1972, in which this issue was put in the lap of the people and they were permitted to vote, there's no question what the outcome would have been. It had to be imposed by edict. The edict was issued by Harry Blackmun. In a very real sense, he has occupied the role of Gadianton because now, after 30 years of it being a right and arguments having been mustered to support it, people can't conceive of it being anything other than a right. And therefore, the voice of the people now has been persuaded by Gadianton that it is altogether right and fitting that we should engage in the process of murdering the unborn. It's one of the sobering lessons in the Book of Mormon. But the Book of Mormon does not leave us without hope.

The destruction that took place is analogous to the destruction which *will* take place, and the destruction was targeted. God knew who to spare, and God knew how to spare them. However random, however surprising the circumstances may have been in which the destruction took place, God knows who His people are. And God has a line He won't cross: He will let the wicked destroy the wicked; He will even let the wicked destroy the righteous, to a point, in order to justify His judgments against the wicked; but what He will not do is destroy the righteous. He can't do that; it would violate one of the laws that He has adopted for this entire creation. God will not destroy the righteous. Therefore, if you accept the Book of Mormon, believe its principles, follow its precepts, and accept it as it has been offered in 2017 to us as a covenant, God will not allow the elements to be

used, the destructions that have been decreed, or the fires that will consume the wicked as stubble to affect you if you remain true and faithful to what He asks of us. And what He asks of us is largely that our hearts be inclined, that we do our best. You don't have to be error-free. He's a forgiving, loving God. Try to do what He asks, give it your best effort, and realize that God will not only refuse to destroy you in the coming judgments, but He will protect those that are His sheep.

I also want to make clear, because this question came up in a conversation I had about a week ago. I want to make clear, there's no reason to be in a panic about the coming judgments. First of all, not everyone who has not heard of the Book of Mormon or accepted rebaptism is going to be destroyed. That's not gonna happen. There will be many, many good people from all over the world with backgrounds that are as divergent as Hinduism and Islam and even atheism who live harmlessly, with goodwill towards their fellow man, who do not present a threat to anyone, who have regard for their fellow man. They won't be destroyed; they'll be preserved. The reason why the prophecy into the Millennium talks about people, that the heathens and "it being well with them," and there being an effort to reach out to them during the Millennium is because many of them are going to be preserved in the coming destruction, and there will be a lot of opportunity for people in very far-spread places to say, "Hey! Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord's house where we can learn of His ways." And why do they have to learn of His ways at the mountain of the Lord's house? It's because where they reside, they don't have it. They have to go and learn it "that we may walk in His paths." See, once they learn, then they want to return and they want to live their lives accordingly. There's a great effort that will be made among people—good people—who will be preserved in the coming destructions. So if you've got someone in your family who's a good person, and this good person thinks you're heretical, if they're a good person, you don't have to wrestle them down into the River Thames and dunk them under the water in a panic because, otherwise, they're gonna ignite like a match head when the Lord appears in His glory. That's not how this is going to work. Calm down!

Look, the best way for people to be interested in what you have to offer, assuming you have something to offer, is to calmly go about living your life confident in the message of the Lord, trusting in the Book of Mormon, and living true to the faith that you hold. *That* arouses curiosity. And when someone *asks* to know about something, they're a whole lot more interested in hearing what you have to say than they are when you come in hands-on-hip and finger-wagging, saying, "You're gonna be damned. But I'm not! And I'm not because I got something you don't got! *You*, you need what I got!" You're not gonna persuade anyone with that kind of nonsense. If they're good people, rejoice with them. Love them. Be kindly towards them. Be patient with them—a long and patient example. When they see...

I mean, why does the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount say, "Blessed are you when men will speak all manner against you falsely for my name's sake" (see Matthew 3:14 RE)? It's because hearts have been broken by hypocrites *so often* that no one trusts a genuinely religious person to be authentically what they claim to be. I can't remember the name of that preacher from Oklahoma... I want to say Swaggart, but I don't think that's it. There was a preacher from Oklahoma who had a university. [Audience

comments.] No, no, it wasn't Bakker. And I don't think it was Oral Roberts, although Oral Roberts had... This guy made, like, Newsweek magazine; it's been a while. [Audience comment.] Umm, it could have been. Anyway, this guy... I think... I want to say it started with an H, but that doesn't matter; name doesn't matter. This guy wound up sleeping with the coeds at his university and getting caught. And when he got caught, this is... This really tells you where his heart was—he's a Christian minister, but where his heart was—he said he “couldn't help himself; it was in his genes and chromosomes. It was biology. He just couldn't help himself.” And there's an article about it, and he's giving his confession and saying, Oh, he was compelled to do so! And my reaction to the article was, “Yeah, if he'd kept his jeans on, his chromosomes wouldn't have been spread about the campus!”

We're accustomed to that kind of crap from the religious community! I had a friend who went to present a paper to a group of Christians in Atlanta. And he presented his paper to an auditorium full of Christians, and one of them came up to him and said, “You talk and write like you believe this stuff!” And he said, “Yeah, I... Don't you?” And the reaction was [disdain sound]. Nonsense. So he asked that there be a show of hands in the auditorium of those who *did not believe* the account of the New Testament to be accurate, trustworthy, and reliable—these are ministers! 80% of the people raised their hands who were professional ministers! They *didn't* believe it. He flipped the question and said, “Well, do any of you believe it to be true?” And about 10% did. So the other missing 10% just didn't know. And they're ministers!

The reason why people say evil concerning you for His name's sake is because if you really do believe and follow what He teaches, everyone is gonna be skeptical because there are so many hypocrites, so many people who sin and disbelieve in private but make a public pretense of believing in it. But if you endure that gracefully, if you really do demonstrate faith in Christ, those people who speak evil concerning you will eventually have it touch them, and they will realize they finally found an authentic follower of the Lord. And when they realize that, that arouses curiosity. You don't have to bludgeon anyone into believing. You don't have to go ask the golden questions: “What do you know about the Mormons? Would you like to know more?” You don't have to do any of that. They'll ask you. They'll come to you. You may have to put up with a lot of nonsense first.

I can't tell you how much garbage there is about me on the Internet. I don't defend myself; I don't respond to the nonsense. I just let it go. But I don't know how many people who have come and spent any time with me have walked away shocked at the remarkable difference between this rather welcoming chap who seemed to have a bit of common sense about him versus the lunatic that's out there trying to recruit a cult so that he can fair sumptuously while shacking up with a polygamous commune. I do not believe that Joseph Smith originated or practiced polygamy. I believe it is morally wrong. I have taught that; I've been clear on that. I've published things about that. And yet on the Internet, that nonsense still percolates about.

So you're gonna get lied about. You're gonna get misinterpreted. You're gonna get misunderstood. That's just what Christ said would happen to you in the Sermon on the

Mount. So don't let it surprise you or frustrate you or anger you. *Blessed are you*. Take it in stride! How do you think Christ remained so congenial throughout His ministry? If you had the nonsense said to your face that He had said to His face, you would have probably been far less kindly than Jesus was. He walked the path; He set the example. We're just asked to follow it. He's already set the pattern before us, and He's given us counsel in the Sermon on the Mount on how to do it.

So, I'm out of time. We're past when we said we would stop. There's still time to hang around in here, and I don't know if we need to straighten things up or if there's more treats in the back to be consumed. But I want to wrap up by saying, look, the Book of Mormon is exactly what it purports to be. And Joseph Smith was not only what he said he was, he rather understated the case. Joseph's proclamations about himself were modest. He was more than he said he was. But he didn't think people could hear everything that needed to be said. And although he began the process of the restoration, it was not finished! It's not going to be finished by a group of people atop a multibillion-dollar church that has the financial and political and social clout to decide to undertake a trillion-dollar enterprise developing a city in Florida on 133,000 acres.

They're not gonna do it. It's gonna be the few who are the humble followers of Christ who take Him seriously that will finish up the work. *That* is currently afoot. *That* is currently advancing, step-by-step, forward to a conclusion. And the promise is that in the generation when it starts, it will all be concluded. There's still time. "Generation" is a vague timing. We may number them as "Z" and "Baby Boomers" and "X" and "Millennials." The Lord doesn't do it that way. So however long a generation is, that's how long it will take to wrap things up. I think we've got perhaps decades. Just live your religion. Just set the example. Arouse the curiosity of others who have seen hypocrisy year in/year out, and live true to your faith. Don't be a hypocrite, and God will use you to a good end.

Of that, I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

2023.11.18 Milestones
United Kingdom Conference
Edinburgh, Scotland
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Denver Snuffer: Did anyone bring a set of Scriptures with them? A set of the three-volume, new printed Scriptures? You did? Do you mind if...

Unknown: [indecipherable comment]

DS: No, if I let people pass them around. Is that okay?

Unknown: You have permission.

DS: This is one volume. Do you have the other two?

Unknown: No, I just choose between three.

DS: So you packed and you flew from the States, did you? Umm, this is hard-bound.

Unknown: Buffalo.

DS: Did they give you the option of getting them hard-bound?

Unknown: Yeah.

DS: They did?

Unknown: Got in early.

DS: Yeah, why would anyone do that? They're flexible when you soft bind them, but they're still in leather.

I wanted anyone who has not seen what these look like to have a chance to look at them. I'm gonna mention them... Let's just pass them around. That way, it'll wind up—if it goes this way and then this way—it'll wind up back with its owner. I want to mention the Scriptures at the end. What time are we supposed to end here?

Unknown: Five o'clock.

DS: Five o'clock. So I'll be right on the money.

When the Scriptures were being put together, one of the last things that needed to be done was to take the book of John and do something with it that made it a little more reliable, a little more accurate. And that assignment ultimately devolved upon me. But the material was not put in the New Testament; it was instead added as a section in the Teachings and Commandments volume, as section 171 and under the name of Testimony of St. John. I'm gonna be quoting from an incident that happened in that text.

As I was working on it, I got to the—very early on—I got to the wedding feast in ~~Canaan~~ [Cana]. And there were so many options using the many definitional choices that you

could have with the Greek for the words that were being used, that I gave up, and I quit the assignment, prayerfully, and let the Lord know that, you know, it would never be done in time for adding it to the Scriptures because the choices were too plentiful. And that night, I got help on the wedding feast at ~~Ganaaan~~ [Cana].

John purposefully selected that and put it into his account very early on, in order to tell about an incident that would illustrate the entirety of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Christ Himself. And so the purpose of this event (which actually took place) would put a parable into the mouth of the master of the feast that illustrates what it is we find when we come unto Christ. So I'm gonna read from that testimony:

When the host of the wedding tasted the ceremonial water...

Now, it's called "water" at this point because these pots were six water pots made of stone that were used for ceremonial purification in religious observances. And so far as anyone knew, they were simply six pots filled with water, the water being used in cleansing ceremonies.

When the host of the wedding tasted the ceremonial water, it had been converted into wine. But he did not know the source that converted the water, unlike the servants who recognized the Source.

In the account, this is an attempt in our language to replicate some of the subtlety that John had at his command, writing in his language. The word *source*,

- in the first use, *he did not know the source that converted the water...* is small s;
- *unlike the servants who recognized the Source*, capital S.

We can use capitals and small letters in our language in order to convey or communicate a point. Throughout the record, Christ is not recognized as who He is, except on rare occasion, and therefore, all the pronouns referring to Him are small letter. But when someone figures out and they're recognizing Him in His true role, then in our language, we can depict the recognition with capitalization. So "source" gets used twice in this sentence: once small/uncapitalized and once capitalized, because the servants were the ones who knew who the Source was.

The host of the feast called for the bridegroom, and praised him using a proverb, saying, Careful men introduce their plans using the best wine, and later, when ... followers are drunk, then their worst — but you have brought [to] us better wine than at the start.

This was a sign confirming his role as the Messiah...

You see, the Messiah is not like men who bring people aboard with some delightful tale, but when they get them within their grasp, then they abuse and misuse it. The Savior, when you come to Him, find out it only gets better. And this is a parable about how the Savior would conduct Himself—and does conduct Himself—with people who come to and accept Him as who He is.

...It was a demonstration of authority over both the elements and ordinances of salvation. Those who recognized this as a sign of his authority were awed as they considered it was him present among them. (TSJ 1:16-17)

But clearly, it was only a small group. And in fact, it was the group that was the most servile; it was the servants who recognized who the Master was. Others were oblivious.

Christ would be confronted by Nicodemus in the account that we have in the Testimony of St. John, and Christ explained to Nicodemus:

I tell you, if you want to ascend to the Heavenly Council, you must first acknowledge and give heed to the messengers sent by them. (TSJ 2:3)

See, Nicodemus had greeted Him by acknowledging Him, that He was a master and that He'd been sent by the Heavenly Council—and he wanted to know something about how to get back into that condition. And Christ is saying, “Well, if you want to ascend to the Heavenly Council, you must first acknowledge and give heed to the messengers sent by them.” So Nicodemus needed to change his priority. Instead of being attentive to the Sanhedrin, an authority that had not been sent; they'd simply inherited office by tradition that had been preserved under the arrangement that Moses had originally established, but they were hollow at this point. They may have authority that people recognized societally/institutionally within the group, but they didn't have authority from the Heavenly Council. And therefore, what Jesus was saying was rather revolutionary. It was rather turning things upside down. It's like that quote I read the other night: "All great truths begin as blasphemies," as George Bernard Shaw.

Well, at this point, what Christ is saying is really in the form of blasphemy because he's undermining those that are in a position of authority. Christ goes on to explain to Nicodemus:

Everything about my assignment, which I am now performing, was foretold by the prophets sent earlier to teach Israel, for they all testified of me. They told you I would come, and I am now here doing what was prophesied, but you refuse to see it happening...

That's always a dilemma, you know. It's happening right in plain sight. Easily ignored.

*Enough is underway that rejecting it means you prefer darkness to light. Humble yourself and admit the prophets foretold the very things **now underway**; repent and be baptized and the Spirit of Truth will open your eyes. If you want greater light, you will obey this instruction. If you refuse, then you never meant it when you greeted me as an enlightened heavenly guide. (Ibid. ¶ 4, emphasis added)*

That's always the test, you see. “I believe in Heaven. I believe in prophets. I believe in Scripture. I believe in the Lord. And I believe all that He said throughout!” And yet, were the Lord here, you'd find reason to criticize! You'd find Him too congenial, too irreverent, or too somber. I mean, He says, at one point: “Look, I sent you people that played for you to dance, and you wouldn't dance. And I sent you others to cause you to mourn,

and you wouldn't mourn. You're never happy. You can't be pleased. The only way to please you is to say, well, you are all of it." But the truth is, none of us are all of it. We're all not quite what the Lord was and is.

Jesus responded to the doubts of the Jewish religious leaders:

My doctrine does not come from me, but from God who sent me. Anyone who walks in God's path will understand his doctrine, because that path increases light and knowledge. I testify of that path. Follow it and you will know whether I am sent by God or I am not sent by God. Teachers who preach from their own understanding only gratify their pride... (TSJ 6:5)

Okay, so we need to pause at that point because this is a really interesting moment in our Scriptures that we've been given. He's saying, If a man is out teaching you and what he is teaching you, it hails from his understanding, then what he's doing is being done to gratify his pride. So hold that idea of gratifying your pride, and I want to jump to a letter that was written by Joseph Smith in the Liberty Jail after he'd been confined for nearly six months and at a point when he did not know if he would ever get out of there. He wrote (after saying "many people are called but few are chosen"):

Why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and that the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, ...the Heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (T&C 139:5)

So if we undertake to gratify our pride, God ends any commission of authority given to that person. And Christ in the Testimony of St. John is quoted as teaching that "when you teach based upon your own ego, that's only being done by a teacher who seeks to gratify his pride." That ought to put us on notice about how careful we ought to be when we teach.

...but a teacher of truth teaches only what God tells him, and that teacher provides a light worth heeding. (TSJ 6:5)

So if you can find a teacher who is telling you that what they are teaching hails from a higher source, then you may have found something worth heeding.

Well, so far, as we have made a few milestones moving along in our present day, we began with the proposition that we were under condemnation, and we had been under condemnation since about the second year of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith, where the Lord says, "You're under condemnation, even all of you, because you've taken lightly the former commandments and the Book of Mormon, not only to say but to do, and this condemnation rests upon all" (see T&C 82:20). So **all of**

us got condemned in the revelation in 1832 (as I recall), and that never got reversed. Now, I was an active Latter-day Saint when I heard people from the podium (including a president of the Church, Ezra Taft Benson) teach that that condemnation remains upon us.

So, we accepted the proposition that we were under condemnation, and so, trying to figure out a way out of the condemnation, one of the things that multiple people were inspired to do was to go back and to take a look at the Scriptures that had been treated lightly. Two different groups of people, independent of one another (actually, at the first, there were three, but two of the three combined into one, so there were two by the time it came to me), two groups of people worked on trying to get the Scriptures right. And I heard rumors that this was underway, but I wasn't involved.

And then one of the groups came to my attention and gave to me their work-up of the Scriptures. Within a few days after that, the second group contacted me and said, "We've worked up the Scriptures, and we'd like to turn them over to you." And I said to both of them (after finding out that they had worked independent) that "You really need to get together." So two completed projects! They all met at my office in the conference room to look at what one another had done, and they found out that they had encountered many of the same problems, but they'd reached different solutions. And my suggestion was, "I don't want two different solutions. You guys get it right."

So the project that had been worked on for some time—years—now was starting over again. And as it turns out, there was, at the same time, more material rolling out into the public view that had been withheld. And so the project started all over again. And it was worked on diligently. I think that effort, with more people using better resources, took about another 18 months to culminate in a finished project, which at a conference held in St. George, Utah was printed up and distributed in multiple copies, large print, for everyone to take a look at so that everyone could give their input if there's something that someone else knew that we didn't know about. And sure enough, as it turns out, there was a fellow who had spent years looking at the Joseph Smith Translation who told us that the Old and New Testament versions we had worked up were incredibly flawed, that the version that we'd been working with had been adopted by the RLDS Church (when they were the Reorganized Church) and that that version included many changes that a committee made that Joseph never did, and it omitted dozens—perhaps hundreds—of changes that Joseph had made that they didn't feel significant enough to include in the text.

So now the Bible and the New Testament have to be reworked, and the project starts all over again, and we find out that some of the material that we thought was included in the revelations of Joseph Smith were, in fact, alterations that had occurred after Joseph had released them. And so the Doctrine and Covenants began all over again.

The Scriptures that are now available have recovered, as close as possible, the version of the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith intended it. The version that the LDS Church printed was taken from a copy that got typeset in England. When the original Book of Mormon was typeset, on average, the printer's copy made one-and-a-half errors per

page when it was copied from the translation copy. So Oliver Cowdrey, making the printer's copy, introduced errors. The printer's copy then was taken to E.B. Grandin's workshop, and John Gilbert typeset the Book of Mormon in the first edition—but John Gilbert was working with a text that had no punctuation. So when Gilbert is supplying the punctuation, he supplies the punctuation in the way that he understood the text ought to be punctuated. Among other things, the punctuation of John Gilbert (which remains as part of the LDS version of the Book of Mormon)—because of commas, semi-colons, periods (and the absence thereof)—has Trinitarian descriptions of God.

If you erase the punctuation and you let me re-punctuate it, I will make the words of the Book of Mormon consistent with Joseph Smith's Lectures on Faith. It's easily done. But there have been Ph.D. dissertations written on the Trinitarian view of Joseph Smith early in his career as a Prophet when he was writing the Book of Mormon, in contrast to his later theological teachings that differed—so Joseph Smith changed his theology. Well, let me change the punctuation, and I'll make it consistent. It's not that hard to do. And it has, in fact, much of the punctuation to the text of the Book of Mormon has been eliminated. Wherever possible, we have made it as simple as possible to give the greatest flexibility in understanding it.

So we have recovered, as close as possible, the version of the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith intended it, we have eliminated things that never belonged in the Doctrine and Covenants, and we have added many of the missing revelations of Joseph Smith that he intended be received as revelations. And there was one talk that Joseph Smith gave in Nauvoo that he wrote up; he intended that as a sermon. It is in... The entirety of that talk is in the—we call it Teachings and Commandments to distinguish it from Doctrine and Covenants—but it's in that volume that's being passed about.

When they worked up the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith had sent Oliver Cowdrey to independence, where a printing press was bought and they were going to publish the revelations. So in Independence, Missouri, Oliver Cowdrey put together the revelations, and he called it the Book of Commandments. The Book of Commandments never made it into print because the press was destroyed. And when Oliver was attempting to translate the Book of Mormon, he was told about his failure and encouraged by saying, “You get to write other things later for people, not by way of commandment, but you'll be able to write other revelations later.” When he was putting together the revelations for the Book of Commandments in 1833 in Independence, Oliver took editorial license because he could write on behalf of the Lord—and things in the Book of Commandments blew up; more got put in. When the press was destroyed and copies were smuggled out by the women back to Kirtland (where they had a press and where they were working on a new edition of the Scriptures), the Book of Commandments version of the revelations got incorporated as the “covenants.” And the “doctrine” was something that Joseph Smith worked on from the School of the Prophets: Lectures on Faith.

Joseph Smith paid attention for months to the content of Lectures on Faith, making sure that he got those right. But a committee took care of the revelations. So Joseph vouched for Lectures on Faith, but he left it to the committee to finish up the revelations.

And so the doctrine, which is the Lectures on Faith, was Joseph assuring us that he would stand by every word that appeared in that, and the covenants were left to a committee. We have cleaned up the revelations, we have restored the Lectures on Faith, and we have published that as Teachings and Commandments.

We have published the most correct and complete version of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (if you have Doctrine and Covenants) is mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants and promised 15 times—that was a necessity for the saints to avoid falling under condemnation; they needed the Joseph Smith Translation. We've recovered it. It was promised 15 times. We've cleaned it up from what the RLDS did to mangle it. We finished up some of the things that Joseph added that have never been included, and that is The Old Covenants and half of The New Covenants.

We have obtained and implemented a new covenant from the Lord that was given in 2017.

We are currently advancing a translation of the Book of Mormon into Old Testament Hebrew that was mentioned earlier. We are also advancing work on a modern English version of the Book of Mormon because, as it turns out, the vocabulary that got employed at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 has language that we share with those people, but we have an altogether different understanding of the meaning of the words that got employed. And so a modern English version that works through the Book of Mormon—in order to give what today, in our vocabulary, ought to be understood by the word choices—is also currently advancing. And we're hoping to get (I don't know, Steph always says, “Never promise a date”) sometime before 2030 to get those in print. We have—modest though our ability and our capacity may be—we have, nevertheless, taken seriously and remembered the covenant people of the Jews and Native Americans, and we have begun a labor on both of those fronts. It's still modest; we assume it will ultimately pay some dividends.

We've begun gathering funds to build a house of God—a Temple—to be built in the tops of the mountains.

We've published the New Testament and Book of Mormon in a single bound volume, as Joseph Smith intended to do and promised would be done. He wanted the Book of Mormon and the New Testament to occupy a single volume. So The Old Covenants volume is the Old Testament. The New Covenants volume is the Book of Mormon and the New Testament. And the Teachings and Commandments are Lectures on Faith and modern revelations.

We've created a searchable, free, online Scriptures site: scriptures.info. Can you imagine that that website was available for the taking? If you go to scriptures.info, all of the Scriptures are available. They're available free, they're online, and they're searchable. You can do word searches. If you want to know how many times the word “iniquity” appears in the Book of Mormon (because Amberli has aroused your curiosity), you can go to scriptures.info, feed in “iniquity,” limit the search to the Book of Mormon, and see how many times there are. It's searchable. Now, there have been some

updates recently to our phones—the plague of modern man—a new program. And so I think that unless you have an older phone, the search engine on handhelds is currently being updated for the new generation of whatever they're doing to charge you more money for your phone, and will be available soon. But if you search it from a PC, it's perfectly established.

We have also established voluntary fellowships in which tithes are collected and then distributed to members of the fellowship to those needing assistance within the fellowship. Tithing doesn't go anywhere except among the people who pay in the tithing. It gets used among those who have a need among the fellowship for food, clothing, housing, transportation, medical care, dental care, and education. If anyone within a fellowship has a need, that need gets addressed. Now, there have been fellowships with rather affluent members with practically no needs, and as a consequence of that, they aggregated a lot of money. And so they decided to reach outside their fellowship. This was them deciding this, voluntarily among themselves. No one's telling anyone what to do with tithe money. It's all voluntary, and it's all a matter of consensus. But there was someone who had a profound disability who needed a van that would help transport disabled people and could be operated by someone that was disabled in a wheelchair. The fellowship had enough money; they bought that van for the purpose of helping someone that they knew locally. It's up to the fellowship to decide such things. But that's underway.

Volunteers have organized general and local conferences, including this one. I don't know who paid for this, but someone did. We believe that the religion requires sacrifice of ourselves. The people who have come over here to participate in this are not being compensated; it is a financial burden to come and to participate. If your religion does not require that you make a sacrifice—and for the most part, people assume that it's enough to be a home teacher or a home minister or serve as a Sunday school teacher. Tell them it's gonna involve your pocketbook, and all of a sudden, “Well, that's not sacrifice. That's wrong! I'm doing... I'm giving up my time and my talent and everything other than money that the Lord has blessed me with or with which He may bless me to the building up of the Kingdom of God and the establishment of some theoretical future Zion that will never get here until after we develop 133,000 acres of real estate in Florida. But it's coming!”

A website has been created to archive the record of the Restoration, including our conferences, our Scriptures, and everything going on currently. And that's referred to as restorationarchives.com. Any talk that's ever been given—I assume including the ones that are given here—will ultimately both be available as an audio recording and as a transcription because we have an obsessive-compulsive transcriber; I'll spare naming her. But she does wonderful work, and she'll get around to transcribing these things. (I hope part of that's automated.)

And we have a website for events that get announced called remnantevents.com.

And those things are what have been and are currently available or are being prepared for as a consequence of what we're up to. Small—I've never thought numbers mattered.

I'm absolutely persuaded numbers don't matter, now. Based upon the letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the Lord's ultimate success in Judea involved 500 who assembled together at the time of His ascension into Heaven. Those I assume to be the correct number of the real believers who had been invited to come along for that occasion. Literally, that means the greatest group of believers that the Lord ever spoke to was the group that He talked to in Bountiful, when people had come up 11 months after the destruction, at a festival time, and they're standing about showing one another "the marvelous changes that took place since the last time we were at Temple Square. Look, the horn is gone!" Except now the spires are gone; the interior is gone. Sitting over here, you may not know the "marvelous changes" that have gone on.

All of the original handicraft of the workmen... I don't know if this is lath and plaster. But it could be because of where we are and how old buildings are here. But all of the interior work of the Salt Lake Temple was made of lath and plaster, painstakingly done by pioneer workmen. It's gone. They gutted the entire interior. Standing on Temple Square and looking through the windows, you can see the sky from the ground up. It's... The entire thing's been gutted. It will be a movie theater version of the temple endowment instead of the live version that was there before. The orientation of the rooms required that you circumambulate a circle, going from room to room and up the stairs; you were required to change directions (a symbol of repentance) when you climb and then change and continue climbing, and then ultimately complete your rotation once you get to the celestial room through the veil, entering from the terrestrial room. And then at the highest level, there were sealing rooms that were made off of the celestial room; an annex was made on the north wall off of the celestial room with a corridor that had sealing rooms on it. That entire north-wall annex is gone. I noticed that one of the problems the temple was having was that when they cut through, in order to add that, the blocks at the corner of the cut had begun to separate, so you could see the crack that was made. They got rid of all that to sturdy up the structure again. But because of that (if the *Deseret News* can be trusted), they have now moved the sealing rooms—instead of being at the highest level and off of the celestial room—they've moved it downstairs into the basement, in the new way of doing it. So you'll get in... And by the way, in order to gut it, they had to remove the solemn assembly room at the top. I don't know what they're going to do to replace or if they're going to do it. It's so rare that they use the three pulpits at one end and the three pulpits at the other end. And they have a theater over in the Conference Center, so that's where the General Authorities can come hold their solemn assemblies. So I don't know what they're going to do with that. But one of the premonitions that I had had some time ago was that the Salt Lake Temple would be destroyed. But I thought, rather like the trumpet being shaken out of the hand, that it would be the doing of the Lord, the trembling of the Earth. But as it turns out, it's been altogether destroyed voluntarily by the proprietors. They've gutted it, and now it's not gonna contain... I assume that they'll try and put moldings back in. But they'll be wood and painted; they'll be, you know, pre-manufactured stuff (at least I hope it's wood and not plastic).

Okay, so it's five o'clock. And I understand this was the moment at which we were supposed to end, but I'm happy to—if anyone's got a quick question—I'm happy to

answer anything on any subject, including why there are so many New York Yankee hats over here! Don't you guys know the Yankees are the evil empire? Get a Red Sox hat, for goodness sake.

Yeah, what?

Question: I was just interested in asking whether you could expound upon a comment that you made in Leeds that kind of made me struggle a little bit to think that, umm, when you said that we may have decades.

DS: It took 500 years for the Roman Empire to fall apart, you know. [Indecipherable audience comment.] It took 500 years for the Roman Empire to finally fall apart. The world is held together—tattered though it may be—the world is held together by American hegemony. If you take the American, really, Navy out of the picture (I guess the Air Force's ability to transport part of that, as well), but right now, you know:

- Turkey and Greece would be at it.
- Right now the Armenians still have a battle to settle.
- Right now Iran and Iraq continue to have animosities.
- You don't have as peaceful a coexistence between Pakistan and India because of the disputed border in that region.
- And what would China do with Tibet if some of the others came to Tibet's aid? Where's that going to go?
- Korea has historic grudges.
- Japan has historic grudges with China.

Everywhere you look, there are potential conflicts that are kept at bay because there's a respected world order. So how long does it take? Well, once you remove the capacity to enforce that, you still have a period during which that animosity turns to violence. It's not abrupt; it's gradual and generally requires provocation. And the prophecy is that the turbulence, the calamity, the stuff that is to come is going to make *a full end of all nations* (T&C 85:3). Well, that's quite a sweeping statement. To make a full end of all nations is not something to be achieved in a blink of an eye.

If you start today and you remove the American presence and their military hegemony from the scene, it's still gonna take a while to work things up. I mean, go up to the castle and look at all the swords. How long did it take to fabricate those? You don't get ready for that, you know, overnight, and you're going to have to undertake the preparations for war. These people aren't gonna go out throwing rocks at one another. It takes a while. But the wicked are going to destroy the wicked. That's the prophecy. The wicked are gonna destroy the wicked, but it's tedious work. I mean, there are a lot of wicked, but there are a lot of wicked to kill. And everyone's got something to do when it comes to that kind of an undertaking.

So, yeah, don't think of it in terms of an abrupt moment. There will come an abrupt moment, but that's at the end, “by and by,” when the Lord in His glory does the wrap-up with, you know, things burning as stubble under the feet of the righteous. That will come. But that's not where it starts. That's where—after the wicked have had a season

of hard labor destroying one another—it all turns about, and the Lord takes care of what's left.

Well, thank you. We've got someone (a monitor) now at the door telling us to get out of here. So, [singing] “Get that thing back where it came from...”

2023.12.16 Understanding Prophecy

Text Follows...

2023.12.16 Understanding Prophecy Q&A

Sandy, Utah

Denver Snuffer: Comments? You were saying something.

Aaron Kibbie: Is it on? Do you wanna record...? Okay, cool. Yeah, I'll just go top-down from the top of the talk down on my questions. So first thing we mention is foolishness and ignorance, but we don't qualify "What is foolishness and ignorance?" That might be purposeful to leave it vague, but it's still there.

Next thing is that we talk about Nicodemus and his inability to recognize prophecy. Later on, it's talked about how the Sanhedrin (the Pharisees and the Sadducees) are unable to recognize prophecy because they have this expectation that created a trap for them where they were unable to recognize the fulfillment of prophecy outside of the bounds of their understood parameters (or whatever). So...

DS: Yeah, they viewed themselves as being more sinful than they really were.

AK: Right. And a little bit later on, you say that God admonishes us to be open to not solidify our expectations, so we CAN recognize prophecy, but nowhere in the talk do we say, exactly, "HOW do we stay open to recognize the fulfillment of prophecy?" So that's a... Kind of like a... It's like a, "You gotta do this," with, you know: How?

Next is we're talking about the vineyard, and we have the use of *wild* in a positive way and in a negative way, which is itself juxtaposed. Because in the first instance, when we're finding the bad branches—right?—and we're chopping out the bad, and then we're grafting in wild branches with the intent of making the tree strong, with a hope that they will become good to overshadow the bad. But then later on in this allegory, we're now cutting out the wild branches. So to me, it's like, okay, what constitutes badness? And you kind of give some examples of what badness is there...

DS: K, well, let's pause on that because that's a good point. You're actually referring to events that occur earlier in the prophecy of Israel's history. Because Israel had acquired a state of religious staleness that they were the only people who would kill their God—and they killed it—at which point, they reach out to the *wild* (which is when it's positive) in order to bring in Gentiles who would be willing to start where the Lord had ended, which is with the ministry of Jesus Christ because they were converted to it. So Christianity thrived for a season, and the *wild*, it took off, getting nourishment from those roots. All of that is historically behind us. The prophecy point in which I pick it up in this talk is LATE: It's now when everyone... There is no good. It's the statement that Christ makes to Joseph in the First Vision about "There's a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

And so we're starting at a point in which the wild has reverted back to being absent of salvation. You can't go anywhere and find good fruit. And so now, given the state of the world (which is really what we want to look at), the last time the vineyard gets worked in, the last time that we have an opportunity to lay up fruit, the last time that He's going to send and labor alongside some servants, that's relevant now to us (assuming we're

gonna be able to produce some natural fruit again). And so that's why I start there. And in that sense, at that moment, the wild is negative. But once you graft it back in... Apparently, that season of Christian apostasy is beneficial to reconnecting up with the roots. And I think, in many ways...

There are those that say that the Book of Mormon was really a product of the early 1830s, answering all of the problems with the then-existing forms of Christianity. And I don't think I would argue with that, because it's pretty clear that in making the abridgment and in the final letters between Mormon and his son, Moroni, he's literally addressing the ills that they foresaw we would confront in our religious traditions today, and gives us answers for them.

AK: Yeah, all I was saying was that there's no clear delineation between when *wild being grafted in* is okay and when we're now treating *wild* as something that needs to be pruned. So the use of the word wild doesn't have... It has a continuous vocabulary, but it... There needs to be some point of delineation to where [indecipherable reading of scripture verses]. So that needs to be clarified in my opinion. But...

There's also the choosing of grafting because... I also wondered, does wild mean not... Because he was talking about, like, wild... It almost sounded like you were describing wild as being those who are not predisposed to the corrupt traditions of some society or religion. That's what it almost sounded like the *good* wild were. And then the wild that became the *bad* wild were those who were entrenched still in their traditions, but they lended strength to the top of the tree so that the roots didn't overpower the other branches. But as they grew—right?—or as the new branches grew and became strong, it now allowed for the pruning of those traditions. But I... That was complete inference. You didn't say anything specific to it so that... I could be totally off my rocker.

And then there was... Okay, that was that question. One thing you said was “good strong roots,” but there was nothing said that defined what “good strong roots” mean.

DS: Abraham and his original covenant.

AK: Okay, cool. So that's right there.

[Reading notes] And then... Already touched on that... Branches...

Oh, the other part is that it might be reasonable to... Well, branches don't have feelings; they don't have emotional attachments to other branches being trimmed, right? And I think that's part of the strength that those traditions kind of allow on top of the good roots but, at the same time, need to be disposed with. But at the same time, you... It's hard to say, “Hey, we're gonna prune you.”

DS: Yeah.

AK: Right? And... Because that sounds very much like excommunication—right?—particularly if the branch is still alive.

DS: Yeah. Fortunately, it's ~~the vineyard~~ the Lord of the vineyard that's deciding what He prunes away.

AK: Right. And I'm not saying one way or another, but a lot of times in that particular parable, I always find a sticking point with WHEN you prune—right?—because hasty, overzealous people are like, “We need to prune you!” Right?

DS: [laughter] Yeah...

AK: It might be reasonable to say that the branches don't have their hands on the shears; that's the job of the servants and the Lord. If you're thinking that you need to be the one who's grabbing ahold of that, then you're falling into the camp of those who have...

DS: Yeah...

AK: ...have decided to be—as you described just slightly later on—being hasty and impatient. And I really am sorry that I'm saying all of this like logorrhea; I'm just vomiting out of the mouth. But anyway...

Whitney Horning: A thought that just came to mind was: How does that relate to “My hand is stretched out still”?

DS: Yeah...

Vern Horning: In regards to the pruning?

WH: Yeah.

VH: Well, I was just gonna say, sometimes the pruning happens, and the people don't even know it happened.

DS: Yeah.

VH: The branch doesn't know.

AK: I think, most of the time, our... I have noticed that our groups kinda self-prune.

VH: That's what I mean, yeah.

AK: I mean, people will gather and then what'll happen is that you'll find that a subset of the fellowship will just go over here. And others will tend to try to find more like-minded people who are sympathetic to whatever they're preaching or believing, and then that creates self-pruned groups.

VH: Well, I was thinking like the Jews, when they rejected John the Baptist and Jesus. They didn't know they were pruned away when it happened.

DS: That's a good point. But they were.

AK: And the seer... You said that... Okay, that one's out of context. I don't have a good one with that one. Sorry, I'm just... I tried to take notes as fast as I could, but...

Oh! I... This one always comes up: Prophecies are only meant to be understood after they are fulfilled. Okay. There's never any sort of nice understanding of "how long after." And so these people wondering if they're a part of that expectation trap up above or if they're not caught in...or if they've actually understood the prophecy correctly.

DS: How long do you think was a reasonable length of time following Joseph Smith bringing forth the Book of Mormon, how long should it reasonably take to at least consider the possibility that God was working through him to restore lost truth? I mean, can you do it perfunctorily without reading the book? Can... Are you justified in rejecting the book? Do you need to at least read the book and its claims? And if you read the book and its claims, then do you need to investigate Joseph? Or is it okay to say, "He hasn't been to college and received training for the ministry, and he's not ordained in one of the existing denominations that I recognize, and he's really just an ignorant farm boy who's making pretentions." Well, how long is it after the work began before you need to at least allow the possibility that Joseph Smith was someone who really did come in contact with God?

AK: Umm...that's undefinable.

Tina Kibbie: Individually.

AK: You said earlier... ([talking to himself] Was it early on or later on from there? It was later on)... "Search for God's will for themselves."

DS: Yeah!

AK: Right? So until you are willing to throw your will at the feet of God, I don't think any prophecy can be reasonably understood.

Stephanie Snuffer: The thing that keeps coming up for me is ('cuz we talked a little bit this morning), like, so what comes up for me is "by their fruits," right? So what is a reasonable amount of time between the coming forth of the Book of Mormon—whether you read it or not, whether you lived in, you know, around him or not—eventually, as an individual and someone who has just a natural desire to give their will to God, eventually they will notice, eventually they will see it. Who cares when it is? Who... What does it matter if it's within Joseph's lifetime, whether it's within, you know, whether it's 2023, and you're just finding the Book of Mormon for the first time? I mean, it is absolutely... It is undefinable. And it's going to happen just for the humble, the honest in heart, and those who—no matter where they are, what they're doing, ~~how they're liv...~~ you know, where they're living—they're just the ones who are willing to turn their lives over to God, whatever that looks like for them. And then, in 2023, someone says, "Oh, my gosh. This is the fulfillment of a prophecy," a prophecy that was fulfilled in the 1800s, right?

DS: Yeah, but it's just now coming to your attention.

SS: Yes. So what does it matter?

DS: Yeah.

SS: What does it matter?

AK: It doesn't really matter as much as [whispering] everybody asks that's stupid question.

SS: Right. Exactly!

AK: Right. And...

VH: Or we're living in a time when prophecy is being fulfilled, like you were saying, or events in the Scriptures that seem like they're about to unfold, is it worth speculating/discussing/talking about those? Or is it just... Or do you wait for the gospel doctrine class in the millennium to connect all the dots?

AK: I think it's exactly what Stephanie was said. But that needs to be taught. It's like, you need for yourself to really take and ponder these things, and see how it fits for you in your current form of development. Maybe bookmark it and say, "I'll come back to that later because it doesn't make any sense to me right now." But there's enough people who you care about who have said this is important. So don't rush yourself. Don't be hasty. Don't be impatient. Just mark it as something that you might need to come back to later. I think far too often we try to teach religion like math: First, you learn addition, then you learn subtraction, and ad nauseam, all the way up until, you know, differential calculus. But religion really is what you're ready for at the moment. And sometimes, like, you'll see kids just get stuff that you're like, "What the...?" And I've been struggling with that for years and now my seven-year-old says, "But Daddy, it's..." and you go, "Oh. Oh! Oh my gosh!" Right? And now you feel like, you know, out of the mouth of babes! What...? That's awesome. But so it's like, don't be discouraged that your "how long after" is not really close.

SS: Or different than someone else's.

AK: Yes. Exactly. Because I think that's what divides us a lot and gives us a lot of evil in our groups and stuff is because we don't allow for the individual growth pattern of other people in our fellowships. It's like, "Oh, if you don't believe that then you can't be here," right? And that is...

TK: That's the "stay in your lane."

AK: That's contrary to, I think... Well, I mean, it's contrary to what I think God wants for us because I think He wants for us not to be... He ~~wants to be~~ want us to be as inclusive as possible. And if pruning is necessary, that's His job—right?—or let the other people prune themselves, but try to be good, regardless. Anyway, I'm just being stupid.

Janson Fish: I've got a question. Can I fit one in?

AK: Please.

JF: “Remnant of Jacob.” “House of Israel.” The same person. Why does the Lord distinguish those groups? I get one is a covenantal name; the other is his birth/given name. But why does He use them interchangeably, it seems, throughout Scriptures? Is it a marker of sorts to, like, identify specific groups? Or is he just using...

DS: Well, Jacob was his given name, but Israel was his new name. In the allegory, the grafting (as he was mentioning a moment ago), you've got wild, and you've got regrafting, and Jacob... He is the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, because He covenanted with Abraham, and He covenanted again with us, He can covenant again with Jacob, and He gave to Jacob the new name/the covenant name of Israel. Well, in the allegory, using both names is a way of suggesting to the mind... I mean, when Christ says, “Isaiah truly prophesied concerning all things, therefore, he had to prophesy about the Gentiles,” the Gentiles' status (when they're wild), they're still Jacob; they're not Israel. They're still Jacob. But you're trying to reclaim it and turn that into some kind of covenantal, familial, back... I mean, we want it to be the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and the God of Janson, and the God of Aaron, and the God of Taylor. We want it to be the God of all of us. Maybe even the God of Vern. That's a stretch there. I mentioned all the men in the room, except for Vern, so I had to mention him, which now means we're really sexist. But if you go back to the beginning, the name Adam meant both Adam and Eve. So the God of Aaron is really “Aaron and Tina.” And the God of Taylor is really “Taylor and Kelsey,” and so on. And Janson, I assume his wife too.

JF: I have a wife, Yvette.

Taylor Ward: I've got a question. At the beginning, as well as throughout, we learned that understanding prophecy is: You can't fully understand it until it happens. And although you can search it out, they're unsearchable. But one of the things I learned that you can do is “incline your ear.” So I was wondering—I like practical—some practical ways to incline our ear amidst all the stuff all of us have going on every day, practical ways to incline our ear so we can understand the way we need to.

DS: You know, this... The incident involving Nicodemus going to Christ is... It's like... Make Nicodemus *every* man. I mean, what was it...? He's a member of the Sanhedrin. He has all the traditions, he has all the learning, he has all the reasons—just like we all do—to live our lives content and in a rut and to leave all of the “nonsense going on” on the side. WHY did Nicodemus go and flatter Christ and then ask Him questions? And Christ didn't accept the flattery. He went right after Nicodemus.

SS: I think the “incline”... I don't know if I'm answering your question specifically, but the “incline your ear” is... The only thing that's keeping us from knowing (whatever that's gonna look like for everybody) is the fact that we think we already know. It's the fact that we think we already know! I mean, it's “being wrong”: Assume you are definitively wrong about everything you know! Because...

DS: Or at least “incomplete.”

SS: Yeah, because you actually are, right? If you know anything about your brain, you know that your brain... It's a masterful... (I can't even think of the word.) It fools you all the time; your brain is lying to you 99% of the time. And so, you know, I mean, somewhere between “believe you're wrong all the time” and know at least, you know, at least “believe ~~what you know~~ what you think you know is incomplete,” that's how you incline your ear. You just let it all go. Nicodemus comes and questions Christ and flatters Him because he thinks he KNOWS—because he is a member of the Sanhedrin. So he knows! And what he realizes is that he doesn't... What he realizes that he knows is like, “I now know that I didn't know anything. Like, I totally missed it.”

VH: So is that the danger of trying to figure out prophecy before it happens, because you get these preconceived ideas that, when it does happen, you'll be blind to the reality?

DS: Why were the Sanhedrin leading the chants, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”? I mean, they... Not only was the Chief Cornerstone rejected, they were bitter and angry and upset, and they wanted Him killed! I mean, how do you...? How does your religion—which is telling you about the coming of the Messiah—how does your religion turn you into that? I mean, I give Nicodemus a whole lot of credit for coming and actually having a conversation with Christ. Can you imagine what the Sanhedrin—behind closed doors, you know, outside of earshot of Christ—what they talked about and what silly things they repeated that they'd heard about, and the nonsense that...? It's like the people who already made their mind up about Joseph Smith. And they can't tolerate the idea that he was a man of virtue and faithful to Emma and that he was surrounded by vipers that lied about him! We'd rather take his—lie or THE lies and project them onto him. I can't imagine what Jesus' reputation inside the Sanhedrin was, other than: He had a devil; He was a devil; He worked with the power of the devil; and He was absolutely opposed to everything good and virtuous and right—so much so that the sorcerer Jesus, the devil worshiper, really did need to be killed for the good of society! We need to protect our people from Him! I mean, how many people entertain really, really stupid, profoundly, strongly-held convictions about Joseph Smith? I mean, I'm amused at the nonsense that gets put on the Internet about me!

SS: Describing the Sanhedrin, what you're describing is the almost insurmountable task of believing “you don't know.”

TK: Well, it's becoming like a child, right?

SS: Yeah. Yeah.

TK: So that's the whole purpose.

SS: Yeah. How can you be a member of the Sanhedrin and stand to the side and say, “Why do you guys think you know that? What makes you think you know that?”

DS: In *The Second Comforter*, the chapter about becoming as a little child, I wrote that little children don't “know,” but they KNOW that they don't know, and therefore, they're

relentlessly curious. We don't have any curiosity about stuff outside of our prejudices because we might have to surrender them!

WH: Well, and I think that brings up, I think, one of the, you know... We talk about paradoxes all the time in this world—right?—and that things are a double-edged sword. So we have this: We need to be curious; we need to assume we don't know. But then how do we, then, avoid being deceived? Because as soon as we become curious and willing to be like a child, we open ourselves up to the deceivers and deception. And so then there's this line that we need to navigate that God fulfills His prophecies, but He uses men to bring it about. So that's one of my questions.

DS: And there are 10,000 people willing to volunteer to claim every sort of...

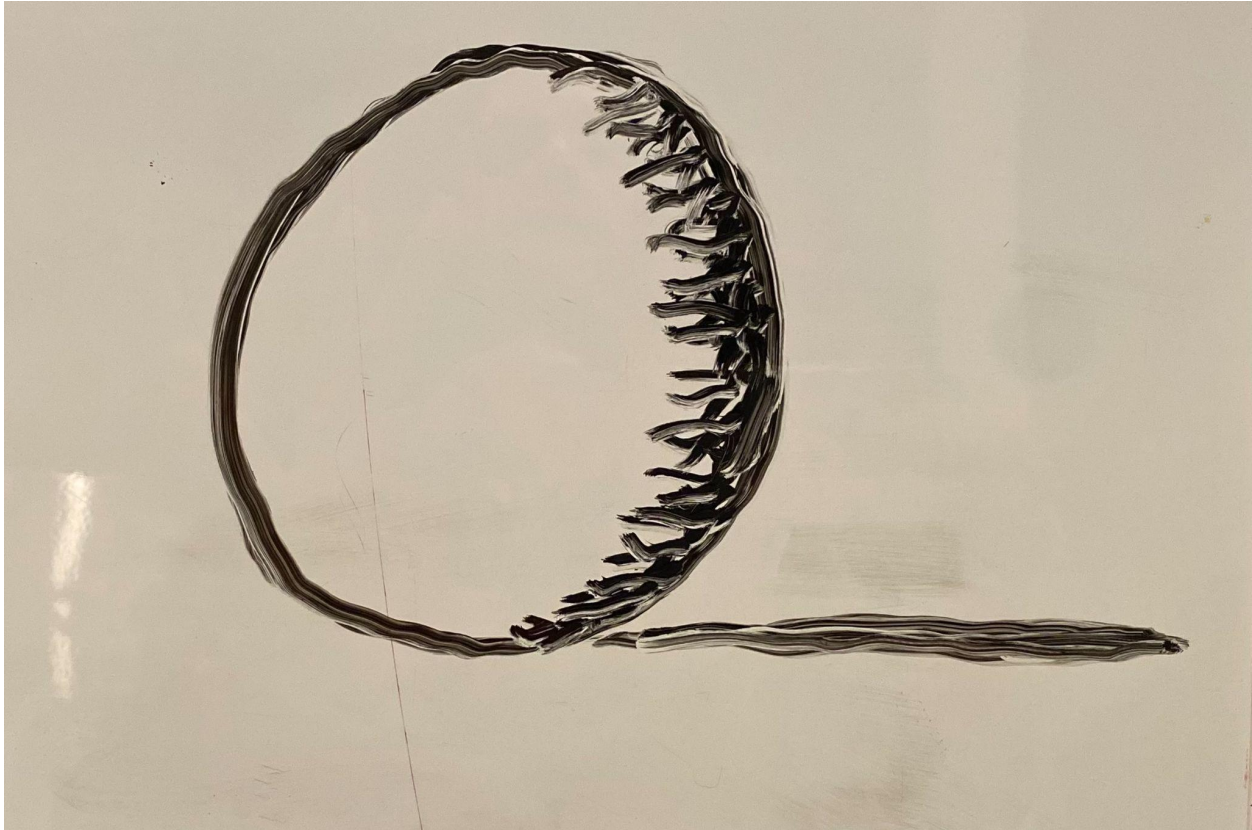
SS: Well, and I think that stays... It, to me, that stays in the area of curiosity, right? Because the minute you close, the minute you hear something that scares you... So fear is HUGE. “Fear” is as big as “thinking you know it already.” Those are the two things that are going to damn us all, right? So as soon as you... And it's by their fruits, “by their fruits, you shall know them.” Well, you may have to go pretty far down a path to realize that this fruit is stinky, right? But we're so afraid of any kind of mistake that we have to stay on the path, we have to stay on the path. I mean, I believe all the Scriptures, I believe there is one way, I believe the path is narrow, but I don't believe we're supposed to stay... I believe we're supposed to explore. That's how you find the narrow path is by exploring something different. And the reason we don't and the reason this is a big issue is because we think we know already, and we're afraid.

JF: Is that, umm... You quoted Joseph's “search into and contemplate the darkest abyss.” What does that mean? Is it that? Is it...?

DS: Look, it's almost impossible to understand anything absent contrasts.

SS: Opposition in all things.

DS: You have to have contrast. If you don't have contrast, you don't know what you're looking at [begins drawing on whiteboard].



If you begin to put contrast onto something, what was once flat and meaningless becomes spherical. And when you begin to put the contrast there, even if it's not apparent, this tells you there is a light source, and it's out of your view and over here. And so now I know/I comprehend this is spherical, it's not just round; there's a shadow, and there's a source of light, even if I can't see it. And so from what the contrast gives me is the certitude of knowing that there's something out there. A lot of times God is giving us a whole lot of information that we sense, not because the light source is within our field of vision, but because it is impossible for this condition to exist in the absence of the light source.

I went to my father's funeral, and his casket—it's open casket—was sitting there in the room, and as soon as I entered the room, I could point to the exact spot. My father was there but not in the shell. He was there, palpable and with the same radiant presence of his person, his personality, his demeanor, everything; disembodied, and not in the box. And that tells me that death doesn't take us away. That tells me that we survive the separation of the spirit from the body. I mean, you lose someone, and they come visit you. Now, they may not visit you by walking in the door and physically opening and closing material structures, and they may visit you only outside of your range of view, but if they communicate something to you that clearly originates from who they were, then you don't have to have the light sitting in front of you; you can tell by all of the other circumstances that it's there. The “searching into the darkness” means we really have to recognize that there is an opposition. The kind of evil that we see on display in this world implies that there is an opposite and a goodness. The teachings of Jesus Christ...

If we took the Sermon on the Mount and we adopted that as our thing, think of all the messes that we've got everywhere in the world right now, think of all the illnesses that we see on display in society, think of all the interpersonal problems that we've had among ourselves, the Sermon on the Mount is a remedy for all of it. Well, the fact that someone in one generation influences multiple accounts of His life, from very different personalities and different vantage points [who] tell us about the existence of this “teacher” who did these things, one generation, and there's this outpouring of historical accounts and, then, teaching accounts that pour out in one generation, and you get now—you know, two millennia later—a book in which His teachings are preserved, and you read them, and you realize that that would cure so much of the world's vanity, evil, conflict; it would cure so much. That tells you that “what we see” vs. “that light,” that Christ was a real historical figure who taught such lofty ideals that you really have no reason to reject His claim to being the son of God. And the witnesses that say He came back from the grave and then reported the statements made by recent witnesses of His resurrection (like Joseph Smith), we don't have any reason to say that light... I mean, I... The presence of evil tells me there is good. The presence of darkness tells me there's light.

SS: So if... Oh, sorry, Aaron, go ahead.

AK: I was gonna say there's no... The analogy of hunger and satiation keeps coming to mind. Food always tastes better when you're hungry, right? And the longer you've been without food, the more willing you are to accept food that's closer and closer to spoiling. And...

DS: That's a GREAT point.

AK: And this analogy keeps on cropping up into my head when I'm thinking about some of the comments you made at the end, which was... And in accordance with Nicodemus' station. He's “full.” He's “okay.” He's at a point in his life where he's accomplished enough and accomplished a lot, and he doesn't need to prove anything to anyone. But he does recognize greatness. And so he's willing to have conversations that may be in contrast to the mainstream. He's confident enough/he's satiated enough where he's “okay,” and he's willing to talk to Christ about things in a way that's blase vs. having real intent. Those who come to Christ who are hungry—who have an appetite to relieve pain and stress in their lives—are willing to accept prophecy sooner, right? And they're willing to get on to something that they feel is affordable (emotionally and physically) for the gains that they are going to feel emotionally, spiritually, and hopefully metaphysically in the life hereafter that will drive them forward, will help them become more than what they are because they are not satisfied. They are not satiated. But then there are those who are satiated, but they know they're missing something, and this is where you have the demonic fruit that is presented by God—and Denver [Joseph] classified it very well as being the flowery, fanciful words that are given by false prophets or false teachers who want you to eat from their hands so that they can pad their pocket with the other, with your resources. And that... It was mentioned over and over again in your talk, and I don't know if it was because of inspiration or because it's the quotations, scriptures, or whatever, but it was mentioned again and again about priestcrafts; I think it was like at

least three times. But that is the fanciful and flowery thing that sets an expectation. Those men are setting an expectation to bar you from receiving true prophecy.

DS: And to direct you into their camp and give them power and influence over you.

AK: Yes, so they are flatterers; they are with the intent of building up a kingdom. And they will sell you with the exact same words that are used in the Scriptures: “WE can build Zion. WE can do this baptism that will bring us closer to God. WE TRULY understand the Scriptures. We TRULY understand what is going on. Therefore, these are the things that we're going to get on the outside. And if you participate with me, we can accomplish this great work.” And that's where you get cults, right? Where there's a figure who has successfully used flowery and fanciful words, along with flattery, to sell an expectation that is backed 90% by truth, in a lot of ways. And they do go after the hungry, and they do satiate them. And when they are satisfied, they are firmly in the camp of those who would kill Christ.

SS: So what if you combat that by always having this part of you that says, “But what if it's wrong? But what if I'm wrong? But what if he's wrong? What if there's more?”

AK: The first thing that you can recognize when you are inside of a space where expectation has taken over you is 1: When someone brings up something new that is actually rational, you have an emotional response to it, usually fear or disgust or hatred, right? Because now your social base is being threatened. Your... Everything that you have done to teach your children is now being called into question. And you now have to come to grips with the idea that you are a bad father or a bad mother or you've been a bad friend because you have taught someone falsehood that's going to damn them to hell—right?—and the reason why that goes through your head is because that is the expectation that has been given to you by those wild or wicked or vain, glory-seeking people. They have said that if you don't follow these teachings, you're gonna go to hell. Therefore, if you're following some other teaching, isn't that going to be the same thing? But that's a false teaching in and of itself, teaching you that God is going to hate you for some reason, when in truth, Christ is the master teacher. Everything that we're going through here is a lesson, and either we get it here or we don't; we're gonna get it at some point. But hastiness and impatience, thinking that you have to have everything done now? That's the kind of thing that creates negative emotion, that's anxiety, right? And worry and fear of failure, right? Fear again, right? Those are the things that will lead to bad decision-making. It's no longer a successful cycle. It's now a cycle of emotional reaction to truth, which means that you kind of... You're definitely in a place where you're missing out on something reasonable.

SS: Yeah. Well, and I think, I mean, I think we have the blessing of, like... It's articulated, if we know there's opposition in all things, that's just a word, that's just a statement. There is opposition in all things. It's not a... It's not meant to make you afraid. It's meant to tell you what's gonna happen.

AK: You could say it another way just like Denver did. There's contrast.

SS: Yeah, it is a statement of truth. And in that statement of truth, there is technically nothing to be afraid of, just an awareness that I am going to—if I'm going to pursue this—I am going to experience that. If I'm gonna pursue this, I'm going to experience that.

DS: Contrast grows.

SS: Yeah, it wasn't meant to scare us off. It wasn't meant to say, “Be timid. Be hesitant.”

DS: We've been here a couple of hours. I'm concerned that the recording is going on too long for people to be tolerant. But there's some people who haven't said anything (Kelsey) or have said very little (Tina, Whitney). Actually, you too, Janson. Does anyone want to say anything?

JF: I have another question: “First shall be last, last shall be first.” Can you... Is there more to that? That keeps popping up through Scripture.

DS: Well, the Jews retained their identity with Israel longer than anyone, and therefore, they are the first in terms of recollection. The Gentiles got lost to that; they became the last because they have completely forfeited any awareness of their identity. But when the end comes, He's going to start by reclaiming Israel and using the cast-off branches that have become wild and redrafting them back into the roots. And then after the Gentiles have been brought back—both by covenant awareness, teaching, acceptance of truth—into the point where they can produce any good fruit, then secondly, the last of the ones who had been first will at last (the Jews and others who've retained the separate identity) are gonna be grafted back in at the end so that the cycle that started with the Jews and went on to the Gentiles is gonna start with the Gentiles and go back ultimately to the Jews.

JF: So the Jews, is it “I self-identify as a Jew; that makes me a Jew”? Or is it a...? Is there a specific bloodline or group of people that...? Like, who's the Jew?

DS: Well...

JF: What does that look like today in today's world? There's a whole lot of stuff going on in Israel...

DS: The easiest answer is that clearly those that self-identify as Jews would be where you would start with it. But there's a whole lot more to that. Yeah, but the easy answer is the obvious one. Is there more to that identity? Well, yeah. But that's a big subject. But it's a worthy question to keep in mind. Yeah.

But Whitney and Kelsey and Tina, what's up? [crosstalk]

Kelsey Ward: I'm a very simple-minded person.

SS: That's lovely. We need a lot more of THAT! Loftiness is...

WH: The thought that's been coming to me in this discussion is charity. So charity for each other when we get things wrong, when we think we've understood prophecy, or we think we're the one who just fulfilled the prophecy. And so charity for that, and then

charity for ourselves as we're trying to figure it out. I think about... I personally don't think that Joseph Smith, when he started translating the Book of Mormon, truly understood what he was fulfilling. I think he was just obeying God. God asked him to do something, and he was being obedient to that. And so I think there's a lesson to be learned there.

DS: Yes.

WH: But then also just the thought that when we're bumping into each other, and we're trying to figure all of this out, and we're trying to be obedient to the Lord in the way we think we're supposed to do something, and we're getting it right, or we're getting it wrong, just to have charity for each other.

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

TK: There's one thing that came to mind when listening to the ~~tree~~ of the olive garden allegory was that I watched a documentary not too long ago about how trees in the forest talk to each other, and how there's like a mother tree, right? And then they send out signals and fungus (like through the fungus they can talk to each other), and when someone is struggling, that mother tree, it like tells all the other ones to support. And that kind of goes along. That just came to mind when I'm thinking of that, you know, listening to the allegory again. That's, I think, part of being equal is being equal in helping one another when someone is down, you know, that... So, it goes along the lines of charity.

DS: Yeah.

TK: It's kind of cool to think about.

SS: I'm just quickly gonna interject because I think that's a perfect example of... You know that; you were probably... Maybe Aaron knows that too. But you're the only one at this table that knows that. You're the only one at the table who watched that documentary— okay?—which is a powerful, powerful explanation of really how God works and how His creation works. We can't be expected to know that. But as soon as you say something like that, what comes to me is like, “Oh, my gosh, look at what I don't know.”

TK: Yeah.

SS: “Oh, my gosh, look at what I don't know!”

TK: [Indecipherable] lack at being that support.

SS: And if I don't know that, and I don't understand that metaphor, and I don't understand how God created the world so that I could have that symbol in my life, then I really can't know much of anything—you know?—and I will spend my life never knowing enough. And so staying in that space of “Wow.”

DS: The guy who might be really interesting to have walk through that allegory is Keith Henderson because he goes and gets cuttings from California and from La Gaille and from all over, and then he grows grapes, makes wine.

TK: There's all sorts of cool things [indecipherable].

DS: Thanks all of you for coming.

2024.04.07 The Holy Order, Part 2

April 7, 2024

Fulbright Auditorium, Hobart & William Smith Colleges
Geneva, New York

This is... It's gone back and forth, and right now the "forth" is that it's gonna go out over the Internet because this particular venue has an adequate connection to the Internet. And it was supposed to start at 10 [o'clock], and it's 10, and I like to be prompt.

I appreciate the invitation to come. For those that are unfamiliar with how we conduct conferences, volunteers decide that they would like to host a conference, and then they organize it, they arrange for the venue, they take care of all of the responsibilities associated with making a conference work, and they do it largely "volunteering" and out of pocket. Now, meals are very often the subject of requests that you pay for your own meal. But anytime someone agrees to do a conference, what they're agreeing to do is to SACRIFICE, which is an essential component of having faith. You cannot have faith if your religion doesn't require that you make sacrifices. Therefore, if you're looking to be compensated to participate in anything that we do, you're sadly mistaken, because we would like to encourage you to have faith. Those who attend the conference, by and large, are here as I am, paying your own way, buying your own plane ticket, renting your own car, paying for your own hotel, and making a sacrifice. I mean, the invitation to come and speak is not an invitation to "not sacrifice."

Religion mandates that we sacrifice for it in order to give us the capacity to have faith. When you have a multi-billion dollar organization supporting and compensating you, it's a matter of a truism, as Joseph described in the Lectures on Faith, it becomes impossible if you're rewarded in order to have faith. And so I'm grateful for the faith of those that have organized and sacrificed to make this conference take place.

If you did not see and haven't had access to what was presented last evening, it's worth the time and the trouble of looking at. One of the things that happened was a report on the translation of the Book of Mormon into Hebrew—not just "Hebrew," but "Old Testament Hebrew," and not just "Old Testament Hebrew," but the canon as it existed at 600 BC and earlier; and so the later prophets, who wrote after the moment that they departed from Jerusalem at 600 BC may have used slightly different vocabulary, added some words that didn't appear in the earlier canon, or used grammar adjustments that don't appear in the earlier canon. What is being done in the Hebrew translation is literally pre-600 BC Jewish Scripture, just as it would have been composed by the authors, although they used a different vocabulary.

(Brian [McNulty]! How you doin'? We have a Scotsman here! [Brian responds,] "I'm doin' okay." [Denver responds in a Scottish accent,] "Yer doin' okay." Well...)

Salvation comes through Jesus Christ. He was assigned the role of Redeemer before the foundation of the world, and in all likelihood was the only one that could have fulfilled that role. Resurrection is only available through Jesus Christ. Forgiveness of sins is only possible because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. This talk is about how,

from time to time, Christ sends authority and order into the world, for His purposes. How He chooses to establish order does not change His essential, central, and singular role as our Savior.

Seven years ago, after a solar eclipse that traversed the United States, I gave a talk titled “The Holy Order.” Now another solar eclipse will traverse the United States in two days after this talk. This is titled “The Holy Order, Part 2.” Actually, the change in schedule: it’s tomorrow. Tomorrow there’ll be another eclipse.

The previous talk is both a paper that can be downloaded from my website and one of the essays in the book *Eight Essays*. The two talks (or papers) belong together.

Footnote 9 to that earlier talk explains a concern when we receive more Gospel light (I’m reading that footnote):

Although I am going to discuss this topic in only a limited way, each time I convey more of what God is now doing it gives God’s opponents more information they can use to deceive others. I hesitate to equip the pretenders, the well-intentioned but deceived, and the foolish with more ammunition to make a better pretense. Even those who hold good intentions are often tempted to run into errors because they possess only a tiny fraction of the truth. We should all only disclose what God approves...when He directs, and how He directs.

I should add that one of the problems that I have seen (and this isn’t in the paper, this is an aside, which I probably shouldn’t do ‘cuz it’s just gonna make this thing longer), but one of the things that I have noticed is that big religious ideas overwhelm weak minds. And sometimes people, in their enthusiasm, display a lot of foolishness simply because the big religious ideas are beyond their capacity to handle.

I’ve noticed when something new is added, there are those who start discussing it as if it were their own insight—even when they have never said one word about it until after they first learn of it from me. The same caution as set out in footnote 9 in the earlier talk applies equally here.

I am not going to repeat anything from the earlier talk but will assume you understand what was taught there, and this will follow up on that discussion.

The earlier Holy Order talk explained the term “fullness of the priesthood.” It was used by Joseph Smith at different times with different meanings, but we can do better than that. This talk is going to clarify that term.

The fullness of the Priesthood, including the rites of the Holy Order, is not something that has ever been or can be publicly explained in complete detail. The fullness of the Priesthood is different from the fullness of the Gospel. The Book of Mormon contains the “fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

The fullness of the Gospel was intended openly for everyone. In contrast, the “fullness of the Priesthood” (which is the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God) is not something that was restored to the church Joseph Smith organized, nor is it publicly

available, nor is it intended FOR everyone. It may SERVE everyone, but it will never be held by everyone. The fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ produces faith in the Savior and will save you if accepted and obeyed. The Book of Mormon reports that some of what Jesus Christ taught *cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man* (3 Nephi 9:5; see also 3 Nephi 8:4). Joseph Smith could not write all that God revealed to him. Much of those unspeakable things belong to the fullness of the Priesthood but will not be publicly available before the Lord's return.

Adam and Eve were the original priestly patriarch and matriarch to whom God gave the right of *dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth* (Genesis 2:8-9). That appointment by God giving them dominion was (and is) part of the Holy Order. They held it jointly, as companions. Joseph Smith explained,

[The Holy Order] was first given to Adam; he obtained the [first presiding position on the Earth], and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed, as in Genesis 1:26, 27, 28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoken of in the Scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the [Holy Order]; he was called of God to this office, and was the Father of all living in this day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven. The [Holy Order] is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven, whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from Heaven, it is by Adam's authority. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, hereafter referred to as *TPJS*, p. 157; see also *JSP Documents* Vol. 6, pp. 542-543)

This (from Joseph) ties together parenthood, priesthood, dominion, and Holy Order. All of these elements were necessary for Adam and Eve to be at the head of the Holy Order and are necessary for it to exist today. In "Our Divine Parents" (a talk and paper you can also read on the website), the nature of eternal unity between the man and the woman and the dual nature of God were explained.

The Holy Order is not synonymous with having your calling and election made sure. You can have your calling and election made sure without having the Holy Order.

The Holy Order is not synonymous with being redeemed from the fall and returning to God's presence. That also can happen without having the Holy Order.

Nor is the Holy Order synonymous with having the fullness of revelations from before the creation of the world through the end of this cycle of creation. That, also, can be given to a person while they still lack the Holy Order.

An individual does not need to possess the Holy Order to be able to enter into a covenant. Covenants have been offered mankind by God through the Holy Order. Once offered, covenants are still honored even if the Holy Order is no longer present. The condition for a covenant to remain in effect requires only that the covenant never change. If officiators make changes, the covenant is broken and is no longer in effect.

Further, it is not required for you to be initiated into the Holy Order to become a member of the eternal Family of God. All those who will be exalted will be members. Only a tiny fraction of the Family will experience that in mortality.

Finally, any position in the Holy Order may change after this life. Christ reminded the mother of Jacob (or James) and John that positions in the afterlife will be assigned by His Father. The Holy Order must return before the Second Coming to re-establish God's "house of order." But organizing and ordering for the afterlife will not happen until some time after the Lord's return. Restoring and organizing God's Family is necessary because of the disorder caused by the fall of Adam. That disorder has been compounded by additional repeated apostasies from the periodic restorations of the Holy Order.

Despite what the Holy Order is not, it is important to understand. Most of our scriptures are the writings of members of the Holy Order. The Order must return. This talk is to confirm God is vindicating His promises, whether the world takes any notice or not.

The Holy Order function requires both a father and mother and is the reason Joseph Smith wrote,

...there are many teachers but perhaps not many Fathers. There are times coming when God will signify many things which are expedient for the well being of the saints but the times have not yet come but will come as fast as there can be found place and receptions for them. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 6, February 1838-August 1839, pp. 396-397)

That time did not come during Joseph's life, and therefore, the return of the Holy Order did not happen in his day. Because of the failure in Joseph's day, the Family or House of God still needs to be set in order. As is always the case, there will need to be a temple prepared for the Holy Order to function. It was first given to Adam and Eve in sacred space, and therefore, sacred space like the Garden of Eden is required for its function.

Abraham received the records going back to Adam and were passed down through generations to him. Despite having the records and testimony of the first fathers from which he learned about the Holy Order, Abraham did not hold it merely because he learned of it. It inspired him to seek *for the blessings of the [Father] and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same* (Abraham 1:1).

Adam [Abraham] spoke with God *face to face* (Abraham 5:3) when he was not yet a member of the Holy Order. God also revealed to Abraham a vision of the creation of this world and its destiny while still not a member of the Holy Order.

Joseph Smith told us exactly when Abraham received his priestly appointment, the one that is without father or mother, beginning or end of days, but is endless and eternal. He also clarified who bestowed it. Despite all Abraham had received before, the Holy Order was not conferred upon him until he met and was initiated by Melchizedek. Abraham explained the process: *it came down from the Fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning (or before the foundations of the earth) to the present time,*

even the right of the firstborn (or the first man — who is Adam — or first Father) through the Fathers unto me (Abraham 1:1). Melchizedek was a king and a priest and stood as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam (see Glossary: Melchizedek) and from him, Abraham received the required initiation into the Holy Order.

In the talk “Religion of the Fathers,” I explained that the Book of Abraham covered events in Abraham’s life before he entered into Egypt. It was years after he left Egypt before Abraham met with Melchizedek and was initiated into the Holy Order. Abraham honored the Order and received it because he was not aspiring to supplant Melchizedek, the man who presided. Instead, he respected and honored the rights that belong to the Fathers. Had he wanted to supplant Melchizedek, he would not have qualified for the ordinance:

*I sought for the blessings of the Fathers and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same. Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a Father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. It was conferred upon me from the Fathers: **it came down from the Fathers**, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning (or before the foundations of the earth) to the present time, even the right of the firstborn (or the first man — who is Adam — or first Father) **through the Fathers unto me**. I sought for my appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the Fathers concerning the seed. (Abraham 1:1, emphasis added)*

That could never have happened for Abraham if he did not obtain it in the right way, with the right intent, and from the one who could confer it upon him. Periodic fighting over who had the right was always evidence of aspiring, untrustworthy men seeking their own vainglory. Abraham was faithful and un aspiring, but also seeking and willing.

The Lord trusted Abraham because he (Abraham) respected the man chosen by the Lord to stand at the head before him. By respecting Melchizedek, Abraham also respected all of the fathers, from Adam through Melchizedek, chosen by God as His representatives on Earth. Because Abraham was to become part of that Family, the Lord could say to him:

And you shall be a blessing unto your seed after you, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations. And I will bless them through your name; for as many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father. And I will bless them that bless you and curse them that curse you. And in you (that is, in your Priesthood) and in your seed, (that is, [in] your Priesthood) — for I give unto you a promise that this right shall continue in you and in your seed after you (that is to say, the literal seed or...seed of the body) —

shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of...[eternal life]. (Abraham 3:1)

For the purpose of this talk, it is important to understand certain terms. The term “this gospel” does not just include the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ but also the fullness of the Priesthood. Those who become part of the Holy Order necessarily recognize Abraham as a Father to them, and they in turn become his “seed” or descendants. Abraham was adopted as son to Melchizedek, which made Melchizedek father to Abraham. Subsequently, all those who were added to the line holding the fullness of the Priesthood became adopted descendants to Abraham. That is why it is written they *shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (supra).

Melchizedek was “Father” to the righteous at the time Abraham was seeking for the blessings of the Fathers. Because Abraham honored the position occupied by Melchizedek, Heaven took notice. As stated before, Abraham was faithful and unassuming, but also seeking and willing. If he hoped to displace, or compete, or stand independent of Melchizedek, he would not have been qualified, nor even considered by Heaven.

If Lehi had not respected Jeremiah as the Lord’s messenger, the heavens would not have opened for him. If Nephi had not respected his father Lehi as God’s messenger, Nephi would not have had the heavens open for him. An aspiring spirit is toxic, and while aspiring men may gain some measure of spiritual understanding, they forfeit any blessing they might have been gained by accepting and honoring the Holy Order.

Abraham received the promise from the Lord that: *I will bless them that bless you and curse them that curse you* (supra). Abraham qualified for this blessing because Abraham honored the position occupied by Melchizedek. Abraham was not like Nephi’s older brothers, who assumed because they were older that they were entitled to rule and not be ruled. As Nephi described his brothers:

...they did seek to take away my life. Yea, they did murmur against me, saying, Our younger brother thinks to rule over us, and we have had much trial because of him; wherefore, now let us slay him, that we may not be afflicted more because of his words. For behold, we will not have him to be our ruler, for it belongs [to] us, who are the elder brethren, to rule over this people. (2 Nephi 4:1)

This refusal to respect God’s choice doomed them and their descendants to continual apostasy. That apostasy led to open warfare beginning with the first generation. Centuries later, Lamanite fighters were inspired by hatred because they believed *your fathers did wrong their brethren, insomuch that they did rob them of their right to the government when it rightfully belonged [to] them* (Alma 25:4). This hatred was grounded in religious resentment. Father Abraham was nothing like Laman. Instead, he willingly accepted and honored the Holy Order. Consider for a moment how unlike Abraham his great-grandsons were (the children of Jacob). They destroyed their father’s garment and perhaps other artifacts handed down within the Holy Order.

The only qualified man in Abraham's day (who obtained it from Adam through the Fathers), was Melchizedek. Although Abraham had been rescued by an angel, conversed with the Lord, had the heavens opened to him, the Holy Order could only be obtained from Melchizedek, who was the heir and officiator of that Order.

In the Restoration Edition of Scriptures, Abraham entered Egypt in Genesis chapter 7, paragraph 4. He left Egypt in paragraph 6. It is not until chapter 7, paragraph 14 (many years later) when Abraham met with Melchizedek. It was then *he [Melchizedek] blessed him [Abraham] and said, Blessed Abram, you are a man of the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth* (Genesis 7:14).

You should read that footnote when you get this paper. Oh, I'll read it:

Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram (Genesis 7:17). It's interesting to consider whether the description "possessor of Heaven and earth" were about "the Most High God" or about "Blessed Abram" in Melchizedek's salutation. It could easily be either (or both).

It may seem odd that this Order is so rare that it is withheld from righteous men who have stood in God's presence. Nevertheless, there are good reasons, established before the foundation of the world, setting conditions that strictly confine the Order.

The Holy Order inducts couples into the Family of God. You can only have one father and one mother standing at the head at a time. Abraham could not receive it from anyone other than the singular couple who stood at the head. God's House is a house of order, and there is never more than one parental couple at a time at the head. There is no more reason to aspire or envy that couple than there was for you to jealously want to replace your own father or mother. We should hope for it to return. Early Christians prayed for the Lord's quick return: "μαρὰν ἄθᾶ" mar'-an ath'-ah (Lord come quickly). We should also hope for His quick return. However, unlike others who follow the Lord without understanding the prophecies, promises, and covenants, we should also hope and pray for the return of the Holy Order that must be restored before His return.

Unlike Abraham, people of this fallen world have rebelled against God's governance. Despite mankind's rebellion, God has been willing to gather people like a hen gathering her chicks under her wings, but we've rejected those offers. The heavens have not withdrawn, they have been evicted. A false "god of this world" has reigned from the rivers to the ends of the earth. He demands mankind worship him. And unfortunately, mankind has too often accommodated that demand with idolatry. For that to change, at least a small group of people must accept and welcome God's governance. Abraham did not assert independence from, nor compete with, Melchizedek. Had he done otherwise he would not have qualified. He recognized the officiant, respected his position, and paid tithes to Melchizedek.

There's a footnote there: "Today tithes are gathered in fellowships and distributed there to those in need" (footnote 34). So you need to read the footnotes!

This gained favor from God for Abraham. Had Abraham been aspiring to compete with or held any reservations about honoring the officiator Melchizedek, Abraham would never have received the “blessings of the Fathers and the right to be ordained to officiate in that Order.”

Joseph Smith wrote a discourse the day after announcing plans to build the Nauvoo Temple. He explained, in relevant part:

It is the highest and holiest Priesthood and is after the Order of the Son of God, and all other [powers] priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers, and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled, and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing his glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which he has continued to reveal himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which he will make known his purposes to the end of time.

Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the Ancient of Days, or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great grand progenitor, of whom it is said in another place, He is Michael [Denver mistakenly said “Melchizedek”], because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but...was the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ has been revealed from Heaven and will continue to be revealed from henceforth. Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed. (T&C 140:2-3)

It may sound odd that Joseph Smith said Melchizedek “stood as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam” (*JSP Documents* Vol. 13 August-December 1843, p. 74). That is, however, the actual purpose of the Holy Order. Joseph Smith was not unique in teaching a man can act in the place of God for the benefit of God’s people. When Moses was called to restore Israel to God’s presence, Moses was given that same role:

And you shall speak unto him and put words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. And he shall be your spokesman unto the people, and he shall be, even he shall be to you in stead of a mouth, and you [Moses] shall be to him in stead of God. (Exodus 2:7)

Joseph Smith’s comment on this scripture confirms the principle:

These scriptures are a [mix] of very strange doctrines to the Christian world, who are blindly led by the blind. I will refer to another scripture. “Now,” says God, when He visited Moses in the bush, (Moses was a stammering sort of a boy like me) God said, “Thou shalt be a God unto the children of Israel.” God said, “Thou shalt be a God unto Aaron, and he shall be thy spokesman.” I believe those Gods

that God reveals as Gods to be the sons of God, and all can cry, “Abba, Father!” Sons of God who exalt themselves to be Gods, even from before the foundation of the world, and are the only Gods I have a reverence for.” (TPJS, pp. 374-375; see also *JSP Documents*, Vol 15, p. 274)

That’s a strange comment that Joseph Smith made. Well, hopefully by the end of this talk you’ll understand it a bit better.

In his first letter, John mentioned there are those who are God’s “sons” and very like God: *now...we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him...* (1 John 1:13).

Jesus Christ defended teaching He was the Son of God by explaining that there had been other mortal men who substituted for God. He taught that He was serving on God the Father’s behalf and got accused of blasphemy because of it:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law: I [say], you are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, You blaspheme, because I [say] I am the Son of God? (John 6:30)

It is a hard matter to hear, and a harder one to teach. There is nothing about this subject that should be understood in a worldly sense. It involves a heavenly order of things and not something to be divided from God’s purpose to save all mankind and exalt those He can. Not everyone is suited to become part of God’s Family. The reality is that very few are.

Jesus taught from Isaiah and would certainly have been acquainted with the Isaiah passage that states, *I am the Lord, and there is none else. ...there is no God...besides me — a just God and a Savior, [and] there is none besides me. Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else* (Isaiah 15:19). And yet Christ also recognized there are *gods unto whom the word of God came* (supra). Therefore, the idea of men who are called “gods” in scripture ought to be understood as an appointment to represent and a calling to teach, and never as making a man anything more than a fellow servant. In the Book of Revelation, an angel was sent to John and testified of his message that, *These are the true sayings of God*. John fell to the earth to worship the angel, and was rebuked for showing him honor: *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, Do you not see...I am your fellow servant? And of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus? Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy* (Revelation 7:10). Bear in mind and understand that messengers can be acknowledged in scripture as “gods, even the sons of god”— while we are commanded at the same time to only worship the Father in Heaven and His Son.

Jesus Christ, the greatest of all, is the best example of this principle in action. He stood as God and was in fact the Son of God. Yet when Christ was asked about His kingship and kingdom, He explained:

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from here. Pilate therefore said unto him, Are you a king then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world — that I should bear witness [of] the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice. (John 10:7)

This is an example of how the Holy Order should operate. He came to fulfill the role of servant. Jesus Christ set the pattern and demonstrated how God's House is correctly ruled:

But Jesus called [unto] them and said, You know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and [that] they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. ...whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life, a ransom for many. (Matthew 10:3)

The Lord's Holy Order is not designed to impose rule, control, or assert dominion over the unwilling. It is designed to teach correct principles and then let those who are taught govern themselves. The Holy Order empowers and frees. It assumes the individual will decide to give heed to what is taught. In contrast, ambitious men crave control over others. They enslave and subjugate. They oppose freedom and self-rule. The Holy Order relies on man's agency. The adversary wants to limit and destroy man's agency.

Christ explained His role, which is similar to the role entrusted to the Holy Order:

My doctrine does not come from me, but from God who sent me. Anyone who walks in God's path will understand his doctrine, because that path increases light and knowledge. I testify of that path. Follow it and you will know whether I am sent by God or [whether] I am not sent by God. Teachers who preach from their own understanding only gratify their pride, but a teacher of truth teaches only what God tells him, and that teacher provides a light worth heeding. (TSJ 6:5)

If God gave Christ the words to teach, then those who believed and followed those teachings were following Christ's Father. This is the same as when the angel asked Nephi if he believed the words of his father. Nephi said emphatically that he did. Upon hearing this, the angel proclaimed, *Blessed art thou, Nephi, because thou believest in the Son of the Most High God (1 Nephi 3:6)*. Believing in the words of truth from a messenger is to believe in the Son of the Most High God! That is as true today as when the angel said this to Nephi.

Enoch is another example of a teacher from the Holy Order. He was sent by God to teach a message. When called by God, Enoch responded, *Why is it that I have found favor in your sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me, for I am slow of speech; why am I your servant? (Genesis 4:2)*. He was no braggart. The task sobered

him; he believed himself unequal to the task. But he taught, some people repented, and without any compulsion, those willing to be taught lived together in peace.

When he was commissioned by God to teach Israel, Moses reacted similarly to Enoch: *And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before now nor since you have spoken unto your servant, but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue* (Exodus 2:7). Moses also described the difference between himself (all mankind) and God: *Now for this once I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed* (Genesis 1:2).

Those who have been part of the Holy Order have been trustworthy to God because they know they are weak. When the Lord says He will make weak things become strong, I do not believe that means a man will become strong but instead means God will provide the strength to those who rely on Him.

If every angel from Adam...

[Denver coughs] Excuse me. They gave me water, but I think this has been opened. It's sorta like kissing the predecessor. That reminds me of a story. (Reed, you're just gonna have to edit this thing.)

So, one year... I need to segregate this.

One year we went to the bike/the motorcycle rally in Sturgis, and that year we went to some rural road that's north and south but not an interstate, 'cuz you always take the back roads. And we were stopped at a gas station, and the fellow I was with had brought his daughter. And his daughter and I were sitting on a bench outside the gas station where we'd stopped to get a drink and to refuel and sally forth to our decadence in Sturgis. It's like "Disneyland in Hell," according to one of my friend's wives. So we're at the gas station, and this rather friendly fellow from Colorado came up to talk to her and to me, and he was just a welder who welded by trade. He had... I think he had a Shovelhead; it was an older bike. And we had this pleasant exchange, but boy! He was non-hygienic! After he walked away, I said, "I think he had green teeth!" She said, "Yeahhh!"

Well, this bottle of water that she and I had been sharing, and after we'd shared it for awhile, the guy—Green Teeth—came back to get his water bottle he'd left on the bench that had been between the two of us, and I said to her, "Dude! That was like kissing Green Teeth...which is bad for you, but it's so much worse for me!"

(K, you've gotta get that out of there!)

If every angel from Adam down to the present time who ministered to Joseph Smith were to minister to you, and if Joseph and Hyrum were added to those who ministered to you, and if you knew more about the heavens than any man now living, you would still be nothing. We do not and cannot comprehend enough to understand God's works. The Lord explained to Moses, *For my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease. Wherefore, no man can behold all my works except he behold all my*

glory, and no man can behold all my glory and afterward remain in the flesh on the earth (Genesis 1:1). Even if a man knows more about Heaven than anyone alive at the time, he still remains incapable of knowing all that God has in store for mankind.

We are feeble, unprofitable servants. None of us have anything to brag about. Any boast about being great and having some wonderful assignment from God is arrogant and vainglorious. DO something for God, don't claim you are going to do so. Then, if you accomplish something, *Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips* (Proverbs 4:49).

The arrogance of men is astonishing. Nephi understood this vanity and described it:

Oh the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves. Wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not; and they shall perish. (2 Nephi 6:9)

The Holy Order is not for the benefit of the holder. No one who views himself or herself as worthy has ever been trusted with it. They (the man and the woman) must be meek like Moses, *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth* (Numbers 7:22). It is troubling, daunting, and perilous. There is no great reward in this life. Here, those who are members of the Holy Order will be doubted, criticized, envied, accused, feared, and cast out from those who they are asked to teach. Only a very few will be willing to give them heed, and many who do listen will still be poor disciples, wayward in their conduct, and misunderstanding what is taught. People rejected the Lord, and more have (and will) reject His messengers.

God's message given through a member of the Holy Order is not to be trifled with, either by the holder or by people who are taught. Everything is always voluntary, and teaching must still persuade. Pure knowledge and love unfeigned are the approved tools. Sometimes reproof with sharpness is necessary as well. Gratifying pride or vain ambition are forbidden.

The approved tools are necessarily what the world regards as "weak." It is intentionally designed by the Lord to be weak. It is the opposite of the "strong man" model. But if followed, the Holy Order can teach people to become strong in faith, hope, and charity. As it is written, *If they humble themselves before me and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. Behold, I will shew unto the gentiles their weakness. And I will shew unto them that faith, hope, and charity bringeth unto me, the fountain of all righteousness* (Ether 5:5).

Just like Jesus Christ, we believe in being subject to and obeying the law. We are not our own "sovereign" but are subject to obey rules and laws of the land. We render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. There is something called the "sovereign citizen movement," which has no place in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Sovereign citizens claim the right to reject laws, claiming they have no application to them.

The “sovereign citizen movement” refers to a group of people who see themselves as answerable only to the laws as they interpret them, not as they are written. Members of the sovereign citizen movement include everyone from litigants and tax protesters, to those who promote financial schemes. They do not believe they are subject to the same governmental statutes that govern the rest of the country. (<https://legaldictionary.net/sovereign-citizen/>)

The worst examples of this are Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols whose Oklahoma bombing killed 168 people, 19 of whom were children. They injured another 680 people. The most tranquil examples are tax protestors who refuse to pay federal, state, and local taxes. We should reject all of the “sovereign citizen” ideas because they are contrary to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. They are contrary to the restored faith.

While Christ declared His *kingdom is not of this world* (John 10:7), there are those who think they can found their own heavenly kingdom. The advocates display the worst form of hypocrisy because they cannot detect their own inconsistencies. I have a pamphlet that advocates a form of withdrawing from “Babylon” by denouncing U.S. Citizenship and claiming to be a citizen of the “Kingdom of Heaven.” The pamphlet advocating this is bound in a plastic spiral binding. This ignores the fact that the plastic is likely produced by hydrocarbons requiring an entire fossil fuel industry to provide the pamphlet’s binding.

It is printed with ink. The ink-making process requires raw materials of pigments, binders, solvents, and additives to produce, all of which require multiple industries to provide the ink for the “Kingdom of Heaven” pamphlet.

It is printed on paper that uses cellulose pulp from a lumber operation, transported by logging trucks to mills, where sodium hydroxide and sodium sulfide are used to break down the lignin of the wood for paper manufacture.

The transportation trucks move along roads paid for by federal and state tax collection. They are safe because of federal, state, and local law enforcement that keep the roads safe for commerce to take place.

All of the raw ingredients used to make the pamphlet were produced and supplied by Babylon. The author is oblivious to his obvious dependence upon what he calls “Babylon.”

While pretending to be separated from “Babylon,” their hypocrisy knows no limits. They are parasitic and require the ongoing support of the same society, government, and taxpayers they judge as morally inferior.

Part of the difficulty with those who believe this way is that they seem to be possessed with a false spirit that will not suffer common sense to be spoken in their presence. They advocate their withdrawal from society relentlessly and do not see and will not hear how things really are. It is as if the spirit possessing them will not tolerate the truth to be spoken.

Those who believe they can be more pure by living “off-grid” are fooling themselves. Some, for example, use solar panels instead of connecting to the electrical grid. Solar panels are built using rare earth minerals, mined using heavy equipment, burning fossil fuels, transported using public highways, and utterly dependent on the proper functioning of a complex society that clothes, powers, protects, and serves them. We should be grateful to society, humble about our own dependence, and accepting of our plight. We may not like “Babylon” (as the fool calls the functioning society that succors them), but as long as it exists, we are not and cannot be independent of it.

Unfortunately, I know people who have bought into these false ideas. Their lives have been burdened, and many of the responsibilities that they should take care of for themselves have been imposed on others. Some have lost family homes, one has been jailed, vehicles without licenses have been impounded, and countless difficulties have resulted from their lawlessness. They foolishly believe they are living a “more pure” and “godly” way of life, while the sad reality is that they are forsaking basic responsibilities they should discharge for themselves.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord gave us this instruction to follow:

Truly, truly I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? [No, they put it] on a candlestick, and it gives light to all that are in the house. Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven. (Matthew 3:16; see also 3 Nephi 5:21)

How do you suppose rebellion and lawlessness to be “good works” that “glorify your Father who is in Heaven?” They will instead resent your imposition upon society. We may fool ourselves into believing we are independent of society, but we are not. All of us who obey, honor, and sustain the law are symbiotic with the government and society at large. Those who claim sovereign citizenship are parasitic. None of us are independent. We should acknowledge our plight and stop fooling ourselves.

There would have been no governments of man if the original Holy Order had been followed from the beginning. Because of rebellion against God’s plan, societies divided into governments that supplanted God’s order with kings, magistrates, governors, dictators, and ministers. For the present, governments are necessary for peaceful and ordered societies to function, and therefore deserve our obedience to their laws. But loyalty to God must remain. God’s “kingdom” is indeed not of this world. Man’s kingdoms will be supplanted by a returning Lord. Before then, we should respect and submit to the order of society and contribute to the peace and safety of our communities.

Society will only welcome us if we benefit others. Letting our light shine includes making our towns and neighborhoods better places by our service to others. People should want us. Because we are commanded to become the “salt of the earth” or the “leaven” that benefits the entire meal, we cannot abandon principles that make us valuable to society.

The First Amendment gives religious societies exemption from taxation. Not individual taxpayers, but the society itself is exempt from taxation. The Lord's House will be built when a command is given and will be exempt from property taxes. However, despite this Constitutional protection, a voluntary payment to support the surrounding community as an act of appreciation to neighbors is consistent with being "leaven" or "salt" or a "shining light." I would hope everyone would want to do this.

While we should not be in rebellion against our government, sadly the time will come when:

With famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed ha[th] made a full end of all nations. (T&C 85:3)

That's not something to look forward to. It will be a time of great mourning and sorrow. Whatever we can do to delay that day and preserve our nation we should do.

Prophecies in the Book of Mormon and modern revelation will be vindicated. Societies will degenerate into violence. The Book of Mormon warns us of the coming destruction of all the gentile nations upon the Americas and all other lands.

But behold, in the last days, or...the days of the gentiles, yea, behold, all the nations of the gentiles, and also the Jews, both those who shall come upon this land and those who shall be upon other lands, yea, even upon all the lands of the earth, behold, they will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations. And when that day shall come, they shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and with... great noise, and with storm and tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire. And all the nations that fight against Zion and that distress her shall be as a dream of a night vision. (2 Nephi 11:15)

Now, I said I would take a break every hour for about ten minutes, and it's been an hour. And while that's not the best places or the happiest note to... We'll find out just how intimidated you are by how many people now visit the restroom! So, let's take ten minutes.

Although there are gentile nations that seem sturdy, enduring, and capable, to God they are no more substantial than a dream. They will pass away. The Lord's people do not need to fight against these governments, nor to cheer on their demise. Fleeing from the coming societal failure is first internal. Our fears, jealousies, shame, guilt separate us from God and each other. We owe honesty and candor to one another. We're living a lie when we fail to honestly speak to each other. I've observed how we deceitfully fail to speak directly to one another but instead tell our complaints to uninvolved others. That's not only wrong, it turns an opportunity to improve one another with honest feedback into gossiping behind our backs.

Gossiping about someone's misbehavior only makes society worse. On the other hand, honestly confronting each other and truthfully sharing our concerns can heal society. We either grow together peacefully, honestly, and candidly, or we will never have peace between each other. We are told to prepare to live in peace and with our fellow man. Fleeing Babylon is first emotional and internal and will become physical and external as the world's institutions fail.

There is nothing about becoming radical, aloof, or isolated that shows we have fled Babylon. Although we should have our eyes open to the wickedness all around us, we can still have compassion on the victims of terrible ideas, false beliefs, and destructive and corrupting social and governmental trends. The world is flooded with lies. Lies were used by Satan to wrap the world in chains at the time of Noah. The widespread lies today are much like the days of Noah. If you want to escape the destruction of Babylon, study and hold tight to truth.

Mormon recorded a specific plea God commanded him to write to us:

Turn, all ye gentiles, from your wicked ways, and repent of your evil doings — of your lyings and deceivings, ...of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and...your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations — and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins and be filled with the holy ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 14:1)

Our world is filled with lying, deceit, whoredoms, murder, priestcrafts, envy, and strife. While the exact number is not known, it's estimated that approximately 60 million American children have been murdered in the womb. When the U.S. Supreme Court decided in 1973 that abortion was a constitutional right, the nation had no say about it. When that decision was reversed in 2022, the issue was returned to each state to decide. As soon as states were given the choice, the people became accountable for the continued slaughter of innocent children. The United States has engaged in a half-century of genocidal slaughter of unborn children. Continuing it when given a choice to end it by the voice of the people makes Americans complicit in mass-murder. Consider this warning from the Book of Mormon: *And if the time cometh that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you. Yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction, even as he has hitherto visited this land (Mosiah 13:7).* That warning is as applicable to us now as it was to the earlier people who inherited this land. France recently amended their constitution to call abortion a "right." It is now legal in at least 75 countries (where 40% of the world's women reside).

Political parties have learned that fear motivates people to follow politicians who promise safety and protection. Class envy, resentment of others, false allegations of racism, and sexual confusion are political tools. If that course continues uninterrupted, the outcome will be violence. Already, the rhetoric of violence is justified as "restorative justice" and "ending oppression."

Eventually the gentile nations will become unsustainable as they descend into violence and confusion. The only preparation for that inevitability is to reject the growing tidal wave of lies. We cannot live in peace with each other if we believe lies about one another.

And it shall come to pass among the wicked that every man that will not take [up] his sword against his neighbor must needs flee [to] Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy. (T&C 31:15)

There will be a place of safety. But “peace” is not possible if your mind has been demented by confusion and deceit. The truth alone can make you free. Jesus Christ was confronted by false religious teachers and explained why they missed the mark. He explained:

Only if you continue to follow my teachings will you be my students indeed, because you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. The leaders interrupted to claim, We’re Abraham’s descendants, and have never been slaves to any man. Why do you say we will become free? Jesus answered them, ...I say unto you, Whoever misses the mark is the slave of errors. And such a slave will not be allowed to be within Abraham’s house in the resurrection, but the Son will remain part of God’s Family forever.

If the Son sets you free from sin, you are free indeed. ...If you were really Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. ...I am a man that has only told you the truth that I have heard from the Most High God; Abraham would never do such a thing. You follow the example of your real father. ...If God were your Father, you would love me, for I am sent by and represent God. I am not speaking my own words or pursuing my own agenda, but the Father’s words and agenda. Why do you fail to comprehend my words? Your refusal to hearken and submit to my teachings makes you deaf indeed. Your father is the accuser, and you share the envy and rebellion of your father. He was a rebellious destroyer from the beginning, and fought against the truth, ...he [preferred] lies. [Because] he spreads a lie, he advances his agenda. He is the source of deceit in this fallen world. And because I am the Source of truth, you are unable to believe me. Which of you can truthfully show that I have missed the mark? And if I teach the truth, why do you refuse to believe me? Everyone who follows the Most High God hearkens to God’s words. Because you do not follow the Most High God, you cannot hear him. (TSJ 6:18-19)

The test for mankind is always the same. It’s no different now than when Adam, Enoch, Noah, or Abraham were here. It is no different now than when Christ was here. When the Lord commissions a member of the Holy Order to declare His message, some will

hear and be numbered as His sheep. The rest will reject the warning and forfeit accordingly. It's always been necessary for mankind to face and choose the truth while being confronted with widespread and relentless lies.

If you can find a messenger with a godly message, then give heed. The Holy Order will return as part of the end time being like the days of Noah. I doubt you will hear anyone with real authority from the Lord speak about it as if it were a credential. When it comes to something that is most sacred, fools will damn themselves by falsely claiming that which they do not have:

Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips, for behold, verily I say that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord and use it in vain, having not authority. Wherefore, let the church repent of their sins and I the Lord will own them, otherwise they shall be cut off.

Remember that that which comes from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care and by constraint of the spirit, and in this there is no condemnation. (T&C 50:14-15)

Those who hold it are unlikely to boast of it. Those who boast of it are not likely to be trusted by God. True holders let the false claimants go in peace. Abraham did not challenge the false, feigning claim of Pharaoh.

Truth alone should be proof of the position. God will do work through whom He chooses and will provide whatever knowledge and authority is necessary to complete the work. Although His servant may be misunderstood, the Lord will see that he is like Moses and can be trusted with His work because he will pursue the Lord's will and not his own. He will hardly mention authority or keys. There will be no need or desire for a hierarchy to accomplish the work. Much like Enoch and Melchizedek, they will teach.

In a letter from Liberty Jail, Joseph explained how the highest order of Priesthood, or any portion of it, should be used:

[Men's] hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and ... Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it[s] true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. Behold, ere he is aware, he is left [to] himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it[s] the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will

immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul; without hypocrisy and without guile; ...your bowels also [should be] full of charity toward all men, and to the household of faith; and virtue garnish your thoughts unceasingly. Then shall your confidence wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrines of the Priesthood shall distill upon your soul as the dews from heaven. The holy ghost shall be your constant companion, and your scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, and your dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, ...without compulsory means it shall flow unto you for ever and ever. (T&C 139:5-6)

God the Father, who upholds the worlds by His power, uses that power to bless and benefit all of us. Both the good and the evil benefit from the power of God the Father. Christ explained that we should treat one another kindly *that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* (Matthew 3:26)

Generations have wanted to hear the words that are being taught today and have not heard them. To hear them is to become accountable for receiving and then acting on what is taught.

King Benjamin put authority and “kingship” into perspective:

I have not commanded you to come up hither that [you] should fear me, or that [you] should think...I of myself am more than a mortal man. But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind. Yet as I have been chosen by this people, and was consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people, and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power to serve thee with all the might, mind, and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me...

He did not presume that his position made him anything more than another mortal man, subject to infirmities. But he could not deny that the Lord had made him a ruler over the people. Continuing:

...I say unto you that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have not sought gold, nor silver, nor any manner of riches of you, neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves [of one] another, or...ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery, or even I have not suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness, and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord in all things which he hath commanded you...

He was not motivated by wealth, but by service. He was a “ruler” and a teacher. And he taught his people to obey the commandments. Continuing:

...And even I myself have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and ...there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne. ...I have not done these things that I might boast, neither do I tell [you] these things that thereby I might accuse you; but I tell you these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear conscience before God this day. Behold, I say unto you that because I[’ve] said...that I ha[ve] spent my days in your service, I do[n’t] desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God. ...behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom, ...ye may learn that when [you] are in the service of your fellow beings, [you’re] only in the service of your God... (Mosiah 1:7-8)

This head of the Holy Order performs his obligation to God and his fellow believer by serving. He is not served. He labors with his own hands to support himself and his family. He does not receive compensation for serving God. Alma abandoned secular authority to serve in the Holy Order. *Alma delivered up the judgment seat to Nephihah, and confined himself wholly to the High Priesthood of the Holy Order of God, to the testimony of the word, according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy (Alma 2:5).* Teaching and persuading are best accomplished without exerting authority. Continuing:

...Behold, [you] have called me your king. And if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then had not ye ought to labor to serve one another? And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service and yet has been in the service of God, doth merit any thanks from you, oh how had you ought to thank your Heavenly King! (Mosiah 1:8)

God chooses people to serve, and their role is to provide service. God approves those who desire to help others, bless lives, and lose their own ambition. Only a mere servant can be trusted with the Holy Order. This is why the Holy Order can act in the stead of God, and those who benefit from it are **not** trusting the arm of flesh. Quite the contrary, the words of a servant in the Holy Order are the words of the Lord Himself:

What I, the Lord, have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself. And though the heaven[s] and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by my own voice or by the voice of my servants it is the same. (T&C 54:7)

This principle of equivalency does not apply to pretenders. They certainly apply to the man and the woman of the Holy Order. They did apply to Joseph Smith in 1831. They would apply to Hyrum Smith in 1841 when he was given the assignment as Joseph’s older brother. When the Lord appoints such a servant to bless His people, then trust in that servant is not trust in the arm of flesh but trust in the arm of the Lord. It was not **idolatry** for Abraham to go to Melchizedek for authority and blessing, to pay him tithing, and to recognize and respect him as God’s king and priest. The name “Melchizedek” is a compound word that means “king” and “priest.”

That name-title was given to Shem, the son of Noah. Shem obtained it by descent from Adam through his father, Noah. As revelation explained:

Abraham received the Priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah, ...from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of their fathers, and from Enoch to Abel who was slain by the conspiracy of his brother, who received the Priesthood by the commandment of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man, which Priesthood continues in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years. (T&C 82:10)

The Holy Order was and is intended to establish a “house of order.” In 1836, the saints were invited to reestablish the Lord’s house of order. They hoped to accomplish that by their own initiative: The Lord wanted His House, *Even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a House of God* (T&C 123:3). They were offered the Holy Order or fullness of the Priesthood, but it was *lost unto [them]* (T&C 141:10) and taken away from that generation. This was not unexpected. The Lord knew they would fail and had previously promised there would come a time when His House would be *set in order* (T&C 83:4). This will happen when the Lord reestablishes the Holy Order. The Lord’s “House” is not merely a physical building but includes His Family/House as well.

Egypt’s first Pharaoh tried to perpetuate the Holy Order by imitating what had been in the first generation:

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. (Abraham 2:3)

The name “Pharaoh” in Egyptian means “great house.” Pharaoh wanted to recreate the “House” meaning the “Family” of God. That is why he was trying “earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign.” He wanted to be the head of God’s Family on Earth. However, men cannot establish the Holy Order. It can only be established by God or, as Joseph Smith explained, through Adam (the original father and holder of the right) under the direction of Jesus Christ.

Those who falsely claim to be apostles of the Lord are not to be trusted, and following them **is** putting trust in the arm of flesh. When Zion returns, it will be clear who the Lord’s servants are.

The Apostle Paul explained that you cannot have faith unless God sends a messenger to preach the truth:

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? — as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 1:49)

Those who deliver a living message from the Living Lord are indispensable ministers whose work is needed so that the “residue of men” can have faith in God, but only God can save us. As it is written:

...neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, shewing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels...that they may bear testimony of him; [that] by so doing, God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the holy ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men. And Christ hath said, If ye will have faith in me, ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. And he hath said, Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved. (Moroni 7:6)

The Holy Order requires both a man and a woman in similitude of Adam and Eve. The couple holds dominion as a father and mother over the Family of God on Earth. That is different than acting as a priest and priestess. God’s House is a house of order. To set it right is something far more important than administering a church or performing priestly rites.

We know that Adam is the one with authority over the Holy Order. *Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all...times [that] have been and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, ...from Christ to the end of...the dispensations that are to be revealed (T&C 140:3).* However, the identity of “Adam” is not just the first man but includes his helpmeet. It is the first couple who are named “Adam,” and Eve stands as partner in this order. *In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day [that] they were created and became living souls in the land... (Genesis 3:14).*

The role of the woman is greater than most have imagined. We have enough in modern revelation to know of the mother’s importance and power. Consider these words from the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant:

*I say [un]to you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for **he could not be there if not for Sarah’s covenant with him**; Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and*

Isaac likewise could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him; and Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him; and all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. (T&C 157:42, emphasis added)

The covenant-making to secure a throne requires the direct participation of the woman. The Holy Order involves both the husband and wife. Refer back to "Our Divine Parents" regarding the Heavenly Mother and the other mothers involved in the Holy Order. The Heavenly Mother declared, *By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth* (Proverbs 1:36). That talk went on to explain that it was Eve who identified the successor to Adam. That was her right, just as it is the Heavenly Mother's right over Her offspring. It was Rebecca's right to choose Jacob over Esau. We should therefore expect the woman/mother/wife/priestess to be involved directly with the covenant making, who positions her husband in the Holy Order. And we should anticipate that the senior-most mother would also likewise have a say in who succeeds her husband as heir-successor in the Holy Order.

It was the Holy Order that existed as the singular government organization for mankind at the first. There was no "church" or other institution. There was only a family, and it had at the head a father and mother set there by God. They were given dominion over all others. They were to be "husbandmen" to raise up righteous posterity who would walk in the pathway leading back to God.

With the exception of Abraham, all subsequent dispensations were organized different from the first. But the end will return to the beginning, and what was once will be again, for the prophecy must be fulfilled: *Now this same Priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also (now this prophecy Adam spoke as he was moved upon by the holy ghost)* (Genesis 3:14).

This Order has been offered in earlier dispensations but can be and has been repeatedly rejected. For example, the Holy Order was refused by the Israelites and, therefore, taken from them:

*And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew two other [stones of tablet], like unto the first, and I will write upon them also the words of the law, according as they were written [on] the first on the tablets which you broke. But it shall not be according to the first, for I will take away the Priesthood out of their midst. Therefore, **my Holy Order and the ordinances thereof shall not go before them**, for my presence shall not go up in their midst lest I destroy them. But I will give unto them the law as at...first; but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment, for I have sworn in my wrath that they shall not enter into my presence, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage. Therefore, do as I have commanded you, and be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with you, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount... (Exodus 18:5, emphasis added)*

Modern revelation explains this was a terribly significant loss for ancient Israel.

And this greater Priesthood administers the gospel and holds the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God...

It is their responsibility to “know”—but not necessarily to teach. Some things are necessary for the greater priesthood holder to understand but to be kept in sacred silence.

Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest, and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the Priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto man in the flesh, for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live...

Part of the instruction of the knowledge of God’s mysteries is given through “ordinances.” These are also kept from public display.

Now, this, Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God, but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence. Therefore, the Lord, in his wrath (for his anger was kindled against them) swore that they should not enter into his rest — which rest is the fullness of his glory — while in the wilderness.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also. And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holds the key of...ministering of angels, and the preparatory gospel, which gospel is the gospel of repentance, and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron, among the children of Israel, until John, whom [the Lord] raised up, being filled with the holy ghost from his mother’s womb. (T&C 82:12-14)

Like Israel at the time of Moses, the Latter-day Saints at the time of Joseph and Hyrum also rejected the Holy Order. In January 1841, the LDS were commanded to *build a house unto my name for the Most High [God] to dwell... For there is not place found on...earth that he may come and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he has taken away, even the fullness of the Priesthood (T&C 141:10)*. Although Joseph Smith restored the fullness of the Gospel, he was unable to deliver the fullness of the Priesthood or Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. The required temple was never completed, and the time and opportunity available to them passed. That rejection was foreshadowed in an 1831 revelation foretelling a future moment when the Lord will speak from Heaven declaring:

Hearken, O you nations of the earth, and hear the words of that God who made you: O you nations of the earth, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not? How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by my own voice, and by the voice of [thundering], ...by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and ...the voice of earthquakes and great hailstorms, ...by the voice of famines and [pestilence] of every kind, and by the great sound

of a trump, and by the voice of judgments, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but you would not? (T&C 29:8)

The question remains open as to whether we will allow the Holy Order to function among us. The Lord will permit it. He's willing to identify those He will permit to enter into His House (meaning His Family). The question is, who will welcome it? The conditions today are the same as at the time of Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek, and Abraham. Few there will be that will find it.

Predictably, as soon as some learn of the content of this talk, they will claim to be worthy, perhaps even in possession of the Holy Order. All such claimants are liars and deceivers. Whenever there is a couple appointed to the Holy Order, there are always competing voices, pretenders, opponents, and deluded others acting in direct opposition.

The Book of Mormon explains for us the direct connection between repentance and obedience in obtaining this Order. This was and is required not only for Melchizedek but also for the people who will welcome the return of the Order:

Now as I said concerning the Holy Order, or this High Priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God. And it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish. Therefore, they were called after this Holy Order and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb. Now they, after being sanctified by the holy ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence. And there were many, an exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God. And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest. Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same Order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the High Priesthood for ever. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes — yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his Order, or...being his Order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.

Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem, and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations — yea, they had all gone astray; [and] they were full of all manner of wickedness. But Melchizedek, having exercised... faith and received the office of the High Priesthood according to the Holy Order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent. And Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore, he was called

the Prince of Peace, for he was the King of Salem; and he did reign under his father. Now there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater. Therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention. Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; [and] if ye will wrest them, it shall be to your own destruction. (Alma 10:1-2)

When he was the servant, Melchizedek preached repentance. He didn't claim self-importance, establish an organization, or claim an office. He preached repentance.

In a sermon on August 27, 1843, Joseph Smith explained, "The Holy Order is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from Heaven" (*JSP, Documents Vol. 7, p.435; TPJS, p.166-167; WJS, p.38*). Because it is the mechanism God uses to reveal from Heaven what is necessary for the salvation of mankind, His messenger will preach repentance.

This world was organized to provide an opportunity for every soul sent here to be *added upon* (Abraham 6:2). But it was never expected that souls would develop equally. Because of apostasy, an overwhelming number of mankind have lived without any opportunity to receive and accept the Gospel. It will nevertheless be "tolerable" for them in the resurrection. But when the Gospel is taught to and rejected by people, the resurrection will not be "tolerable" for them. People who live and die without learning of God's law are also redeemed and unaccountable for what was never shown to them.

From among the few who have the Gospel preached to them, the "fullness of the Priesthood" has been available to teach very few indeed. How often God would have gathered people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings? But mankind has continually returned to a state of apostasy, rejecting the gift that was (and now is) continually offered by a gracious God:

You who are quickened by a portion of the Celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fullness. And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fullness. And also, they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fullness. And they who remain, shall also be quickened. Nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they [were] willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received. For what does it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive[s] not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. (T&C 86:4)

If there is a need to fix blame for the limited opportunities mankind has had for being gathered by God and protected by Him, then the blame is upon our ancestors who rejected the Gospel. The blame is not on a willing God. Our unwillingness to let Him govern us through the Holy Order has resulted in this world descending into chaos and sin. The path back is through repenting and returning to God's path.

The Holy Order was established before the world and was conferred on Adam. It could have been a continuous guide to all of Adam's descendants, but men loved sin and surrendered to carnality because of their weakness. Even as Adam was preaching the truth, *Satan came among them, saying, I am also a Son of God. And he commanded them, saying, Believe [it] not. And they believed not, and loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish* (Genesis 3:5).

Although mankind rejected Adam's preaching, God never withdrew Adam's commission. He continues to hold that position and will do so until the end of this cycle of creation or the end of the world. All of the later forms of priesthood are inferior to the original.

The Holy Order requires a restoring of great knowledge that's hidden from the world. The fathers knew it would be restored in the last days and anxiously anticipated its return.

The Holy Order was conferred during the creation, when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden and were given dominion over the creation. Then, after the fall, Adam's initiation into the Order continued in this documented event:

And it came to pass [that] when the Lord had spoken with Adam our father that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was [carried] away by the spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized, and the spirit of God descended upon him. And thus he was born of the spirit and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard [the] voice out of Heaven saying, You are baptized with fire and with the holy ghost. This is the record of the Father and the Son, [and] from henceforth and for ever. And you are after the Order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from...eternity to all eternity. Behold, you are one in me, a son of God. And thus [all may] become my sons. Amen. (Genesis 4:10)

Adam would teach his descendants these principles as part of the initiations. Our Scriptures do not provide the details. However, we learn more about the Holy Order from the account involving Melchizedek in The Old Covenants, Genesis 7:17-23:

And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed [him]...

Melchizedek ordained Abraham. However, details are missing. But the record tells us why Melchizedek was chosen to hold the Holy Order:

Now Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness. And when a child, he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained a high priest after the Order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, it being after the Order of the Son of God, which Order came not by man, nor the will of men, neither by father nor mother, neither...beginning of days nor end of years, but of God. And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed [in] his name.

For God, having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself that everyone being ordained after this Order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, ...divide the seas, ...dry up waters, to turn them out of their course, to put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God, to do all things according to his will, according to his command subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world. And men having this faith, coming up unto this Order...were translated and taken up into Heaven.

...now Melchizedek was a priest of this Order, therefore he obtained peace in Salem and was called the Prince of Peace. And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained Heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world, and has said and sworn with an oath that the heavens and the earth should [not] come together, and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire. And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the King of [Peace] by his people...

...he lifted up his voice and he blessed Abram, being the high priest and...keeper of the storehouse of God, him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. [Therefore], Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him, more than that which he [needed]. And it came to pass that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession, according to the covenant which he had made...according to the blessing with which Melchizedek had blessed him.

And it came to pass that after these things, the word of the Lord came [to] Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram. I will be your shield. I will be your [exceeding] great reward. And according to the [blessing] of my servant, [the "blessing of my servant" is referring to Melchizedek], I will give unto you. And Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless and Eliezer of Damascus was made the steward of my house? ...Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed and [no] one born in my house is my heir. ...behold, the word of the Lord came unto him again, saying, This shall not be your heir, but he...shall come forth out of your own body [and] shall be your heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and...said, Look now toward heaven...tally the stars, if you[re] able to number them. ...he said unto him, So shall your seed be. ... Abram said [to the] Lord...how will you give me this land for an everlasting inheritance? And the Lord said, Though you were dead, yet am I not able to give it to you? And if you shall die, yet you shall possess it. For the day comes that the Son of Man shall live. But how can he live if he be not dead? He must first be quickened.

...it came to pass that Abram looked forth...saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad. And his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 7:18-23)

The Book of Mormon has 25 different places expounding on the Holy Order. The Book of Mormon has more information than any other book of Scripture about that subject. It is first mentioned in 2 Nephi chapter 5 in The New Covenants version.

The words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, which he spake unto the people of Nephi: Behold, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, having been called of God and ordained after the manner of his Holy Order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi, unto whom ye look as a king or a protector and on whom ye depend for safety, behold, ye know that I have spoken unto you exceeding many things. (2 Nephi 5:1)

For Jacob to have been “called of God and ordained,” it required someone to ordain him; he identifies Nephi as the source.

When and how did Nephi obtain the Holy Order of God? Before his family migrated across the Arabian peninsula, God spoke to him,

...the Lord spake unto me, saying, Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently with lowliness of heart. And inasmuch as ye... keep my commandments, ye shall prosper and...be led to a land of promise, yea, even a land which I have prepared for you, a land which is choice above all other lands. ...And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren. (1 Nephi 1:9)

Those words, “a ruler and a teacher” identify a role that belongs to the Holy Order. But this is a conditional promise of a future ordination. After that promise, by faith Nephi obtained the plates of Laban, studied the records of the fathers and the prophets, broke the bands from his hands and feet, beheld a vision of God’s condescension, witnessed things not lawful for him to teach, held the power of God in his hands, built a ship and led others across the oceans to a promised land, recorded God’s dealings in Scripture for his people, and summarized God’s blessings to him in these words:

I know in whom I have trusted. My God hath been my support, he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep. He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh. He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake before me. Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, ...he hath given me knowledge by visions in the night time. And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high, and angels came down and ministered unto me. And upon the wings of his spirit hath my body been carried away up on [an] exceeding[ly] high [mountain]. And mine eyes have beheld great things — yea, even too great for man — therefore I was bidden that I should not write them.

...I have seen so great things, [and] the Lord, in his condescension unto the children of men, hath visited me in so much mercy... (2 Nephi 3:7-8)

These accomplishments are evidence of Nephi's ordination, however, he omits mention of the actual event for himself. He does record his brother, Jacob's, ordination to the Holy Order by him. This is also typical of someone having authority. The evidence is not in proclaiming status, but in providing service.

The Holy Order continued for generations with the descendants of Nephi. Alma the Younger claimed to have been called after the Holy Order, and what he taught about it is the best proof he was a member of the Order. Here is what he wrote about his calling:

And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to the revelation of the truth [and] the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him — according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who should come to redeem his people from their sins — and the Holy Order by which he was called. And thus it is written. Amen. (Alma 4:2)

Alma the Younger gives the best scriptural exposition and the foremost description for why an individual is ordained to the Holy Order in this life:

And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children. And I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests after his Holy Order, which was after the Order of his Son...

This clarifies that Alma is speaking of the original Holy Order that was after the Order of the Son of God. This is the priestly authority that many of the Nephite prophets held. This is why Joseph Smith called the record of the Nephites the most correct book and the keystone of our religion. The text was composed by people within the Holy Order who were adept in the required knowledge, experience, and wisdom to compose a correct ~~amoun~~ [account].

...to teach these things unto the people...

This is the primary role of the Holy Order. Enoch led a city to peace by teaching. By obeying Enoch's teachings, his city was translated into Heaven.

And those priests were ordained after the Order of his Son in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption...

Now we're getting into some pretty deep water that I don't want to interrupt for lunch. It's a little ahead, and I'm gonna end there for lunch. And I've had a couple people ask me if I was willing to take questions. Here's the problem: You don't know what's gonna be said as we're going forward, so the answer to your question is very likely gonna be heard a little later in this same talk. So, ONLY in relation to anything that has been said

up to this point and nothing further. Does anyone want to ask a question, or would you like more time to eat lunch?

Okay, we've got one hand up here. Someone's not all that hungry.

Yes?

QUESTION 1: Just a question of... Earlier you'd said that it's not (I don't know the exact word, but...) "permissible" with someone who the Lord said identified as holding the Holy Order, so it made my thoughts go to Paul and Peter. Did Paul make a mistake there? Or is that something different?

DS: No, in fact, the two of them are described...

[Audience interjection]

Oh, the question was, it's not appropriate for people within the order to compete with one another; what about Peter and Paul?

Okay, Peter was a very rigid man, and Paul was a very enthusiastic man, and in terms of personality types, they were probably two of the most incompatible people that you will ever meet. And yet, both of them were servants of God and called and asked and given assignments. Peter primarily labor,ed as Paul with disgust pointed out, among the Jews, so much so that he accommodated them in ways that Paul would not. But then later... Later, Paul gets Timothy circumcised, rather abruptly, in a non-hygienic way that would never be approved by a modern physician who would be considerably more hygienic in the process of accomplishing such a feat. And so, when it came right down to the rub, there were moments of conduct by Peter, on the one hand, accommodating the Jews, and Paul, on the other hand, accommodating the Jews, that you could put either of them in the exact same place and you would detect no difference between how they were proceeding and what they were doing. That being said, when they got together, Paul talks about how he "withstood Peter to his face." Well, good on you, Paul. Peter probably needed that. And Paul probably needed his comeuppance.

Look, the primary focus and the primary reason for calling Paul was to take a message into the gentile world. Peter was indeed the one who saw the blanket descend with the unclean animals on it and received the admonition to "take and eat" and then protested that that would ceremonially violate the law to which he was holding fidelity. But he got the vision! He was the one that it was instructed. It was Paul, however, who became the messenger to the Gentiles. And so, I mean, it's... So between the two of them they licked the platter clean. You didn't get the job done with one, and you didn't get the job done altogether with the other. You actually needed both of them in order to accomplish the work. Paul did NOT supplant Peter. And Peter did not supplant Paul. They were disagreeable with one another...which oughtta be another lesson about how godly people don't necessarily have personality traits that are fully and completely compatible. I mean, "Hail, fellow well-met," is not necessarily the greeting that...

In fact, Joseph Smith, in a revelation, gave words that are supposed to be spoken when a brother meets a brother at the entry to the temple, and they are to greet one another with a holy kiss. And the words of greeting are proscribed! It's not, "Oh, crap! He's here! 'Hey....'" It's specific words. "Art thou a brother?" or if it's more than one, "Art thou brethren?" And then you greet one another with a recitation and a holy kiss. It's kinda French. It'd make Aaron feel at home. Maybe he'll be the greeter!

Yes, okay!

QUESTION 2: Sorry, I just wanted... I wonder if you're gonna speak more about the woman's role or what it means to a woman or... [crosstalk]

DS: Maybe. Maybe. Maybe we will, and maybe we'll just have her [Stephanie] get up here and talk for a little while about something or another. She...yeah.

Look, this is all one singular, self-contained exposition about a subject, the most alarming portions of which will come after lunch. Now I know you guys had the sacrament and you drank wine, and it put people into a...one of those wine comas. I'm hoping that you don't come back in a food coma for this afternoon because there's something valuable about having the content sounded live in your own ears in the moment that it gets offered. And I can't... I don't think I can adequately express the importance of the content of this material. It will, I think, dawn on you at some point. I'm hoping not while we're still together, and that I can catch an eclipse.

But we're gonna go ahead and end early for lunch 'cuz it's gonna take awhile. There is a lunch that people have paid for, and that... You'll [Joe Jensen] take care of that? Okay.

K, so the primary responsibility—primary, probably the foremost responsibility—is to teach. But we have this in Alma's description:

...those priests were ordained after the Order of his Son in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption...

So there's a connection between the manner in which the ordination is done and proving up the mission of Christ. They're intended to reflect the Son of God. It's the Son of God who's going to provide for the redemption. But only one generation was there and heard Him teach. Other generations needed examples that allowed them to believe in and anticipate the redemption through the Son of God. And that is also needed now.

The Son of God would only teach what the Father told Him to teach. *I am Son Ahman, and that I have done nothing on my own; but as my Father has taught me, I repeat his words* (TSJ 6:16) This is what the Son of God would do and what every one ordained after His Order would likewise do. That's the manner to look forward to Christ and to also look back and understand about Christ.

...this is the manner after which they were ordained: being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works in the first place, being left to choose good or evil; therefore they, having chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith, are called with a holy calling — yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such...

Probably the most important single description of how the Holy Order operates.

All the qualifying individuals for the Holy Order—all of that qualifying—happened before this cycle of creation. When the “foundation” or beginning planning of the world was first underway, God in His Wisdom knew it would be necessary to send messengers who would reliably teach others. Those chosen had already proven to be loyal to God and shown great faith in God’s Son. However, even if they were prepared before the foundation of the world, they needed to be initiated into the Order in mortality. Abraham was chosen before the creation but still was not part of the Holy Order in mortality until initiated by Melchizedek.

...thus they hav[ing] been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds (while, if it had not been for this, they might have had as great a privilege as their brethren — or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren — thus, this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts...

That happened BEFORE; it happened before this creation. That was when the qualifying took place. That’s when Abraham qualified. Some showed unwavering devotion to God. They had proven reliable. Others would not qualify because they would risk failing and leading souls astray. They risked rejecting God’s spirit because of hardness of hearts—or in other words pride and lack of humility. They questioned and argued, doubted and challenged. They had an inconsistent record of conduct, sometimes hesitating when others remained steadfast and true.

The risk of blind guides falling in a ditch and leading others to fall in that same ditch was disqualifying. And yet we still see those who, without possessing the required calling and ordination, claim they should be leaders and teachers. Even the pre-qualified still need to be “called” here.

The Holy Order is not for the benefit of the servant. Its purpose is to allow others to “enter into his rest” or receive the redemption of the Son of God offered to all. The Holy Order is to “teach his commandments” in a reliable, authorized, and dependable way. It’s not to get acclaim, attract a following, or preside over anyone. The responsibility is to teach God’s commandments.

...which Order was from the foundation of the world, or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity according to his foreknowledge of all things...

Because the qualification and ordination was first accomplished from the foundation of the world, it took place before the first day was set for this world. Therefore it is without any beginning of days. And because that authority will endure into the afterlife, it will not come to any end in this world where years are counted. Hence it is “from eternity to... eternity.”

Now they were ordained after this manner, being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance... (Alma 9:10)

An ordinance is required. Alma confirmed there is a required “holy ordinance” for someone who qualified before the foundation of the world. They need to receive that holy ordinance before they are part of the High Priesthood of the Holy Order. That’s why Abraham went to Melchizedek to obtain the ordinance.

The description of those who obtain the Holy Order was given in the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory on February 16, 1832. They are identified as those,

...who overc[a]me by faith and are sealed by that Holy Spirit of Promise, which the Father sheddeth forth upon all those who are just and true.

They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

They are they into whose hands the Father hath given all things [dominion].

*They are they who are priests and kings, who, having received of his fullness and of his glory, are priests of the Most High [God] after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the Order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, **they are gods, even the sons of God.** Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. And they shall overcome all things. Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let them glory in God who shall subdue all enemies under his feet. (T&C 69:10-13, emphasis added)*

Here the scripture uses the present tense to call them “gods, even the sons of God”; not that they *will be*, but that they *are* presently in that position. And yet, consistent with all we have been told about worship of God only, this same description teaches, “let no man glory in man, but rather let them glory in God who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.” These are consistent statements. The appointment to the Holy Order does not make the recipients anything other than servants, teachers, and guides who can reliably report on their errand from the Lord. They deliver God’s words but are not to be worshipped.

While these words have been around since 1832 and generally regarded as promising status to the faithful in the afterlife, when understood in light of the Holy Order, they take on a different meaning. They describe specifically and exclusively that group.

Some comparatively few qualified for the Holy Order before this world's current cycle of creation. But remember, *the course of the Lord is one eternal round* (1 Nephi 3:5). Things repeat, and there are *worlds without end* (T&C 69:28).

This is not our "first estate," nor will it be our last. Creation is endless, and God has declared that His *[words] are without end, ...for they never cease* (Genesis 1:1). God explained to Moses:

For behold, there are many worlds which have passed away by the word of my power, and there are many [worlds] also which now stand, and numberless are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them.

And it came to pass that Moses spoke unto the Lord, saying, Be merciful unto your servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens; and then your servant will be content. And the Lord God spoke unto Moses of the heavens, saying, These are many and they cannot be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me for they are mine. And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come. And there is no end to my works, neither my words. (Ibid. 6-7)

We have a partial account of events before this cycle of creation. There were those who rebelled during this earlier existence or estate. Because it happened prior to this cycle of creation, it is referred to as the "first estate," but it might as well be called an "earlier estate" or a "prior estate." We read:

And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon, and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; ...they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

And the Lord said, Who shall I send? ...one answered like unto the Son of Man, Here am I, send me. And another answered and said, Here am I, send me. And the Lord said, I will send the first. And the second was angry and kept not his first estate, ...at that day many followed after him. (Abraham 6:2-3)

The second who did not keep his first estate was cast down and drew a third of the stars of Heaven with him as he fell to Earth. It's described as,

...an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten...(whom the Father loved, [and] was in the bosom of the Father), was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son, and was called Perdition, for the Heavens wept over him. (T&C 69:6)

That earlier tragedy before this cycle of creation is not dissimilar to a description of events to happen later, at the end of this cycle:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be set loose out of his prison and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of

the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. (Revelation 8:6)

It is all one eternal round, worlds without end, opportunities to prove faithful without end. Accordingly, we can prove faithful in this present estate so that what comes in the next cycle will let it be said of us:

...being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works in the first place, being left to choose good or evil; therefore they, having chosen good, and exercising exceeding...faith, are called with a holy calling... (Alma 9:10)

We tip the scales by our choices, and by so doing, we change all eternity. We change eternity by the choices we make here (T&C 159:13).

There is an eternal balance, with infinite results, hanging on our every choice. We stand in peril or stand in glory depending upon our every thought and deed (Ibid. 14).

Five minutes of mortality are more precious than all the prior eternities of pre-earth life. Only here can you demonstrate the faith from which creation itself was born (Ibid. 15).

Why not view this moment as another “first place” and choose to obey God, in faith, to have your good works follow you into your next estate?

Our noble acts and righteous deeds are celebrated in joy and song in the corridors of Heaven. As we choose God and His ways, the Hosanna Shout rings out in Heaven for such choices. We are the place where eternity’s conflicts are now being played out. We are the battleground between infinite good and infinite failure (Ibid. 17).

What you do with your thoughts, words, and deeds NOW matters. Whether you will repent and follow Christ determines an eternal course.

In contrast, those consigned to hell to suffer until the end follow a religion with only a form of godliness, while denying the redemptive power of following Christ’s servants. They are described in the revelation in these words:

These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. These are they who suffer the wrath of God on...earth. These are they who suffer the vengeance of Eternal fire. These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God, until the fullness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work, when he shall deliver up the kingdom and present it unto the Father... (T&C 69:27)

They love lies because they’re comforting. Lies tell you there’s no need to repent. Lies promise you salvation without obedience. The scope of their lies is particularly alarming.

They claim to follow true but deceased prophets but never accept a living testimony of Jesus:

For these are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas. These are they who say they are some of one and some of another: some of Christ, and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch...

...every one of those were actual servants called by the Lord. And we have today those who claim to be absolute, reliable, trustworthy advocates of Isaiah's works that can tell you (because Jesus made reference to "great are the words of Isaiah," you know; He commends them to us to study) that he is now a *reliable servant* and *light to be yielded acknowledgment to* because he's teaching you of Isaiah. These are liars who are thrust down to hell, and they say they are "of Isaiah."

Oh, and there are those who say, "Torah, Torah, Torah"—not as in the attack on Pearl Harbor, but as in, "You can't get there without Torah!" They are "of Moses." They are liars, and they are damned to hell. (I believe they'll be listening to this.)

...but received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenants...

They rejected the Holy Order in the form of the servant sent to them. They prefer to think themselves safe by acknowledging known but dead prior messengers, but they dare not risk letting a living, contemporary representative of the Holy Order to teach them.

Reestablishing the Holy Order involves a new dispensation with those who went before providing the foundation for the work to go forward. Angelic ministers needed to come at the start of Joseph's dispensation and were needed again.

...all declaring each one: Their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their Priesthood.

[Giving] line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little...there a little, giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come and confirming our hope. (T&C 151:15-17)

This is required to restore the Holy Order any time it's been lost. The Order is not just a form of priesthood but also involves a family connection to the first fathers. For the holder, it establishes a role within that family. The senior-most living couple in that order stands in the same position as did Adam and Eve. It is essential that the Holy Order be reestablished prior to the Second Coming so that the events of Adam-Ondi-Ahman can take place. To link together God's Family necessarily follows the precedent of Abraham because it includes adoption of the living holder on Earth to the "fathers who are in heaven" (as Joseph Smith put it). The identity of those "fathers in heaven" and the identity of those who have held the Holy Order are the same. God's family must be linked together on both sides of the veil.

The fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is open to everyone and publicly invites all to accept it and benefit. Each person must decide if they will repent, forsake their sins, be baptized, and accept Christ's offer. The fullness of the Priesthood or Holy Order is not open to everyone, but when it exists, it can benefit all those who accept the fullness of the Gospel. Only Adam, under the direction of Jesus Christ, can decide if a couple will be inducted into the fullness of the Priesthood or Holy Order.

Not all people are going to want the fullness of the Gospel. Every soul is different from every other soul, and no two have the same desire for light and truth. Some souls are added upon by only having the opportunity to witness light and dark each day and night or to experience hot and cold each yearly cycle. Newborn children experience hunger and thirst, and eat and drink to understand the contrast. This world presents contrasts to inform everyone of eternal truths in this mortal experience. The fullness of the Gospel has only been present intermittently, with long periods of apostasy. Even when present, the majority of those living at the time know nothing about it.

This is wise and fair. It's part of a grand design to patiently allow all of mankind to progress suitably. *For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word[s], yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore, we see that the Lord doth counsel in his wisdom, according to that which is just and true* (Alma 15:13). Apart from the fullness of the Gospel, there are deeply spiritual, singularly understanding, very pure souls who inherited Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or other forms of God's word. They are also remembered by and precious to the Lord. Contrast that with some who have the fullness of the Gospel, miss the point altogether, and are marred with conceit, animosity, and self-righteousness.

As the fullness of the Priesthood or Holy Order is restored, do not expect it to be broadly distributed, openly available, or discussed in public forums. Some portions of the Gospel have always been unlawful to disclose in that manner. The Apostle Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians about being caught up to the third heaven: *...he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which...is not lawful for...man to utter* (2 Corinthians 12:4). The heavens were opened, and the witness ascended to hear something true and faithful. Yet it was not lawful for him to tell it.

Some things belong to God alone to tell. We have no right to impose those things on others, particularly if the result will be to condemn them for their rejection of the truth.

Yet all are invited to behold and learn from God. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon reported after the heavens were opened to them:

Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he shewed unto us, which surpasseth all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which [we were] commanded...we should not write while we were yet in the spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter...(T&C 69:28-29)

There are true things that are part of the Gospel. God is willing to reveal them. They include:

- things not lawful for man to speak
- things man is not capable of explaining
- things God grants the privilege of seeing and knowing to those who love Him and purify themselves
- things that surpass all understanding in glory, might, and dominion.

But we don't get to teach them, and we aren't able to help others to understand them. They are God's (possessive, capital G, *God's*). And those who behold them are gods (small g, non-possesive).

Alma explained how any of us gain this sacred but hidden knowledge:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; ...[but they're] laid under a strict command...they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. ...therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. (Alma 9:3)

Even as they get knowledge, “they’re laid under a strict command they shall not impart.” There are people who use their spiritual experiences as a credential. There ARE people who do that. One fellow tries to get people to listen to him because he claims to have meetings with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and even the ancestors of the person he attempted to persuade. He uses his spiritual experiences as a credential. Another fellow claims, without having accomplished anything to fulfill an assignment from the Lord, he is special, deserving deference, respect, and financial support for his mission.

Then we have so many versions of the sealed Book of Mormon that it would now require a library card catalogue to keep a complete inventory. And the “fan fiction” volumes of apocryphal, pseudo-prophetic materials multiplies at an astonishing rate. All around us, there are false claims of new Scripture.

More alarming, however, are our own weaknesses and foolishness. We gossip and assume and condemn. The Lord has told us how He deals with our failures: *If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget (T&C 157:58).*

We welcome many false ideas and errors. We shouldn't. We can do better.

Alma's extensive teaching about the Holy Order continued in chapter 10 of The New Covenants. He wrote:

Now as I said concerning the Holy Order, or this High Priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God. ...it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish. Therefore, they were called after this Holy Order and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb...

God's conditions are the same for everyone. We are all required to repent and work righteousness. That is required before the Holy Order is conferred. The words "ordain," "sanctified," and "washed" should be understood in the context of an ordinance (or a process). There is an initiation that is needed. It results in "white garments" or, in other words, a cleansed and forgiven soul through the Lamb of God.

To clarify, they should not be considered... When it says they "could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence," they should not... That should be considered as absolutely refusing to return to a sinful life without that being abhorrent to them. Their gratitude to God is the product of knowing Them. The Family connection alters the way they view themselves, God, and this life. The "rest of the Lord" removes uncertainty about their relationship to God. They understand they have been made Theirs. On that subject, their minds are at rest; but in this world, there is continuing trouble and challenges. The term "rest" is characteristic of the afterlife, not something involving ease in this world where the sweat of our brow remains our lot.

...bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest...

Notice that, as in many other places, actual "repentance" requires "fruit" or action to be undertaken. It's not enough just to feel regret; behavior also has to change. Repentance is always accompanied by outward evidence of an inner change.

Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his Order or it being his Order...

Abraham was faithful and showed respect for the head of the Holy Order before he could be initiated. Alma confirms "these ordinances were given" to induct a couple into the Order. It's not just laying on hands. More was and is required, and even Father Abraham, with all he had experienced, still needed these ordinances. Alma understood this subject and wrote truthfully about that.

But Melchizedek, having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the High Priesthood according to the Holy Order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent. (Alma 10:1-2)

Preaching repentance was and is the distinguishing role for the Holy Order in this world. In this description, we should ask: Who was identified as "his people?"—meaning Melchizedek's people. I do not think it was just a random audience who heard him teach. I think "his people" were those few who heard him teach and responded by repenting. There were likely far more who heard him than who repented. As with any age in history, few will be gathered because only a few will ever respond and repent.

Melchizedek was qualified to teach and preach reliably and truthfully by his knowledge of God's great mysteries. Similarly, a messenger like Joseph Smith had far more experience beyond the veil than he ever taught or revealed. His First Vision ends with this comment: *...and many other things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time* (JSH 2:5). Melchizedek and Joseph were no different from many other messengers

who likewise knew far more than they revealed. God does not trust a gossip, nor are the heavens supposed to be the object of voyeurism.

“Heed and diligence” are recited like a formula in the Scriptures. The great difference between Nephi and his older brothers was the heed and diligence present in Nephi and absent in the older brothers. The first verse of the Book of Mormon describes Nephi as being *taught somewhat in all the learning of my father* (1 Nephi 1:1). As a result, he was able to gain knowledge of the mysteries of God and had command of *the learning of the Jews, and the language of the Egyptians* (ibid). Later, Nephi reported about how he and his father had responded to God:

*And it came to pass that thus far **I and my father** had kept the commandments where[fore] the Lord had commanded **us**. And **we**...obtained the record which the Lord had commanded **us** and searched them and found that they were desirable, ...even of great worth unto **us**, insomuch that **we** could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children. Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that **we** should carry them [forth] with **us** as **we** journeyed in the wilderness toward[s] the land of promise. (Ibid. 23, emphasis added)*

All of those are referring exclusively and solely to Lehi and Nephi, and none of it is referring to the other members of the family. This is about Lehi and Nephi and how they had treated the commandments and the Scriptures. Nephi’s older brothers lacked that same diligence in pursuing godliness. The older brothers apparently lacked even the ability to read the Scriptures, and therefore, Nephi read the plates of brass to them:

I, Nephi, did teach my brethren these things. And it came to pass that I did read many things to them which were engraven upon the plates of brass, that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands among people of old. And I did read many things unto them which were written in the [book] of Moses. ...that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer, I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning. (Ibid. 6:1)

Nephi’s ability to read and teach were the result of his heed and diligence over his lifetime. Like oil in the lamps of the virgins, heed and diligence secured for Nephi a lifetime of light and truth.

Although they claimed the right of government over Nephi, the older brothers could not understand the Scriptures even when they were read to them:

...after I, Nephi, had read these things which were engraven upon the plates of brass, my brethren came unto me and said unto me, What mean these things which [you] have read? (Ibid. 7:1)

Without heed and diligence, Nephi would not have been appointed by God to be a *ruler and teacher over his brethren* (ibid. 1:9). He studied, obeyed, and taught from the Scriptures.

The Scriptures are central to our discussions, teachings, and focus. The words of the Covenant ask us to *receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern you in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts, and deeds* (T&C 158:3). Teachings should be anchored in the Scriptures. It should be rare when it becomes necessary to provide any new personal revelation. If there is any scriptural precedent that can be used to teach or reveal a point, then that should be used. Nephi taught and wrote using the words of Isaiah to introduce his great revelation. His brother, Jacob, also taught and wrote this way, using the words of Zenos as his own prophecy.

It takes experience to distinguish true revelation from false revelation. Every gift of the spirit can be the route of a lying spirit used to deceive us. Joseph Smith delivered a lengthy sermon on the presence of false spirits and the necessity of detecting and dismissing them. I adopt his words. I'm putting all of them into the paper. I'll read excerpts today:

...It is evident from the Apostle's [writing] that many false spirits existed in their day, and had "gone forth into the world," and that it needed intelligence which God alone could impart to detect false spirits, and to prove what spirits were of God...Spirits of all kinds have been manifested, in every age and [amongst almost] all people: if we go among the Pagans they have their Spirits, [and] the Mahommedans, the Jews, the Christians, the Indians; all have their Spirits, all have a supernatural agency; and all contend that their Spirits are of God. Who shall solve the mystery?...“many spirits are abroad in the world,” One great evil is that men are ignorant of the nature of Spirits; their power, laws, government, intelligence &c, and imagine that when there is any thing like power, revelation, or vision manifested that it must be of God:— ...is there any intelligence communicated? are the curtains of heaven withdrawn, or the purposes of God developed? ...they have not a key to unlock, no rule wherewith to measure, and no criteri[a] whereby they can test it; ...if Satan should appear as one in glory? Who can tell his color, his signs, his appearance, his glory? or what is the manner of his manifestation? ...who can drag into day light and develope the hidden mysteries of the false spirits that so frequently are made manifest among the Latter Day Saints? ...no man can do this without the Priesthood, and having a knowledge of the laws by which Spirits are governed; for as “no man knows the [thing] of God but by the Spirit of God,” so no man knows the spirit of the devil and his power and influence but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of...Priesthood the mysterious operations of his devices; without knowing the angelic form, the sanctified look, and gesture, and the zeal that is frequently manifested by him for the glory of God:— together with the prophetic spirit, the gracious influence, the godly appearance, and the holy garb which is so characteristic of his proceedings, and his mysterious windings. A man must have the discerning of spirits, before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors: for nothing is a greater injury to the

children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit, when they think they have the spirit of God.

...unless some person, or persons, hav[ing] a communication or revelation from God, unfolding to them the operation of spirit, they must eternally remain ignorant of these principles:— for I contend...if one man cannot understand these things but by the Spirit of God, ten thousand men cannot; it is alike out of the reach of the wisdom of the learned, the tongue of the eloquent, and the power of the mighty. And we shall at last have to come to this conclusion, whatever we may think of revelation, that without it we can neither know, nor understand any thing of God, or [of] the devil; ...The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God they considered to be false prophets; and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and they had to hide themselves “in deserts, and dens, and caves of the earth”; and although the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds; whilst they cherished, honored, and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, imposters and the basest of men.

...A power similar to this existed through the medium of the priesthood in different ages. Moses could detect the magicians power and shew that he was God’s servant, he knew when he was upon the mountain (through revelation,) that Israel was engaged in idolatry. (*JSP Documents Vol. 9*, pp.324-329, discourse Friday April 1, 1842 [spellings as in original], emphasis added; see also *DHC*, Vol. 4, pp. 571-576)

All of his comments are included in the paper.

Spiritual gifts or sensitivities are just as likely to be influenced by a lying spirit as a truthful one. This means the head of the Holy Order is required to gain experience to be equipped to tell the difference between the two. Adam and Eve witnessed Satan deceive their sons and daughters. The one they first expected to be their successor in the Order loved Satan more than God. Adam’s many experiences made him the one best to detect the Devil when he appeared as an angel of light to deceive Joseph Smith. By the time of the April 1, 1842 sermon I was just reading excerpts from, it’s clear that Joseph also knew the difference between a true and a false spirit.

Moses had no difficulty determining Satan’s demand that he worship him as a “son of God” was deceitful. Moses declared, *I can judge between you and God* (Genesis 1:3).

Other members of the Holy Order who have experience with and knowledge about the opposition have been qualified to distinguish true from false spirits by that experience and knowledge. That is necessary. That is why they are called to preach and teach, and their instructions are trustworthy. The efforts of false spirits to mislead are ineffective because, like Moses, they can say, *For it is blackness unto me...* (ibid.).

Comprehending these things about the Holy Order allows us to understand Alma’s (the father of Alma) account of his authority from God. Remember he had been one of the wicked priests of King Noah. He heard Abinadi’s warnings and was converted. He fled

in order to save his life and began preaching, converting, and baptizing in the wilderness. Members of the Holy Order are commanded to not publish details of the Order. Therefore, the testimony that Alma gives us is discreet. But look carefully at what he tells us:

...after he had poured out his whole soul to God, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, Blessed art thou Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. [For] thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi. And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them...

The Lord calling Alma “Blessed” is significant. Alma is becoming something and acquiring status recognized by God. But the Lord is likewise blessing those who would accept Alma’s teachings.

...And blessed art thou because thou hast established a church among this people. And they shall be established, and they shall be my people. Yea, blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name, for in my name shall they be called, and they are mine. ...Thou art my servant, and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life. ...

For Alma, this was the Day of Judgment. He’s obtained the Lord’s favorable judgment and, with that, the promise of “eternal life.”

...And thou shalt serve me, and go forth in my name, and shall gather together my sheep. And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him [ye shall] receive into the church, and him will I also receive...

They’re hearing the Lord’s voice from what Alma is teaching to them because Alma is the one being sent by the Lord with the message. Therefore, when they hear the message from Alma, they are hearing the Lord.

Like Enoch, Moses, and others who are “gods, even the sons of God,” Alma is now a living doorway for salvation. The Lord trusts him with His (God’s) message. Therefore, the words taught by Alma are delivered as the messenger of God. Whoever receives Alma likewise receives Christ. Jesus taught: *He who receives you, receives me. ...he who receives me, receives him who sent me. He that receives a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward. ...he that receives a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward* (Matthew 5:8).

The Holy Order, when it is present on earth, is the means provided for mankind’s salvation. When it is absent, then darkness prevails. The prophet Amos declared:

Behold, the days come, says the Lord...that I will send a famine in the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it. (Amos 1:27)

Because mankind refuses to allow God to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, this has been the condition of the world generation after generation. Mankind prefers apostasy. The Holy Order has not generally appealed to the children of Adam. Rejecting teachers from the Holy Order results in being cut off from God. When God appointed Nephi to be a “ruler and a teacher” over his brethren, it was accompanied by this condemnation: *And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord* (1 Nephi 1:9). Rejecting Nephi as a teacher was rejecting God’s presence. God’s presence is made available to the faithful through His messengers.

That having been said, remember that you can have your calling and election made sure without having the Holy Order. You can be redeemed from the fall and return to God’s presence without it. You can receive the fullness of revelation from before the foundation of the world through the end of this cycle of creation and still not have the Holy Order. Nor do you need it to enter into a covenant with God. It serves God’s purposes when He allows it to be restored, and it is governed strictly by Him. Because *this same Priesthood which was in the beginning shall be [at] the end of the world also* (Genesis 3:14), it needed to return to function again before the Lord’s return. Do not expect that to be a particularly spectacular thing or for the world at large to take any notice of it. God’s prophecies are always fulfilled while devout scholars, disbelieving skeptics, worldly fools, and disinterested mankind remain ignorant of His “strange act.” There will be no announcement. The Holy Order will set about teaching and working to obey the Lord’s every command. Of course, some day what has been accomplished will be shouted from the rooftops after the Lord’s return. When men complain that it was done in secret, the Lord will remind them that they are like the Jews who rejected Him: *We have piped for you and you have not danced. We have mourned for you and you have not wept* (Luke 5:18). Proud people never accept those the Lord sends. They always find reasons to not be persuaded. Like Joseph said, when a real servant is sent, “they banished them from their society as vagabonds; whilst they cherished, honored, and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, [and] imposters and the basest of men.”

Given the limited availability of the Holy Order and the limited way it can be exercised, the question arises: “Why have it at all?” Certainly it’s not designed to accomplish compulsion, control, or dominion in any degree of unrighteousness. Nor can it be asserted as holding any privilege entitling the holder to any automatic and unquestioned respect. It is merely a God-given opportunity to learn, made available for anyone who is persuaded to the truths that are taught. But when it has been here, there are always competing voices teaching contrary things and asserting claims that conflict with the Holy Order.

Moses gave a final, inspired blessing to the tribes of Israel. For the tribe of Joseph, Moses prophesied:

And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that crouches beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious

things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwell[eth] in the bush. Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of [the] re'ems. With them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth. And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. (Deuteronomy 9:27)

This blessing, hundreds of years after the blessing given to Joseph by Father Jacob whose new name was Israel, echoes the earlier blessing that was given by Israel:

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have severely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), even by the God of your father who shall help you, and by the Almighty who shall bless you with [the] blessings of Heaven[s] above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph...on the crown of the head of him that was separate[d] from his brethren. (Genesis 12:29)

Upon Joseph, who was separated from the other 11 patriarchs, blessings were conferred that foretold his posterity would locate in “the ancient mountains” and upon “the lasting hills.” HOW is that location to be identified? Will not authority from God be required to inform us? HOW will Joseph “push the people together to the ends of the earth”? Will not authority from God be required to accomplish it? HOW is a “crown” to be placed upon the head of Joseph if not by God?

We have a revelation from Joseph Smith that foretells some of what will be involved with the fulfillment of these ancient prophesied events:

And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of [the] people and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice and shall no longer stay themselves, ...they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence, and a highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, and in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants, and the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence, and there [they shall] fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim, and they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the heads of the tribes of Israel...and his fellows. And they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain, shall be sanctified in

holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, for ever and ever. (T&C 58:3)

HOW will the children of Ephraim be able to crown the Lord's people with "glory" unless they have received from God the knowledge to do so? If blessings are to be administered "upon the heads of the tribes of Israel," will it not require the Holy Order to accomplish it?

Ignorant people will not re-gather Israel and confer glory upon the "heads of the tribes." A great deal of missing knowledge is necessary, or the promises of God will not be fulfilled. The Family of God will have an order.

Remember the greatest fulfillment of prophecy in the past happened in relative obscurity, unnoticed by the world, and with very few directly involved. When the prophesied Messiah came to Israel, His birth was known to only a handful of people. When His ministry began, most who heard Him teach rejected Him. Ultimately, He was killed rather than welcomed by His people. Why should anything be different? Why should anything different be expected before His return in glory? Shouldn't we expect fulfilling the prophecies at the end to also seem uneventful? If His people did not recognize Him, why would they recognize someone commissioned as His servant who is far less than Him?

The purpose of the Holy Order is to serve God. It is not to get noticed or acquire fame or fortune. It serves only God's purposes. The return is related to the last-days' work. For Zion to put on her strength, it will require the Holy Order, or as Joseph Smith explained about Zion putting on strength:

[Isaiah] had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of Priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel. And to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the Priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that Power which she had lost. (T&C 129:4)

The only "authority of the Priesthood" that would be adequate to "bring again Zion" is that same authority held in the cities of Enoch and Melchizedek. It would be contrary to the Lord's consistent pattern for there to be a final City of Zion without the Holy Order that established these prior cities of peace.

Remember the words of the covenant our Lord gave to us in 2017:

All you who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings, of lying and deceiving, and of all whoredoms, and of secret abominations, idolatries, murders, [priestcraft], envying, and strife, and from all wickedness and abominations, and have come unto me, and been baptized in my name, and have received a remission of your sins, and received the holy ghost, are now numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel. (T&C 158:10)

Everyone who entered into the covenant and abides by it has “now been numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel,” meaning that when the Lord returns, He will acknowledge you as His and spare you from condemnation as He did the people in Bountiful. That is a great gift from the Lord to us.

Zion cannot be imposed. There can be no hierarchy, no one greater and no one lesser. Even a teacher assigned by the Lord to teach others cannot be esteemed above another. We have a description in the Book of Mormon that gives us a correct pattern:

And when their priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God, they all returned again diligently unto their labors, and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers; for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner. And thus they were all equal; and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted. And they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely. And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again... (Alma 1:5)

You can respect, even honor, the teaching. However, the teacher is no better than the learner, otherwise there is no equality. When there is a hierarchy that maintains a right to control others, it perverts the meaning of “keys” to get gain. Such churches always descend into the direful condition prophesied by Mormon: *The power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts, yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers, in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches* (Mormon 4:4). It cannot be like that for Zion to come.

There is still a great gulf separating us from the promised New Jerusalem. There is a need for order, and order should be the result of following correct principles. If we are taught correct principles, then we should be able to govern ourselves. None of us is better than any other. Some of us know a great deal more than others about framing, farming, masonry, engine repair, plumbing, electrical wiring, and other skills. Every one of those will be needed in a functioning community. When the Lord provides His people a teacher, then that teacher is no different or better than a framer. All of us should be willingly contributing, and no one should be prideful.

The Lord Jesus Christ does intend to accomplish a “strange act” that eludes the wisdom of the wise or the understanding of the prudent. But then again, that could be said of almost every significant achievement of the Lord from the beginning.

The final mention of the Holy Order in the Book of Mormon is this: *Behold, it was by faith that they of old were called after the Holy Order of God* (Ether 5:2). And that’s the right point to end with and leave for you to ponder.

Now, I've been asked if there could be questions, and I'm willing to do that just very briefly. Then we'll take a break, and then we're gonna move on to something altogether different, and Steph is gonna come join me.

So, is there any question relevant to the topic that doesn't readily violate what I've already said is inappropriate?

Yes! There's a hand.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Me?

DS: What? Yes, you!

Hey, hey, wait a minute, wait a minute. We have to take a moment—ohmmm—and observe. The lady about to ask a question is a descendant of the very same...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: King Follett.

DS: King Foll-ett, whose funeral sermon...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: His name is pronounced "Follutt."

DS: Here she is, correcting the pronunciation of her own relatives! As if... Go ahead! What's your question?

QUESTION 1: You called them "12 patriarchs."

DS: Twelve.

Q1: But were all 12 "honorable priesthood holders"?

DS: No, no, not all 12 were honorable priesthood holders, which brings up a point that's really interesting because Jesus says to...

She's asking if all 12 of the patriarchs... I called them 12 patriarchs. And certainly they were, at least genetically and by seed they were. Jesus says to the 12 *apostles* that they're gonna sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. But there's an obvious, you know, question mark that immediately arises, because Judas was one of the 12. And yet, Judas was, you know... I think, in that reference to the son of Perdition that Christ makes after the Last Supper, I think it is possible that He viewed Judas as a son of Perdition, which would mean, of course, he fell—which means, then, that of the 12 that were appointed to sit on thrones and to judge the 12 tribes of Israel, that one of them fell. So there's an absence.

I studied this out and thought about it and came to a conclusion that it would not be Matthias who replaced him in the 12 that would sit on the throne, but it would be Paul who got called separately. And so, thinking myself ever so wise in coming up with that answer, I then—because I don't ask unless I've studied it out, and I've reached my own conclusion—I then prayed to know if that were the case. And as it turns out, I was

wrong. But when you've done the work and you deserve an answer, even when you're wrong, you get an answer.

As it turns out, 11 of the original 12 patriarchs lost their position to 11 of the apostles. But there was A patriarch who never fell, who preserved the rest of the family, and who occupied that throne not just during his lifetime but thereafter. And so the 11 that Christ said would sit on thrones will include Joseph who never forfeited his position in the first place. And so, it's really useful to do what Oliver Cowdery failed to do, which is to study it out in your own mind and come to a conclusion, and ask the Lord if your conclusion is right, and then get an answer. Because He'll correct you if you're wrong.

I've studied out many things. Some things have required years of study in order to feel justified in the ability to ask a question of God and get an answer. But I don't perfunctorily say, "Hey, short-order-cook on High! Fetch me an answer to this bizarre, broad, ill-thought-out question." You take junk to the altar to offer to God, and He'll sort through the junk and hand you some of your crap back just so He can get it off the altar. But it's not going to be a divine revelation. It's gonna be, "Stop bothering me, kid."

There was another hand, and then we're gonna take a break.

Yes! What?

Question 2: So, you've said in another talk, which I feel like is related to all this, is it's not by way of a strongman but it's, you know, that Zion can't come by way of a strongman; it's gotta be by priesthood. And then I'm remembering your Priesthood talk where it talked about priesthood is more of a fellowship. And then in your Holy Order talk six or seven years ago, you said instead of using the word priesthood you're gonna use Holy Order, so I'm trying to put all that together. Do you want to define some of that?

DS: Ok, so he's asking something about the Holy Order and priesthood being fellowship and comments made in several different places and how they all harmonize together. Umm...not sure I understand the question, but I'll take a stab at saying something so we can take a break (because you want to use the bathroom; I can tell).

Look, in the beginning there was one singular—singular—priesthood that God gave that was a form of parenthood and priesthood and dominion and governance and family. Adam and Eve occupied positions as priest and priestess, as rulers, as parents. They occupied, essentially, two different roles in their relationship to their posterity. The role of Eve was to predominantly reflect wisdom; the role of Adam was to predominantly reflect knowledge. These are not automatic things. No one gets fairy dust: "Now you're knowledgeable!" The reason why Nephi was able to become knowledgeable was because (and he tells you) he studied it extensively. The reason why Eve, I mean... Women can be... In fact, if you read the Proverbs, one of the huge negatives that's talked about in the Proverbs is the foolish woman. The foolish woman is an absolute catastrophe, not only to herself, but she's a folly to her husband and to their family. And so, the role of wisdom is not something that is just magically conferred. When we read the account of what Eve was doing at the beginning, they'd had apostate child after

apostate child after apostate child until finally she had someone that she thought, “Now I have gotten a child from God, so I know he’s going to choose the right.” And that was Cain, who would subsequently murder Abel. So, to what extent was Eve informed by the sad disappointment in Cain that gave her understanding, wisdom, and insight that before that catastrophe she didn’t have? I mean, very often wisdom is the product of sad failure, disappointment, bitterness... Yeah, you...

Look at how Nephi describes all of the things that he went through that were so terrible, followed immediately afterwards with “having been highly favored of the Lord.” Well, why is it that you put all of the ugliness out, followed by highly being “favored by the Lord”? It’s because every one of the bruises, every one of the cuts, every one of the breaks and the falls, every one of the failures and the slips and the falls, every one of those things informs you better.

I was thinking about Leroy [Smedley], and you know, he’s a boxer. And you know, when my dad was trying to teach me something and I wouldn’t get it, eventually he would just demonstrate the hole, okay? “Now, I’ve been telling you, ‘Do something about that.’ You haven’t done something about that. How’s the black eye feel? Okay? Stop it!” I mean, it’s comin’ for ya. Leroy, I imagine you’ve had dozens of learning opportunities in which you figured out, “Well, that didn’t work.”

Leroy: Hence the flat nose.

DS: Hence the flat nose. Ya, it’s where it comes from.

Okay, let’s take a break, and then we’ll regroup and do something else. And I would like to join all of you this evening (whoever’s going) over at wherever. But I would like NOT to talk about this or to answer questions because what I have to say has been put into the paper, it’s been here, it’s been taped, it’s on video, and I don’t want a bunch of, “Oh yeah, but afterwards I asked and then Denver said...” and now I’m accountable for whatever it was that you misunderstood me saying in an off-the-cuff remark at a later time. If it’s really important, send me an email. And if it’s REALLY good, I’ll put a post up on my website, and I’ll actually discuss it in an open way so that I don’t have to be accountable for all of the “Denver said this to me somewhere in sometime in someplace that’s ill-defined; at least that’s what I got out of it.” And I can’t be accountable for what you got out of it! But I’m happy to be accountable for what I put out there.

Okay, so let’s take a break and move on.

2024.04.07 Topics to Consider

April 7, 2024

Fulbright Auditorium, Hobart & William Smith Colleges

Geneva, New York

Stephanie & Denver Snuffer

Stephanie Snuffer: Okay, alright. 1-2-3, eyes on me! Works for second graders; sometimes works for fifth graders. Doesn't work so good for adults.

Denver Snuffer: She's a substitute teacher at Waterford. So, yeah, you're gonna...

SS: Alright. Okay. Are you gonna sit? What are you gonna do? We're supposed to be up here together.

DS: I'm gonna make faces.

SS: Okay, so we—I don't know, about two weeks ago, maybe?—we started talking about maybe some topics that, if he finished, that we could bring up and just briefly address or put some ideas out there for you that you can start to consider in terms of, you know, yourselves/your relationships. If anybody has ever heard me speak in the last year or so, I have a particular penchant for interpersonal relationships and the benefit of getting your crap together, which basically means you have to know stuff. And I love how much knowledge we can gain by reading Scriptures, books, whatever it is we're doing. And I don't want to leave this part of learning off of the table. So Denver's sort of really been a wonderful guinea pig for the last few years for me. We... He's willing to... He's taught me amazing things over the past 30 years that we've been married, and I've been, hopefully, lucky to offer up some stuff that maybe he hasn't known in the past.

DS: It's the electric shocks that bother me most. [laughter]

SS: Oh, stop it. Alright. (Kids, that doesn't really happen.) Okay, we have... We came up with like nine or ten; we're gonna maybe try and get through one or two—okay?—depending on how long it takes. The first idea we want to talk about is an idea... The idea of resilience. And every time I say, "resilience," I want to sing Chumbawamba. Anybody?

Edwin Wilde: "I get knocked down..."

DS: "...but I get up again!"

SS: Right? Yeah. Okay. If you didn't hear Edwin sing Chumbawamba, just ask him a little bit later. Resilience has a very specific definition: It is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. So inherent in that definition is, "Life is hard, and you are going to get knocked down." And then you have to get up again. And what I did is I tried to find scriptural representation of resilience, so...because there's nothing better than sort of marrying the two ideas, right?—some, you know, personal skills, some mental wellness, some self awareness—and then just see how that is represented scripturally.

So, in James 1:2-4, there's this scripture that says, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* (Epistle of James 1:2 RE). So, we were driving to Niagara yesterday and reading through these things, and I said... Okay, so then we're talking about the scripture, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And I asked, "What do you think that means?" And you gave your input...

DS: Feel free to repeat it.

SS: I don't remember what it was because I was actually looking for the...

DS: It was profound.

SS: I was looking for the RIGHT answer. And he didn't give me the right answer, so I had to wait 'til he finished, and then I had to say, "But what about THIS?" And so, what struck me was it says...

DS: [Chuckling] That's true.

SS: ..."let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." So this idea of the trying of your faith, this idea of a difficulty or a fall down, if you will, and tying it with *patience* and *perfect work* and *entire* and *wanting nothing* just really sort of actually blew my mind. Because I think that what this scripture is trying to say is that we have the ability to be complete, we have the ability to be whole, we have the opportunity to want nothing in the patience...

DS: (I just want to see if this [mic] makes feedback.)

SS: ...of the trying of our faith. And so, if you tie this to resilience, the "getting knocked down" is a gift. It is the opportunity for you to do what the Lord wants you to do. Have faith. Pick yourself back up. Be resilient. And in that, you have the opportunity to be perfect, be whole.

DS: You know... Is this [the mic] working?

SS: Up... Very... All the way up to your mouth.

DS: Alllll the way up...

SS: All the way up to your mouth.

DS: So like...

SS: Come over here!

DS: ...like Jagger.

SS: Yeah, you're gonna hate this. Get over here.

DS: I get to speak like Jagger.

SS: Yeah.

DS: I've suggested that you read the account in Exodus and only look at what Moses said in the story of the deliverance from the pharaoh. Moses was told to go, do, and say some things. But it's pretty clear that when he went and he did and he said, that the whole process intimidated him, and he wasn't even confident about how well it would be vindicated—and **Pharaoh wasn't persuaded**. So he went, and he told the pharaoh that the sign would be given, and that sign was given. And however much Cecil B. DeMille may have distorted our view of what that looked like, to the pharaoh, it didn't look like enough to justify freeing the people. And Moses left there defeated and complaining and whining about it. If you think that adversity is something that only YOU get to experience...

It's universal. It's everywhere. And it includes extraordinary frustration, difficulty, setbacks (that we know about) in the life of Moses, in the life of Jesus Christ, in the life of Joseph Smith. We just don't have an adequate record to be able to fully assess all of the challenges, difficulties, and disappointments in the life of Melchizedek. I mean, why DID he need, by faith, to call rivers out of their course? What exactly was going on when that event took place? I mean, was he begging God and running for his life? It reads like "triumph," but I don't know of any life that gets lived without setback after setback and frustration after frustration. I referred to the first verse in the Book of Mormon (in the LDS version), Nephi telling you about himself—suffered all kinds of things throughout his life and, nevertheless, been "highly favored to the Lord"—is because he was resilient.

SS: Um-hmm.

DS: (Here, I'll take that.)

SS: Okie dokie. Job is another obvious representation of someone who was incredibly resilient: *Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him* (Job 5:10 RE). "Though he slay me..." This is Job talking about God: "Though he slay me, I will trust in Him." That's a pretty powerful recognition of where these bumps and knock-downs are coming from, right? Job knew what was happening to him, and yet, he views it as an opportunity to trust in God.

It doesn't take... You don't have to read very much or listen to too many different things to realize that we're not a particularly resilient population. We're actually quite soft, and it's getting worse by the HOUR, actually. It really is getting worse by the hour. And so, resilience is an important thing to understand, and it's an important thing to cultivate. And there are actually things you can do to increase your resilience. Many of the things that are talked about in the context of mental health or mental wellness are SKILLS. This is not the kind of stuff that distills on you like the dew—umm, I don't know—the dew, right? This is stuff you have to practice. Very often it doesn't come naturally. Very often we feel confused/unmoored, so to speak. We don't know where we're going wrong.

I won't name any names, but I was talking to a lovely woman who told me that she listens to my podcast and realized that she was doing something that she thought was right until I said otherwise. (I wasn't telling her she was doing it wrong.) But there are skills that can help in these kinds of concepts. And so, resilience is one of them. One of the things that you can do to increase your resilience is a gratitude practice. And a gratitude practice can be on paper, it can be in a journal, it can be with a buddy, it can be through text messages and group family chats, it can be some form of prayer, it can be said out loud, it can be said quietly. But a resilient person is grateful! They're grateful for their shoes and their most comfortable pair of pants. And they're grateful that the Airbnb had another set of pillows in the other bedroom because the ones in the bed that she was sleeping in were not sleepable (or something like that). And a gratitude practice is a wonderful way to increase your resilience. And it's easy. It's free. You don't have to ask anyone or pay anyone for this, right? You can do this on your own.

DS: I'm telling you, you would have paid money to use those pillows in a high school pillow fight [laughter]. You could dislocate some important body parts with 'em. So there's reason to be grateful for just about everything. The idea that you don't mourn your losses or deal with your frustrations and that the failure to do that is an absence of resilience...

It shows up over and over when Nephi is lamenting his life and when Alma is lamenting his sojourn. They both interrupt their complaints and say, "But I really ought to be grateful," and then they flip it. I mean, it's not just an idle idea that you can overcome your disappointment and frustration with gratitude. It's in the Scriptures by some pretty accomplished Scripture authors that they felt the same way we all feel from time to time. But then they stop and take an inventory.

There's a fairly... Well, you would know some of these guys who are now not only NOT Latter-day Saints, they actively engage in the business of being an ex-Mormon and do shows and collect money and... In private conversations, I have had people who appear for all the world to be faithless and hostile to the Restoration and disbelieving in Joseph say their lives were better when they believed, and they would trade nothing for the mission that they served when they went out preaching for two years. They were blessed, and they were benefited from that. However much they may have lost their faith now, it blessed and it benefited them. I can't help but think that in declining years, as people get a little more reflective and a little more sober about eternity, that there won't be a whole lot of people that we regard right now as faithless and hostile and apostate who, as they think back on their life, will realize their happiest moments came when they were trying to obey God, came when they were serving faithfully within a church organization or within a community of believers. And I think many of them may yet repent, as long as the disease that kills them lingers long enough. You take 'em in a heart attack, it may be too abrupt. But if you can give 'em something that they will suffer to die with, I think many of them are going to regroup and reconsider and repent. I think it's coming. Well, adversity serves not only a benign—but it serves a beneficial—purpose, and gratitude gets you there quicker. Yeah.

SS: We have... We would have nothing in terms of this particular religion (or Scriptures, for that matter) if the people who were not writing them or sacrificing or moving or crossing the ocean or...were not resilient people. That goes without saying, except that it is not a HIGHLIGHTED feature in what we read or what we take in; it's just this backdrop, and we don't realize how much of "what mental health is" existed in these people: Abinadi, Nephi, Lehi, Abraham, Isaac. I mean, I'm just gonna... I'm just... Pick out the names! It doesn't matter...

DS: Lehi's wife.

SS: Yeah, Lehi's wife.

DS: Yeah.

SS: It doesn't matter...

DS: She complained.

SS: She has a name. What is her name, honey?

DS: Sariah.

SS: Sariah. Thank you. Yes. I am not Denver's wife. I am Stephanie.

DS: [Chuckling] Yeah, there ya go. Yeah.

SS: So in the context of these ideas and these concepts, understand that there is a lot not written that we just take for granted or ignore outright as characteristics: a solid set of mental health skills that these people operated with. And we're running around here, willy nilly, you know, lo there, lo here, dismissing that, only taking this seriously because we don't know what we don't know.

So another way to increase your resilience is to meditate. Ahhhh. Have a mindfulness practice. A mindfulness practice will improve your ability to bounce back from difficult situations. And it's not going to be magic; you're not automatically going to wake up one morning and say, "Oh, yes, I'm so glad that I did that five minutes of mindfulness yesterday because, now, the fact that my dryer doesn't work and my fence blew down doesn't bother me in the slightest!" Okay? Might still bother you, but you will have a better capacity to tolerate that, right?

DS: Yeah. Because you can always use that same wind that blew the fence down to dry the clothes! It's like that Monty Python thing: "Always Look on the bright side of life!"

(I'm sorry. You were talking about something...)

SS: No, you're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. I love... That is resilience. Resilience is the ability to find the positive in something.

DS: [Chuckling] I hear whistling. [Whistles]

SS: The ability to look on the bright side of life is also a resilient skill, right? Use your friends, use your family. If you're low, if you're down, if you're struggling, reach out to someone who can help somehow build you up and give you something, you know, that sort of settles you down.

I have done... I... In fact, I looked while I was sitting over there: Podcast, 37, 38, and 39 are all on resilience. And the reason I did three podcasts on resilience is because I think it is pretty dang important. And we don't have a lot of it. And I think it's one of those things that, as a body of people whose goal is to come together in some meaningful way to further God's work (in whatever way you're called, in whatever way that will look like for you, at whatever time in your life you are at), this is something you have to have —because I assure you, you will get knocked down about a million and a half times. And if you don't have what it takes already to get back up, in the immortal words of Chumbawamba, you know, there's a whole community of people who got no use for you.

DS: Hey, I wanna comment on the...that idea of meditation. I think one of the most interesting passages in one of the shortest books in the Book of Mormon is when Enos goes out in the wilderness to hunt beasts, and the words that he often heard his father speak to him sank deep into his heart. Well, what that means is that he may be out there and he may be alone and he may be up to something else, but the word sank deep in his heart. He's meditative about something that matters to him.

Back when there was a Provo temple (it's been destroyed recently), you could go to the Provo temple, and every 20 minutes there was a session starting because they had six rooms in a circle. And as a law student and then after graduation, I went to the Provo temple so often (in the pre-1990 era) that I could recite the endowment ('cuz you'd heard it so many times). Well, once they started making dramatic revisions in 1990 (and have continued on apace), there are many, many things that were once there that are still in my memory that I DO reflect on, that I DO meditate on—because I think the whole purpose of it was to present, in a ceremonial form, vast ideas compressed into little, little symbols, so that if you could grasp the little symbol, it would spool out into something much, much bigger.

(I don't know; I may have already told this story.) But I was there in the temple one time with a group of missionaries, 'cuz missionaries came over and ate at our place all the time, and one of the permitted things you could do with them was to go to the temple. And so I was in the temple with a group of—I think it was a whole district—and we were in the celestial room, and I was talking to them about some of the symbolism that's embedded into the garments and how they relate to some of the things that go on in the ceremony. And there was this old, puckered fellow that looked rather more like a Baptist Sunday School teacher than a Latter-day Saint, and...

SS: Don't editorialize.

DS: Don't editorialize?

SS: [Chuckling] No.

DS: It makes the story better. [Audience laughter.]

And he scowled for a bit at me, and then he came over, and... Literally, I'm gonna try and replicate (as best I can) his whisper: "If you're talking about the meaning..."

SS: Stop it. That is not...

DS: "...of the symbols, you're wrong!..."

SS: I was there.

DS: "We don't know what they mean!"

SS: [Chuckling] That's not how it happened.

DS: I thanked him, and then I continued apace explaining what was going on. And it, really, it drew him in. He actually got interested.

SS: [Chuckling] That is not how it happened!

DS: Anyway, that's a long way to go from Enos in the wilderness hunting beasts to...

SS: What are you talking about?

DS: But meditating on things, particularly some of the prosaic words that we get in Scripture... Some of the passages that we've got in Isaiah are an amalgamation of things that will happen/have happened/are happening or patterns that are going to repeat themselves in history by multiple people, at multiple times, in multiple ways. And when Christ finally gets to the point in Third Nephi that he has now delivered, "I've now told you what the Father commanded me to tell you," and there's a line of demarcation; He's been doing and saying and teaching and accomplishing exactly what the Father wanted him to do, and when He gets done with that, then He just sort of freelances for a little bit. And Christ in Third Nephi is rather like Isaiah: He's future, He's present, He's past, He's future, He's present. It's as if there is no past, present, or future in the mind of the Lord or in the revelations given by the Lord, but that they amalgamate all into one—so that the past and the present and the future are present before God continually. And when He comments, He comments (basically) thematically. And so, when you get a thematic commentary by Isaiah or by Christ, maybe that's because we ought to be meditating about themes, about really big subjects, about really repeating patterns that come and get fulfilled—extraordinarily, clearly—in one life at one time and then get repeated in your own experience, and in the experience of your children, and in the experience of a body of believers, over and over again. Because when God interjects Himself into the course of events that we live, it turns out that everything mirrors what went on before and what will come after. And as you meditate on those things, sometimes you can see the very themes that were present in the book of Isaiah or in the comments of Christ are present in your life and that you're living a pattern—and the pattern is continual.

That meditation thing? That's big, whammy stuff there.

SS: Okay, and actually, what you said reminded me about the themes and the themes of life, because I know you're talking Scripture, and then you went personal and then community, but that's also a really important thing. Because there are themes in your life. There are patterns in your life. Your patterns are different than mine. Mine are different than his. And that self-awareness and that meditation and that opportunity to focus on the patterns in your life and the themes in your life (this is from that book we're listening to)...

DS: Oh, yeah.

SS: ...is an important way of bringing self-awareness and bringing an awareness to see where your strengths are.

- Where do you get stuck?
- Where are you blocked?
- What works for you?
- What doesn't?
- What relationships are difficult for you?
- Why?
- Are you quick to anger?
- Are you slow to calm?

These are themes and patterns that if you start to pay attention—through a meditative practice, by seeing where you're resilient and where you are not resilient—this will become obvious to you. And you will awaken to a new level of understanding, which **by its very nature** draws you closer to God. The work and glory of God *is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man* (Genesis 1:7 RE). And we have the scripture side down: we have the “study the Scriptures,” we have the tools to study the Scriptures, we have a lot of really good resources and a lot of really good material to do all of that. That's one part. That's one part. It's a huge part. The other part is this part: it's the YOU part. It's the part you are trying to find those deeper answers to so that you can see why you're stuck. You can see why you can't break through in this way or that way—and resilience and mindfulness and journaling and gratitude. Those are real skills and real tools that have the potential to really open up in ways that you could not have foreseen before.

Okay, do you have anything else on resilience, 'cuz I think I'll move on.

DS: What was it...? What was it that...?

SS: (Give that to Q; she wants it.)

DS: (She wants this?)

SS: [Chuckling] (Just give it!)

DS: What was it that Ferris Bueller said to the guy at the restaurant when they ordered pancreas? It's because of...

SS: Oh, gosh!

DS: It's because of...

SS: People like...

Audience Member: Tolerance.

DS: Tolerance that...

SS: Yeah.

DS: People like us can put up with people like you.

SS: What does that have to do with anything? I like it, but...

DS: Resilience!

SS: What does it have to do with anything?

DS: That's just the way I "resiliate"!

SS: Okay, now this one, okay, this one is "wise mind."

DS: Oh, this is important.

SS: This is important, but...

DS: We should have started there.

SS: No. Okay, whatever.

DS: Okay. Yeah.

SS: The problem with this is I have a whole bunch of scriptures written down, but there's two things wrong: 1) They're King James Version Bible scriptures in Proverbs, and neither one of us brought our scriptures, and 2) I can't translate them into the new Proverbs. So I don't know what they say. I just went through and found them. But let's start with "wise mind," okay? "Wise mind" is this concept that is the balance between rational thought and your emotional experience. That's important. "Wise mind" is the balance between your rational thought and your emotional experience.

Now I want you just for a minute to close your eyes, and just briefly, remember the last emotional experience you may have had.

DS: Like, really emotional? Like...?

SS: (Shush, don't leave 'em.)

Could have been...it could have been a calm emotional experience.

DS: Hmm... No, no.

SS: It could have been a very agitated emotional, right?

DS: Ah, yeah. There we are. Yeah.

SS: There is a very distinct difference between your rational thought and your emotional experiences—like HUGE, like to the point of, “Oh gosh, I wish I hadn’t have acted like that,” right? “Oh, shoot, I wish I hadn’ta said that,” okay? So there’s this idea of balancing this all out in a wise mind. Practice: meaning skill, meaning this is something you can actually get better at! This is what I love about this stuff. Not one of us is stuck where we are. It doesn’t matter how old you are, it doesn’t matter how young you are, if you are willing to learn some things, practice some skills, you can improve.

So “reasonable mind”: this is where your logic is, it’s where your facts are, it’s where you see things objectively. This is where you just describe something. ~~Decisions are made from this state~~ The decisions that are made from this state are typically analytical and based in evidence.

DS: Oh, yeah. We talked about this yesterday.

SS: Well, kind of, but... So don’t go there yet.

DS: Okay. Alright.

SS: But this is “the lawyer.” This is “the facts.” This is “how it is.” It is “this way,” and if it’s not this way...

DS: “Just the facts, ma’am.”

SS: ...(right), it can’t be any other way.

DS: ‘til Friday.

SS: Right? Okay. “Emotion mind” is where your emotions drive this state: Decisions are made based on feelings, and responses are governed by the emotional reaction to a situation.

DS: [With great exasperation] “Are you kidding me?!!”

SS: You have very little control over your emotions.

DS: Yeah.

SS: They just come unbidden. What you do have is the ability to control the **management** of your emotions, right? So there is no... Not one of you out there should be saying to yourself, “Well, I have a hard time controlling my emotions,” because you’re not supposed to control your emotions. You’re not supposed to control whether they come, whether they go away, what they are, how they are. You’re not supposed to care whether it surprises you or it doesn’t surprise you. What you’re supposed to care about is how you ACT. That’s what you’re supposed to care about. You’re only

supposed to care about how you act—because that’s what other people are gonna care about.

So we had a discussion (I don’t know if this was about this one), but we were talking about how the person...

Okay, I come in, and I’m crying. (I’m trying to think of a good reason why I would be crying. Whatever. It’s okay.)

DS: Red Sox lost.

SS: That’s not why I’m crying [audience laughter]. So I come in, and I’m upset about something. All right, maybe I’m crying, maybe I’m not crying; maybe I’m just plain old upset, who knows? And I’m upset, and I come in, and I’m ranting and raving, and I’m upset, and we’re in the kitchen—right?—and everybody can see me. My kids can see me. Whoever’s there can see me. They can clearly see that mom’s upset. And dad steps in, and he’s like, “Hey, it’s no big deal. You don’t need to be upset.” And he tries to calm me down. In that—my emotional experience, okay?—in that moment, who is looked at as the better person?

[Audience response.]

The rational one! That is nonsense! Okay, so HE gets... I mean, not in MY family, because we’re all like me. I mean, we’re... This is the... I mean, there’s three therapists and whatever. So that’s not praised in my house, right? But in the world, the person who looks good to the world is the rational one, the one who calms the emotional child down, the one who says, “There, there. You don’t have to cry,” right? That is a profoundly misunderstood concept.

DS: You’ve reversed it.

SS: Yeah, the person who actually is in some sort of healthy engagement in their life experience is the one who is actually emotional...

DS: They’re dealing with it.

SS: ...(right?), the one who’s actually feeling the frustration or the tears or the crying or the sadness or the whatever it is. In that moment, what I have control over and what I should do is make sure that my BEHAVIOR in my emotional state does not hurt anyone, is not offensive, is not lashing out, is not threatening or in any way aggressive, right?

But the wise mind and the rational mind are both important. They have a place. The wise mind is the convergence of “reasonable” and “emotional” mind, leading to intuition and knowledge, where you can make balanced decisions. My favorite part of this is that the balance between those two things leads to intuition—right?—this sense, this felt sense, that what you’re doing is right because you are neither too emotional or too rational.

DS: Yeah. Have you ever thought about how Christ could tell what the other people were thinking? They haven't articulated it yet. It was intuitive. And I don't think that that was because of a magic trick. I think it was because of the wise mind. He could look at their demeanor, He could look at their body language, He could look at their facial expression, He could tell from that—and because of the circumstance, and the situation, the setting, and the subject at hand—He could tell they were about to oppose Him on this topic. So He could say, “Yeah, I know what you're thinking,” and then address that without them ever having said a word. He was intuitive because it was the wise mind.

SS: Okay, so then I wrote a whole bunch of Proverbs scriptures on the back of my paper, but I can't do anything with them. So... Okay, so what I want YOU to do with them is I want you to read Proverbs.

DS: Hmm. Yeah.

SS: And I want you to read Proverbs with this idea in mind. Where is there some sort of representation of the wise mind in the Proverbs? Because we all know that Proverbs is full of, you know, comments and discussions about wisdom. So find the scriptures in Proverbs that deal with the wise mind. And then go further than that. Just continue to look for these concepts in your Scriptures, because you will find them. They are there. This is the material in mental health concepts, whether it's a therapy, in and of itself, or... I can't even think of what I'm...the words I'm looking for. It is the gospel in secular language. That's all mental health is. It is a way for a non-believing population to still have the opportunity to develop a spiritual, grounded side.

DS: Let's go there next, and we'll finish there.

SS: Okay.

DS: Yeah.

SS: Alright. Okay, so nothing more on wise mind?

DS: It eludes me!

SS: Okay. (I'm sorry. I just put a mint in my mouth.) Alright, so the next one is: We're gonna talk about assumptions. And I have to... We keep having these conversations. I cannot... (I don't know what this is.) I refuse to talk or have a conversation or listen to a conversation if the premise of the conversation starts on an assumption. If the premise of the conversation starts on an assumption—meaning you just think you know something, and so you're going to start to have a conversation—I will literally stop you. Because I cannot do that. It is such an enormous waste of time to talk about something that is not grounded in any kind of fact or truth whatsoever. And when you start to pay attention to it, you will stop talking to a lot of people! And the rest of us should just shut our mouths because we're not actually saying anything. We're just walking around, opening our mouths, saying, “Hey, did you hear this?” And I'll say, “Where did you hear that?” And they'll say, “Oh, so and so said, ‘So and so,’” and I'm like, “Stop there, okay?” Not a conversation I'm willing to have, because there's nothing to it. And so, this idea of

assumptions and operating from a place of assumptions is incredibly toxic to interpersonal relationships. Even, I mean...

And it's amazing how assumptive we actually are, right? So it is as simple as: He comes home from work, you know, kind of cranky or... I don't know, maybe he comes home from work, and I'm cranky; let's do it that way. He comes home from work, and I'm cranky (had a tired day; I'm hungry; I didn't have plans for dinner), and I snap at him because—I don't know why—because I'm cranky! And he just, for some reason (maybe he's not feeling particularly resilient that day), and he just sort of goes into a spin, and he thinks that I am mad at him. And then he starts to think of a conversation we had this morning that maybe didn't go perfectly. And he's like, "Oh my gosh, that's why she's mad at me." And then we spend three hours just kind of poking at each other unnecessarily because he assumed—because I was cranky—that I was mad at him. How is that fixed? Well, it's generally not, right? We go to bed, and then we wake up in the morning, and everybody's fine. But we actually wasted three hours of some amount of emotional dysregulation and disconnection because of a 30-second exchange when he walked in the door. [Addressing Denver] What could you have done?

DS: I could have stopped at McDonald's and...

No, umm, the... There's a statement that kind of stuck with me. Carl Jung, the psychologist, this is a quote from 1937. It said, "In the absence of facts, we project what happened," meaning: When we don't know the truth about something, then we draw on ourselves and we project the things that we fear (or we are) into assumptions about the other person. So when you don't have facts BUT you are viewing someone narrowly and critically, what you're probably doing is you're revealing something TO yourself ABOUT yourself, not about them. I thought it was a profound insight, because we really do let our fears inform what we think of others, and often our fears are based upon what our own internal problems are.

This was the one where we talked about the law.

SS: Yes. Yeah. Okay, hold on just a second. I want to brief... And then we'll probably end with that.

So assumptions erode trust. I'm just going to tell you what happens when you operate from a place of assuming something. I mean, besides the fact that it makes an ass out of you and me, right? Do you remember when your teacher used to write that on the board or whatever? ASS-U-ME, which is really ironic because that is the very... That's the bedrock of what assumptions are. Assumptions erode trust. They break down healthy communication—assuming you have healthy communication. Assumptions break down healthy communication. They build and breed resentment and conflict. They are barriers to intimacy and personal growth. There is a loss of self expression and agency, especially if someone is making assumptions about YOU. If I assume that my child is intentionally misbehaving and that is the way I deal with that child, then that child has lost the opportunity to express him or herself and be autonomous in sharing with me what is actually going on for them. So I want you to pay attention, because **you will**

be SHOCKED at how much of your life is built on assumptions and conversations that take place around them.

So this was where we talked about it because...

DS: Yeah.

SS: So let's... Yeah, let's talk about it. We were talking about how assumptions play into our lives but particularly him—because his life is literally built on facts, right? I mean, 30 years in the law practice, it's facts and only facts! So what were we talking about?

DS: You cannot—under the rules of evidence, both state and federal—you can't offer opinion testimony except within extremely narrow confines that require you to have some kind of basis for offering the opinion, and it has to be qualified, based upon knowledge, experience, education, training. Other than that, you can't offer an opinion. So a witness says, "Well, he was at fault in causing the car accident." That's an opinion. That's a conclusion. Why are you saying that? If that was the testimony, there would be an objection, the objection would be sustained, and if the witness managed to say that before the objection, the judge would say, "Strike it from the record."

- What did he do?
- Where was he at?
- What time was it?
- Where were you located?
- What opportunity did you have to observe?
- Describe what it was, then, that you saw.

All of those things are foundational before you ever get to a fact. You're not allowed to just spew things in the courtroom because the courtroom is a fairly serious moment in which you're trying to resolve a problem. If the problem were easily resolved, you would never have a trial. The only cases that go to trial are the ones where there are two legitimately different stories, and if you believe one story, they will win, and if you believe the other story, they will win. And both sides believe so intensely on the story they're telling that they can't resolve it between them—because they simply disagree on what the facts are. So when you finally get there and you're presenting the case, you don't get to say, "She's a bad woman. She was mean. She treated me badly." Okay, I... Maybe. Yeah, okay. I object. And let's talk about:

- Who? (Her)
- When?
- Where?
- Was anyone else present at the time?
- Are there other witnesses who saw the same thing you claimed to have beheld?
- Can we get corroborative evidence for this?
- Was it recorded?
- Is there anything other than your word that will allow me to accept the fact that you're about to offer about what she did that was so troubling?

And at the end of all that, if the final statement—once you’ve laid a foundation so that you know who, what, when, where, and your opportunity to observe, you put out a fact—it is possible that the trier of fact is gonna say, “Yeah, but my wife does that to me every day. She... I wouldn’t call her ‘mean.’ I would call her ‘forthright’ or something a little more laudable.”

We tend not to ever get down to the fact. We tend to “high-level” our descriptions of what went on in characterizations, conclusions, opinions—and completely devoid of facts. And we do that just as a matter of common conversation because it takes a lot of time. Trials take a lot of work. It takes a lot of training for people to finally get to the point that the presentation is focused on the facts that happen.

There have been cases where I knew—I knew!—I could absolutely tear apart the nonsense that the judge was going to hear from the other side, and they offered a bunch of objectionable opinion and conclusions, and I didn’t make any objections. And I’ve got a judge sitting up there looking at me like, “Did you take the day off, Counselor? What are you doing?” I’ve even had them ask me, “Are you not going to object?” And I’ve had to say on occasion, “No, Your Honor, I don’t have an objection to this line,” but that’s because I have photographs, and I have recordings, and I have documents, and I have other witnesses, and every one of them is consistent, and the nonsense you just heard from the witness, I am going to utterly undermine. And so I want them to do this. Because when you hear the facts and when we finally get to the bottom of it, then you’re going to say, “I can disregard everything that that witness said because it was simply a bunch of negative opinions without any foundation.”

Look, we tend to be far more sloppy, careless, disrespectful, unkind, and frankly, incredible (meaning lacking credibility) in our everyday conversation. I don’t expect you all to become trial lawyers overnight, but it would be nice—particularly if someone has something critical to say about someone else—if you tried to find where the fact was. Because the opinion may be very negative and honestly held, and perhaps, in that person’s experience, not only understandable, but maybe that’s the right way they should view the person because of their own life’s experience. But it doesn’t mean that you should share the view unless you make a reasonable enough inquiry to try to get to the bottom of it to figure out what they did. What people do is bad enough. We don’t need to pile on with our opinions.

SS: Yeah, I want to say, too, that this... We practice this wrongly in our relationships, right? This is... We... This is our standard mode of operating (going back just to the basic, you know, example that I used with Denver). And so, it IS a lot of work. It IS a lot of work to build resilience. It IS a lot of work to operate from a wise mind and marry the rational and the emotional together. It IS a lot of work to get to the bottom of what is potentially an assumption. Make no mistake, it IS a LOT of work. It’s not trial-level work but close. And the payoff is much better than trial-level work.

The reason the payoff is better is because everything that you practice in terms of these kinds of skills will improve your relationships, create greater intimacy, build bridges, bring you together. What we’re doing is either keeping us apart or it’s keeping us at the

status quo, right? And if our goal is to become, you know, exalted (holy crap), if that's our goal (our goal is to be exalted), that's where the work is—right?—because I'm pretty sure we have a set of Heavenly Parents who are still doing this stuff because I don't think this ever ends, right? As long as you are in a relationship with someone, this is your work. And so when we practice making assumptions (with our kids and with our spouses and with our siblings and with our co-workers), and when we have a imprecision of language and we do not use the correct words for the correct things, and we're sloppy in our emotional expression, and we're sloppy in our, you know, we don't get back up as quickly as we should, that takes a toll on us.

DS: Um-hmm.

SS: It is disconnecting from God when we are not doing this work.

(And that's four out of the ten... ish.)

DS: Yeah, we're gonna wrap it up there.

SS: K, I'm done.

DS: So there! Take that!

SS: Alright. Works for me.

DS: (Are those your glasses?)

SS: (No, those are your glasses.)

DS: What? What? [Audience question.] Yeah, SHE'LL answer.

Question 1: Good. It sounds like intuition and assumption are fighting against each other.

SS: Okay, tell me how.

Q1: How is intuition NOT an assumption?

DS: Intuition is based upon the wise mind, which is taking evidence that's before you and reaching a conclusion based upon a premise that you're entertaining from both your own experience, your own emotions, your own background, AND thinking it through.

SS: Assumption... [Mic feedback] (Aaaa, what just happened, Reed?) Assumption is... (Red button. This one? Okay, you hit the red button.)

Assumption is just believing anything you see or hear, without any kind of corroboration. OR assumption is "not actually seeking" for clarification.

DS: Yeah...

SS: So I don't know. I mean, you tell me!

DS: ...the wise mind is marrying both rational thought and emotional reaction. Look, our emotional reactions are exactly the same as the emotional reactions of a little child. When you have a one-year-old, a two-year-old, a three-year-old, a four-year-old and their emotions, their emotions may be closer to the surface and put on display with greater frequency, but an adult's emotions are exactly the same; there's no difference between the two. And the problem is that we tend to express that emotional outburst in more colorful language when we're an adult (and just a lot of noise when you're a child). But it's this... It's grounded in the same thing. So if you're reacting to something emotionally, you're reacting the same way a child would, and it doesn't do any good to tell the child to settle down! You have to let that process play through. And then you can think about, and you can reflect on.

SS: Okay, let's...

DS: The wise mind gives some distance between the emotional outburst and the opportunity to think it through rationally.

SS: Okay...

DS: Assumptions are not based on anything but innuendo—and especially when assumptions are negative (because we tend to allow the assumptions to run in favor of the negative). But we also find people whose assumptions run to the positive. Joseph Smith did that. He thought people generally had the same motivation as did he. As a result, there were a lot of con-men that got over inside the Latter-day Saint community in Kirtland and in Missouri and in Nauvoo. And it was because he trusted people that were untrustworthy. It was an assumption that he made, and it was the wrong one.

SS: K, let's go!

DS: What's that?

SS: I said, "Let's go." It's 4:15.

DS: Oh, yeah, it's 4:15. We're supposed to end now! And you figure it out!